



crossroads

a step-by-step guide away from addiction

facilitator's guide

Edward T. Welch



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FOR FACILITATORS AND FRIENDS

TO WALK WITH AN ADDICT is both a gift and a grief. It is a privilege to bear another's burdens and love someone who is, in most ways, just like you. But it is painful to be lied to, to witness the ups and downs, and to watch while someone you love trashes his or her life and the lives of other people. These challenges are enough to lead you into humility and prayer, which are exactly the basic requirements for the job. Add love and you have the whole package.

A wise old ex-addict, a man who had come alongside hundreds of other addicts over the course of his sobriety, was asked how he could keep doing it when so many seemed to go back to their addictions. "I want to love them well," he said. "Then, when they are ready to change, they will remember that there is at least one person who cares, and they can call me."

That sounds pessimistic, but it actually points to a no-lose proposition. When you love someone who struggles with an addiction, you may end up watching that person disappear back into addiction. If that happens, you pray for another opportunity. Or you may see the Spirit of God work in that person's life. Either way, you were a faithful ambassador for Jesus Christ.

Love, humility, and prayerfulness—wrapped together with a confidence that God speaks with authority and grace to the difficult problem of addictions—are the basic requirements for the job. They all go together. If you have one, the others follow. If you are prayerful about another person, you will grow in humility because prayer says, "I need Jesus." You will also grow in love because you can't help but love someone for whom you consistently pray.

Of the three, love is the best summary of your job description. So, do you love well? Do you love in such a way that the struggling person knows that you love him or her? If you do, you are already going to help more than any manual or study guide. Of course, the Spirit of God can use all kinds of means to bring change in other people's lives, but, more often than not, the Spirit uses love.

Consider *Crossroads* a supplement to your ministry of wise love. Here is an overview of what is ahead:

- The steps in *Crossroads* try to mimic the way Jesus speaks to us.
- They speak in a direct, no-nonsense style.
- They ask questions as a way to teach and lead.
- They surprise or, even better, amaze.
- The steps in *Crossroads* provide warnings.
- They point out the path of beauty and lasting satisfaction.
- They bring hope on every page because all of God's words to the addict are summed up in the good news given to us by Jesus Christ. His love cannot be turned away, and his power can release anyone from bondage.

You, too, will adopt these different styles at different times. Love has rich variety.

The title *Crossroads* comes from one of the recurring images in the book. When we read through Proverbs, we notice that we are always standing at a crossroads, with Wisdom pointing us to the Kingdom of Heaven and Folly trying to seduce us away from it. At that decision point, which we encounter all the time, we must be wide awake, all our wits about us, because our natural instinct is to veer onto the path of folly.

When seen from a distance, folly looks like—well, folly. After all, who would tease an asp or walk randomly around an area loaded with traps and snares? But when temptation is breathing down our necks, it can suddenly appear rational, attractive, and satisfying. One goal of the Book of Proverbs is to prepare us for that crossroads moment by helping us take a step back, get a little distance.

Other images run through the book as well: light, darkness, wilderness journeys, and banquets. Any of them could be the organizing theme, but “crossroads” is flexible enough to incorporate a wide swath of the biblical teaching.

A WORD ABOUT METHOD

The workbook, of course, is unapologetically God oriented and Christ focused. This might be too much for someone who is committed to discovering his or her own god rather than knowing God—who-has-revealed-himself-as-THE-God. But it should suit most addicts just fine. Those who have a difficult time saying no to temptations know they need help. They know they need God. Usually they prefer that the knowledge of God not be left to their own judgment. They know the real thing when they hear it.

In the table of contents, you will notice that the steps specifically about God don't come until the middle of the book. This gives addicts time to see themselves more accurately before they really consider the character of God. For example, if an addict believes that his or her problem is largely biological, God will be a healer and helper, but he won't be the crucified Redeemer. Start with people and move toward God, or start with God and then talk about people—the knowledge of one is always connected to the other. You could start either place. I have chosen to show addicts their needs first, then move into the specifics of how God in Christ meets those needs.

