**Fire Fighters Week 7: Fighting Drugs**

Welcome to week 7 of the Fire Fighters series. We have covered some pretty hectic issues in this series already, including: Fighting Anger, Pressure, Bullying, Anxiety, Depression and Suicide. Please go to our FB page if you’ve missed out on any of the issues.

This week we are going to learn how to fight drugs.

So we’ve been dealing with a couple of superheroes in the past couple of weeks. If there’s anything all of them have in common – it’s that they’ve all got a weakness. Anybody want to guess who our Superhero for this week is?

It is Hancock!

Video: Hancock Official Trailer. Get it on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkX1VuXLRSc

John Hancock is an alcoholic, with superhero powers…including flight, invincibility, and super-strength.

Though he uses his powers to stop criminals in his current residence of Los Angeles - his activity inadvertently causes millions of dollars in property damage due to his constant intoxication.

He’s a drunk! As a result, he is routinely jeered at the crime scenes. Hancock also ignores court subpoenas from the city of Los Angeles to address the property damage he has caused.

At one of these crime scenes Hancock meets PR specialist Ray who offers to improve Hancock’s public image and Hancock agrees.

This partnership later leads to a complete transformation, elevating him to a reformed superhero status where everyone loves him.

Before we understand why Hancock was addicted lets define who an addict is. The dictionary definition is: “..a person who is addicted to an activity, habit, or substance: a drug addict.”

One the other hand, the ‘actual’ habit of addiction is defined as: Becoming physiologically or psychologically dependent on an addictive substance such as alcohol or a narcotic.

Hancock’s drug of choice was his alcohol. Hancock becomes so dependent on his alcohol that it hinders his ability to help people. The true purpose for which he was created.

According to the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, 1 in 10 South Africans have an addiction problem and their top drugs of choice are dagga and alcohol.

Drug and alcohol addiction does not discriminate. Take a look at how many famous people have battled with drug and alcohol addiction - Here are just some of the guys in Hollywood who have been addicted to drugs. Robert Downey, Ben Affleck, Charlie Sheen, Michael Jackson, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Gerald Butler.

Here are some of the ladies who have also been addicted: Lindsay Lohan, Whitney Houston, Amy Winehouse, Kisten Dunst, Mark Kate Olson.

Sharing: Have you or someone close to you, taken drugs?

Let’s begin by understanding drugs.

Video: Teenage Drug Stories. Get it on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOLb21bii-A

Many people use drugs as a coping mechanism to deal with life - to ease stress, anxiety, or depression.

Some first try drugs out of curiosity,

Some first try drugs to have a good time

Or because friends are doing it,

And also because society makes it look cool

You have Weeds – the TV series.

And Breaking Bad which is the award winning series about a Chemistry teacher who recruits his former student to cook meth with him.

I am sure most of you know who Russell Brand the actor is. Here is a video interview he had recently where he talks about his new Say No foundation and also reasons why he did drugs.

Video: Russell Brand interview on Drugs. Get it on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOKsooC9Sv4

Are You A Potential Drug Addict? There are many risk factors that increase your vulnerability to drug addiction: (1) Family history of addiction. (2) Abuse, neglect, or other traumatic experiences in childhood. (3) Mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. (4) Early use of drugs.

How do drugs affect you physically?

You neglect your responsibilities at school, at home or at work. Skipping class. Failing your exams continually because of your drug use

Acting uncharacteristically isolated, withdrawn, angry, or depressed

Misusing money, valuables, or prescriptions. Unexplained need for money.

Engaging in secretive or suspicious behavior. Demanding more privacy; locking doors; avoiding eye contact; sneaking around

Your drug use starts to cause problems in your relationships – fights with friends and family, loss of friends.

How do drugs affect you spiritually?

The bible says that YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Honor God with your bodies.* (1 Corinthians 1:16-20).

If indeed the presence of God dwells in us, we must clean house. We must ensure that God’s living room is clean and tidy enough for him to come in and chill with us. When we abuse drugs or alcohol we defile our own bodies created to be God’s temple.