A WORD ABOUT LANGUAGE

Use the word *addiction* with caution, or at least with self-awareness. We inject words with particular meanings. Your goal is to supply meaning that will easily draw a person into the story of Scripture. In the pop psychology of our times, the word *addiction* means so many different things that it can easily remain outside of the biblical story. But if you reload the word so that it means temptation, desires run amok, or voluntary slavery, then Scripture comes alive.

Most words are neither good nor bad. But some words and their meanings are more easily assimilated by Scripture, and some tend to resist biblical oversight. You, of course, want addicts to find themselves on every page of Scripture. To that end, you will be alert to words such as *addictions* and *cravings* that, though they can be easily understood biblically, take some extra work to establish the links. The method you use to bring all things under the oversight of God's Word can be

flexible. Some people prefer to define terms up front. Others prefer to let Scripture gradually demonstrate its interpretive power.

OFFERING HOPE

All the basics should be here: reading Scripture, prayer, confession, and hope through knowing Jesus Christ and responding to him. The means of change for addicts are the same as they are for everyone else. To go in search of a new strategy to deal with addictions would be to say that God has not said enough to us in Scripture. Your job, ultimately, is to help the members of your group see that there is genuine hope and freedom in the gospel of Jesus Christ. A big part of that will be helping them to see where God is *already* at work in their lives. So be alert: watch for evidence of progress, and encourage your group members by telling them what you see.

One last thing: all of the material from your group members' guides is the main text here in this facilitator's guide. The leader-specific material in this guide is set off by an arrow. You will notice that they get less frequent as the book progresses. That is intentional: as you get deeper into this study, you as the study leader won't need my guidance as much. Or rather, you need God-given discernment more than you need any additional guidance you could get from a leader's note. Every group is different, and members will progress at different rates. As you moderate the discussion, pray for wisdom and discernment to see how best to offer hope to the members of your group.

Crossroads will give you the opportunity to be a blessing to people who need the hope that God offers in Christ. And you can expect to be blessed yourself as you see God's faithfulness at work.

A FEW PRELIMINARIES

GROUPS ARE LIKE A SMALL CHURCH. In the simple act of meeting together, men and women are saying that they need help. Without the help of Scripture and other people, they lose their way and go blind to the mixed motives of their hearts. When men and women attend a group, they are making a step of humility, which is a wonderful and necessary first step when attacking any addiction.

Meeting together is normal—lots of people do such things. But it is also extraordinary. You are meeting in the name of Jesus; you are meeting in order to know Jesus. That alone is dramatic evidence that God is on the move, and you have the opportunity to remind men and women of that spiritual reality. Be sure to let them know: their presence in the group is evidence of God's power and love for them.

The structure of a group can vary. If you are meeting with only one other person, you will have less structure. You could use this book as a guide for discussion. Read together parts that either of you highlighted. When something doesn't make sense, pray for wisdom.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

The larger the group, the greater the need for some structure. Senates have their parliamentary procedures, committees their Robert's Rules of Order, and teachers their lesson plans and classroom rules. For those who struggle with addictions, structure can help because addicts, once they start talking, have a lot to say.

There can be a designated leader or rotating chairpersons, and the order of the meeting can vary, depending on the interests and needs of the group. It can include any of the following:

- A predetermined time to start and stop
- A statement of purpose—this is a nice opportunity for you to consider why you are meeting together and put that into words.

Aim to be brief. For example, “We need help, God gives help, and he uses people.”

- Prayer
- A short passage of Scripture that is relevant to the meeting’s topic
- A testimony. Consider ending the testimony by asking the person how the group can pray for him or her, but be careful to keep the time from being a group counseling session. It is hard enough to share something shameful, such as an addiction. An advice free-for-all could be confusing at best and could easily push the person away. If the person has no accountability partner, you could talk after the meeting and suggest someone who could be a mentor.
- A brief summary about the step discussed in the meeting
- Group responses, action plans, or questions about the step. Keep comments brief.
- Prayer for one another. In a large group, you could write requests for prayer on a 3x5 card and distribute them to group members.
- A hymn
- A benediction. One of the shocking things about God is that he desires to bless his people. The blessing from Number 6:24–26 is one example.

“Getting Started” is a step. Have your friend or friends (let’s use “friend” rather than “addict”) read aloud the parts that are particularly relevant. They can insert brief commentary.

GETTING STARTED

DO ANY OF THESE STATEMENTS FIT?

- You feel out of control. What began as an escape from the hassles of life has become hazardous. Something—drugs, alcohol, gambling, food, sex—is taking over. You feel like its slave.
- You still love your addiction, but it is no longer friendly. You think it is time for a change.
- You think it is time for change—you want to leave your addiction—but you aren't sure how to change. You have already tried a few strategies, and they didn't work.
- Someone told you that you'd *better* change.
- You are sick and tired of the lies, broken relationships, and nagging conscience that accompany all addictions.
- You are already off and running, already leaving your addiction behind.

Whichever fits, welcome to reality. You are closing in on it.


 Reality = life as God interprets it.

Reality is not as bad as you think. Yes, the world around you can be miserable at times. It can be miserable *most* of the time, as a matter of fact. You have known that misery. Otherwise, you wouldn't have preferred an altered reality. But there is more to reality than what you see. Usually you are looking through glasses that are smudged, scratched, and out of focus, and things don't look good. But reality—true reality—is better than you think.


Your addiction has taken you to the woodshed for a good whuppin'. At those times it is hard to see hints of beauty, goodness, justice, love, and joy, that are always peeking out of this life, but they are still there.

Let me put it this way: What if you were invited to the greatest feast ever? What if you received a promise of great treasure? Would that be

enough to lure you away from an addictive way of life? It, at least, would get your attention.


 It is never too soon to entice someone with a new vision of wonderful things. Read the first nine chapters of Proverbs, and you will find a series of warnings and inducements, all given by a wise man who is savvy about the human heart. All these inducements find their fullest expression in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Think of this book as a treasure map. At times you are reluctant to give up your addiction, in which case a map, even a map to someplace beautiful, isn't powerful enough to guide you. Yet at other times you are sick and tired of being owned by something that is killing you, and you are ready to leave it behind. The problem at those times is that you simply don't know how to get away. Every trail seems to loop right back to where you began. It is as though the object of your addiction sucks you into its gravitational pull and there is no defense against it. The purpose of the steps ahead is to orient you and direct you to a path of change that has been proven to transform people.

 This, of course, is not to tout *Crossroads* as the answer. God's Word, applied by his Spirit, transforms.

A few points before you get started.


First, *your struggle is a common one*. Don't begin with the idea that your experience is out of the ordinary. It is, of course, unique—no one completely understands your struggle (not even you). Still, we are all cut from the same cloth. All of us, if we are truly honest, would have to acknowledge a familiarity with that tug of addictions. A lot of *wanting* is in the human heart.

 This is self-evident: addicts want more. But this is also a radical statement that cuts across the grain of much of the teaching on addiction. Addicts are victimized by addictions, but they also want them. Their hearts are always active.


The desire for drugs, alcohol, sex, and food are the more dramatic ones, but they aren't fundamentally different from our cravings for comfort, significance, relationship, money, love, and so on. Try to find one person who has successfully and consistently said no to any of those wants. You won't succeed.

If you consider yourself a special case—the worst addict, the most victimized—stop and think about what you are really saying. Right below the surface is the idea, *Whatever worked for other people is not going to work for me*. And right below that idea is the private thought, *I am not going to change*.

You might be saying, “I *can’t* change.” You are afraid to get your hopes up for what could be another failure. Or you might be saying, “I *won’t* change.” You virtually dare people and programs to take their best shot at you so you can show them that they are not as good as advertised. Either way, you have already decided that nothing will help. You are certain that you are not normal, so normal treatments (this book, for instance) won’t help. You may genuinely hope that *something* will come along and be the answer, but you suspect it never will.


 Voluntary slavery is one of the paradoxes of the human heart that is apparent in addiction. This paragraph, again, emphasizes the *voluntary* nature of the heart.