Addiction is an Idol. As an addict all you attention is focused on your next fix. Satisfying this deep desire to cope in life by filling that empty space. Thus turning your addiction into this Idol craving your attention. Taking your focus away from God.

*“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5)*

Anything that we use to take the place of God in our lives to bring us comfort or relief, to fulfill or define us other than God himself – that thing is an idol.

Not all idols are addictions but all addictions are idols.

You become a Slave to sin. “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.” (Romans 6: 5-7)

You start to surround yourself with other addicts. *Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”* (1 Corinthians 15:33)

The unfortunate truth about addiction, is that addiction leads to server consequences in life. For Hancock, it landed him in jail. Even if he went willingly, it forced him to reconsider his behavior and how he treated the people of LA.

Lance Armstrong was know as the world’s greatest cyclist - he had won the Tour De France – 7 times.

And then his drug problem was revealed. Imagine if he hadn’t taken the drugs?

Lance Armstrong was recently interviewed by Oprah.

Video: Lance Armstrong admitting to using drugs. Get it on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N\_0PSZ59Aws

Addiction is not something that just affects you – it affects the lives of those around you! Imagine how it affected Lance, his wife (who left him) and his children.

Video: Lance Armstrong on Telling His Son. Get it on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vq8NgepsFg8

Does anyone remember Marion Jones? The Gold Winning Olympian. After pleading guilty to doping charges, Marion found herself in Jail.

Hancock was created for a specific purpose. He had a destiny. His addiction kept him from his destiny.

Addiction takes the focus off our journey, the true purpose for which God called each and every one of us for. Addiction affects not just us, but the reason for which we were created. “*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:11*-12).

We all have a Purpose. A Destiny. A Divine Calling.

There is hope. None of your stories have to be like the stories I’ve told today.

So how do we go about fighting drugs?

1. Decide to Abstain. JUST SAY NO! Don’t start doing drugs!

“He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.” (2 Timothy 1:9)

2. Manage Free Time. Focus on the good things in your life and spend time doing them. Spend time with family and friends, read a book, watch a movie, spend sometime outdoors – I promise. It’s good for you

“Idle hands are the devil’s workshop; idle lips are his mouthpiece.” (Proverbs 16:27)

3. Deal With Stress. Take a break from technology!!! – Seriously! Take up exercise. Listen to calming music. Enjoy the beauty of your environment – walk in the garden or the park – enjoy a beautiful view or landscape. If you’re stressed talk to someone. We often become overwhelmed by issues in life. Some of these issue’s we talked about in the last few weeks: Angers, Anxiety, Depression, Suicide. If you’re feeling overwhelmed talk to someone who’s willing to listen.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

And remember that Jesus will ultimately carry all your burdens: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

Recovering from addiction is a long process, one that requires time, commitment, motivation, and support. If you (or someone you are discipling) are using drugs, the next four steps will be really helpful for you to follow:

4. Admit the Problem – in the Alcoholics Anonymous program one of the most important stages in the recovery process is getting to the point when you admit in front of the whole group that you are an alcoholic!

5. Identify the Triggers. Figure out what triggers your abuse: Certain places, people or situations may give you a strong urge to abuse. You need to avoid them. Minimize your triggers as much as possible.

6. Look for Support (Family, Friends or a Support Group). Seek support from Family and Friends. It is extraordinarily difficult to quit all by yourself. Don’t rely on someone else to quit with you. Avoid people and friends that use or talk about drugs in front of you.

If necessary, join a support group. You are not alone. Other recovering addicts will encourage you to share your story and talk to people who have been through your struggle too.

In South Africa an excellent resource is Narcotics Anonymous: http://www.na.org.za/

7. Go for Counseling. Find a Therapist or a Counselor. Look for someone who specializes in helping people overcome addictions, and who has plenty of experience and a good track record.

Being able to work one-on-one with someone you trust is an especially good option if you're not as interested in sharing your experience in a group setting.

Here is a summary of the steps we have explored to fight drugs: *Decide to Abstain; Manage Free Time; Deal With Stress; Admit the Problem; Identify the Triggers; Look for Support and Go for Counseling.*

Let’s Pray

Next week we are looking at fighting breakups and Thabile will be preaching.