If that’s you—if you believe that your case is unique—perhaps you still love your addiction more than you love anything else. That doesn’t mean that a guide such as this is a waste of time. It just means that you are starting at a disadvantage.

 This sounds blunt, but addicts don’t mind your being blunt. They mind hypocrisy, and they mind bluntness without love, as they should.

Second, *the path you will be traveling has much to do with God*. That should come as no surprise. Books about addictions always say something about God. But much more is happening between you and God than you may think.


- You will be surprised to learn how you avoid him.
- You will be surprised to learn how he pursues you.
- You will be surprised that you know him more than you think.
- You will be surprised that you know him less than you think.

 Addicts have a tendency to be numb. “Surprise” might rouse them. Also, it is a reminder that you don’t want to say things that seem worn out and predictable. You will be considering the words of Christ, and they are the words of a cosmic revolution.

If you find yourself shutting down when the conversation turns to God, don't just wait for the conversation to move to something else. When you shut down at the mention of someone's name, the issue is *not* that he is irrelevant to you. The issue is that he is more relevant to you than you are comfortable with. Take a quick look, and you will probably find a history of misunderstandings and fractures in the relationship. Your addictions are linked to your relationship to God more than you realize. You can't ignore that.

Third, if at all possible, *do this work with someone else*. Addictions are private, so doing this in public is a way to take a stand against your addiction. God has always planned for people to live and grow in a community, where we give and receive, pray for others and get prayed for, and learn wisdom and offer it.


This book has its roots in a book called *Addiction—A Banquet in the Grave*.

 This book overlaps with *Crossroads*. It would be worthwhile for you to read.

The image of the banquet comes from the Book of Proverbs. Just insert “Addiction” for “The woman Folly” and it will make sense.

The woman Folly [Addiction] is loud;
 she is undisciplined and without knowledge.
 She sits at the door of her house,
 on a seat at the highest point of the city,
 calling out to those who pass by,
 who go straight on their way.
 “Let all who are simple come in here!”
 she says to those who lack judgment.
 “Stolen water is sweet;
 food eaten in secret is delicious!”
*But little do they know that the dead are there,
 that her guests are in the depths of the grave.*
 (Proverbs 9:13–18, emphasis added)

Vivid, accurate, and tragic. Addictions lure you.

 This emphasizes the slavery side of voluntary slavery.

They look attractive until the lights are turned on and you see the ugliness, horror, and death swirling around you. This is not the banquet you were hoping for.

But Dame Folly's banquet in the grave isn't the only banquet. There is another one. *The* God has invited you to *The* Banquet. This banquet is in his honor, and he has picked up the tab so you can come.


Who would have thought? The treatment for addictions is to want something better than your addictions.

“Come, all you who are thirsty,
 come to the waters;
 and you who have no money,
 come, buy and eat!
 Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread,
 and your labor on what does not satisfy?
 Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
 and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.”

(Isaiah 55:1–2)


Inviting, isn't it?

 The gospel is a universal invitation. The simple requirement for this banquet is that you bring nothing. You acknowledge your need for Jesus and believe that he is, indeed, the risen Lord who has paid everything on your behalf. Does anyone think he or she is too bad and unworthy to come? The invitation is especially directed to the marginalized and unworthy, such as murderers (King David), adulterers (King David again), liars (the apostle Peter), and all others who have nothing to bring.


STEP 1:

Listen

MAIN IDEA: The path away from addiction begins by waking up and listening, really listening. Such listening also goes by another name: it is called humility.

 For background reading, consider chapters 1–3 of *Addictions—A Banquet in the Grave*.

The rumors are true. There really is a way through the addictive fog. When you consider the number of times you tried to stop and then went back to your addiction, you can easily believe that life is a revolving stage, always returning to the same place.

 Scripture is quite realistic when it comes to addictions (Proverbs 23:29–35). Addicts can be like dogs that return to their vomit (Proverbs 26:11). By stating the obvious about addictions, you are creating a culture where men and women can speak openly about their struggles. That alone can be hopeful, and hope is what you are offering.

But there really is a guidebook to life, and, contrary to what you think, it is available to everyone, including you.

Wisdom calls aloud in the street,
 she raises her voice in the public squares;
 at the head of the noisy streets she cries out,
 in the gateways of the city she makes her speech.
 (Proverbs 1:20–21)

Wisdom means knowing how life is supposed to work—how it works best. To get it, you just have to listen.

TWO VOICES

But listening to Wisdom is not that easy. As you know, another voice calls out in the street. That voice is Folly.


 Here is the crossroads we all face.

Folly. Folly—also known as Addiction—offers the flash and cash. Consider what she promises, and it's no wonder she is difficult to resist:


- Something secret
- Quick money
- Pleasure
- Rest, relaxation, and ease
- No problems (at least for right now)
- “Friends” who will encourage you in your foolish path

It’s what she *doesn’t* say that is the killer.

She cries out, “Now! Now! Now! You can have all this now!” Who wouldn’t listen to such a promise even if she hasn’t delivered? But here is reality. Her speech is a trap that is barely camouflaged. As she invites you to her banquet, she tries to shield your eyes from the death all around you. The stench is masked by cheap perfume. Even while you become contaminated, as the disease spreads and your own flesh begins to rot, she promises that *more* of your addiction is the only tonic that will heal. Death is her trade. Lies are her native tongue.

 These warning images come from Proverbs 9. Warnings are not condemnation. Don’t be afraid to offer warnings; when you love someone you want to scare them away from death and induce them to life.

Wisdom. It would be nice if you could simply say, “Oops, I lost my way,” then start following the voice of wisdom. But as you know, the work in front of you will be a battle. Think of the cartoons where a person has two miniature creatures—a “Mini-Me” on each shoulder—whispering in either ear: foolishness in one ear and wisdom in the other. Foolishness usually wins. Foolishness is the hip contrast to wisdom. Who wouldn’t follow it? From a distance, foolishness sounds ridiculous. It makes promises it can’t keep, and it has nothing to give except death anyway. But close up, when it conjures up a mirage that matches our desires, foolishness sounds like life itself.

 From a distance versus up close—that will be an important distinction. Perhaps the addictive object is temporarily out of reach, and your friends have a false sense of power and clarity. They should remember that when the object of their affection comes close, they could easily go temporarily insane. It is time to be afraid and get prepared.

Wisdom, or at least the stereotype of it, seems boring by comparison. Slow and steady. How many ways can you make “Don’t do it”

sound interesting? But wisdom doesn't just fade away when it loses to the slick appeal of foolishness. Instead, wisdom goes into overdrive. It speaks more beautifully, exposes the ugliness of folly, and makes promises that it will keep. Wisdom woos you. It beckons. It persuades.


Do not forget my teaching,
 but keep my commands in your heart,
 for they will prolong your life many years
 and bring you prosperity. (Proverbs 3:1–2)

“Lay hold of my words with all your heart;
 keep my commands and you will live.
 Get wisdom, get understanding;
 do not forsake my words or swerve from them.
 Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;
 love her, and she will watch over you.
 Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.
 Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
 Esteem her, and she will exalt you;
 embrace her, and she will honor you.” (Proverbs 4:4–8)


My son, pay attention to what I say;
 listen closely to my words.
 Do not let them out of your sight,
 keep them within your heart;
 for they are life to those who find them
 and health to a man's whole body. (Proverbs 4:20–22)

Listen and you might hear hope, which you may not have heard for years. Wisdom actually seeks you. Your job is to hear the voice of wisdom and learn to love it.

The Source of Wisdom. As you can already tell, wisdom isn't a system of steps to memorize. Wisdom is quite personal. It comes from God; it is his voice. You already knew that, but it still might surprise you. Perhaps you thought God was peeved and waiting for you to finally get it right; *then* he *might* grace you with his presence. Or maybe *you* were peeved at God and waiting for *him* to finally get it right. Or both.

 Which one? Let the group respond.


In any case, you probably aren't accustomed to thinking of God as the One who goes out into the most dangerous streets, in the middle of the night, searching for you and calling out your name.

 Your friends might never have had *anyone* fight for them. They might not be able to imagine that anyone, including yourself, ever would. If they are awake, this should surprise them.

Perhaps you didn't know that when you veer off into your addiction, he ratchets up his persuasive appeal a few notches.

TWO KINGDOMS

God is the voice of wisdom. He invites you to his kingdom. Your relationship with him is an uneasy and strained one, so it will take some work.

 *Wisdom, folly, kingdoms*—these are not everyday words, but try to stay with them. They are bridges between addiction and the truths of Scripture.

That other voice? Listen to how familiar it sounds. The cartoons have it partly correct: the voice of your addiction really is your own Mini-Me. That's *your* voice you're hearing. Yes, other voices join in, but it is, at least, your own voice. How else would it know you so well? How else would it know exactly how to entice you?

It is the voice of your desires.


The map is now in front of you. The path you are on always comes to a crossroads. One path leads to folly and death, the other to wisdom and life. Study the map, and you will notice that you are actually walking toward a kingdom. You are traveling either toward the kingdom where God is your King and Father, or you are committed to a rival kingdom in which you try to manage life on your own, apart from God. In other words, these decisions are about allegiances. Addiction is the battleground where your loyalties are revealed.

Here is where addicts have an advantage over most people. Addicts know the deeper reality that life is set up according to kingdoms. Addicts know that there isn't one square inch of neutral territory. Everyone is on the way to one kingdom or the other. This may sound like religious gobbledygook to many people, but you know different, even if

you aren't sure what you believe about God. You know from your own experience that this is reality. You know all about the crossroads: you have lived with the Mini-Mes battling for your soul on either shoulder. You know that your addiction is a matter of loyalty, of decisions for God or against him. You even know that the central question—not just in addiction but in all of life—is, *Who will I worship? Who will I bow to?* After all, that's what you do with exalted kings.

Some bow to God. If they do, they can't take any credit for it. God pursued them first, in the same way he is pursuing you. Others worship themselves and their own desires through the pursuit of money, security, comfort, prestige, power, drugs, or sex. What distinguishes you from most other false worshipers is that you have chosen to worship something illegal, something more dangerous, or something that carries a higher possibility of bad consequences.


? How do you feel about being identified as a false worshiper? Do you believe it? Do you believe that your life is ultimately about kingdom allegiances?

 These truths might not resonate with your friend or group members just yet. If not, try to understand why, but remember, there is no reason to debate. At this point, just let them continue to receive more light.

TAKE ACTION

The stakes are high. Listen carefully. Two different voices call out to you. It may not feel like it, but you still have the capacity to hear the voice of God who wants to guide you into wisdom and life. You will find that God speaks plainly, not in code. To hear God, you don't need any special skills. You just have to listen to him.

Do something. Listening and action go together. If you are ready to listen, you are ready to act. If you are *not* ready to act, you are not ready to listen.

 When God listens to his people, he does something. He acts. You might want to point out this truth as a way to establish the connection between the Lord and your friend.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law [God's words] that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but *doing* it—he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:22–25)

? How would you explain this piece of wisdom?

Are you ready to act? The next step will address more about this. But when it comes to addiction, the strategy is to act NOW. Take a step.

Addictions generate a lot of momentum. To act against them seems like a superhuman task. As a matter of fact, it *is* a superhuman task; and you aren't feeling as if you have any superpowers. You're in a rut. You instinctively follow your desires wherever they lead you. You don't question, don't think, and don't resist. But no matter how dead and powerless you feel, at least you are *not* dead. That's good. Change will not be easy. It won't seem natural at first, and you will be sorely tempted to give up after an hour or two. But that resistance is part of the process of becoming a real human being.

You need to do *something*. Keep a pen handy. Write all over this book—in the margins, in the blank spaces. Go ahead and cover it with graffiti. Argue, write down questions, state your disagreements, and jot down ideas on how to put up a fight against temptations. You have been lulled to sleep by Folly. It is time to wake up (Ephesians 5:14)!

Are you awake yet?

How can you tell?

Here are some ways you can take action.

Talk to God. Start by asking for help. Admit it now to God. Simply say, “I need help.”



It sounds easy, but we can only pray because the Spirit empowers us. If any of your friends respond with prayer, remind them that they are not acting like mere humans, but they are acting like children of God. One of your jobs is to point out the movement of the Spirit.

Have you said it?


You may have heard that your problems are usually rooted in your selfishness and pride. Wisdom comes when we take steps of humility. Humility acknowledges a need for help.

Being humbled is not the same thing as being shamed or embarrassed. Being humbled means that you are getting the knack of being human the way God intended. The addict's motto is, "My will, my way." The more human alternative is, "Your will, God. I need help and I am listening."

Talk to another person. You should talk to another person for two reasons: First, by talking about what you have just heard, you will know if you really heard anything. Second, you may need some practice asking for help. If you ask God for help, it should be easy to ask a mere human like yourself for help.

? Who can you talk to?

? What will you ask?

 Your friends are already speaking with you. So once again you can remind them that there is nothing ordinary about this action step. It is evidence that God is on the move. Tell them that. Of course, they can also talk to another person.


Read. If you want more background on the two voices and the two kingdoms, read the first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs, which is found in the Old Testament of the Bible. You could also read its New Testament counterpart, the Book of James. Then tell someone about what you read.

? Will you begin to read it? Who will you discuss it with?


You probably have all kinds of true and false ideas about the Bible—everyone comes to the Bible with lots of assumptions. Regardless of what you believe, the Bible will be your map, compass, guide, eyes and ears, comfort, defense, ammunition, and even your food.

One reason people avoid the Bible is that it makes them feel guilty, and most people feel they have enough of that already. It is much more helpful to think of the Bible as a light in the darkness. In the darkness you can do forbidden things and believe that nobody sees. That feels like freedom at first, but eventually darkness comes to feel like an isolated prison. Light is always good. It might make you squint. It might make you feel exposed. But it is always good.

Your interest in the Bible will be a gauge. It will measure your desire for change.

 Another reason people avoid Scripture is that it seems ancient and hard to understand. The passages mentioned here are immensely practical, which make them easier to engage. But you are taking small steps toward reading the most important sections of Scripture—the stories of Jesus in the New Testament. Scripture is very personal. It is not a series of self-help steps; it is God's autobiography.

Run. Since the crossroads you face is about life and death, here is some sound advice: RUN. Run like a maniac. Run away. Run from death and everything that it touches.

 The farther we are from the addictive object, the better we are able to hear truth. Addictions are loud. Get close to them, and you can't hear anything else. If you are leading a larger group, suggest that some members might still be deaf to the truth because the object of their addiction is so close and available. You could also ask how many are still walking randomly in the vicinity of their addictive object. Anyone who acknowledges that has just made a step away from his or her addiction.

? What would it mean to run from your addiction?

? What people or places are contaminated by your addiction?

? How will you run from those people and those places? Don't forget, if you get near them, they pull you toward death.
Change your phone number.
Have all the computer sites you hit sent to someone else.
Throw out your secret stash.

? Who will you tell of your plan?

Even if you aren't yet sure what you are running toward—even if you don't know where the safe haven is—you still have to run.

Be afraid. It is best to go into this with a little bit of fear. After all, life and death are being set before you. But don't just fear your addiction. Have a bigger fear. Be afraid of YOU.

You are tuned to folly's frequency. You are programmed to hear the lies and believe them.


Though you can see the disaster of addiction when you are away from it, as soon as you get close, it starts to look good again.

You think you can manage life on your own.

Though independence is impossible, you prefer the myth of independence to living under the God who created you.

? What are some reasons why you should be afraid of YOU?

Welcome to the path of wisdom and hope. It is honest and clear. You have good reasons to look forward to traveling on it.

 Do you love your friends? Have you decided together on how you can pray for them? In other words, have they been able to ask for prayer, and have you been able to take those requests and anchor them to particular promises of God?

Are those who need extra help getting paired with someone who has practiced running from addiction?