



UTREACH CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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Reflection on Addiction

The class I have been taking for the last several weeks has been counseling for addictions. Addiction is one of the greatest reasons that I wanted to pursue this degree and educate myself because I felt so in over my head when it came to helping street-connected youth who are addicting to substances like shoe glue, paint thinner, marijuana, and cocaine. During this class, I have learned so much about how addiction develops neurologically and also how closely tied trauma is to addiction. Honduras and much of the US tends to see addiction as a moral issue. You just need to stop taking the substance to stop sinning. This judgmental stance may mean well, but oftentimes, it is an easy way of not walking with an addict through recovery and isolating them with their struggles. It also can cause so much shame for individuals who are trying to overcome their addiction but are struggling. In reality, addiction affects the whole person. It stems from self-medicating deep wounds that haven't healed, undiagnosed mental illness, seeking spiritual connection, and biological factors such as genetics and the reward centers of the brain. This class has renewed my compassion for this population because after experiencing so much heartbreak working with street kids previously and feeling like I was fighting a losing battle with their addictions, I was burnt out and felt too helpless. In the midst of this class, I have

News from Honduras

been able to have some good conversations with Josuan. You may recall that Josuan is a young man that Raúl and I began helping almost nine years ago. I had him in Teen Challenge for a full year, and he lived with me when he got out. But, ultimately, he went back to the streets. Since then, we have seen some improvements that may seem inconsequential but are small victories. Josuan has been working for Raúl at the tire shop for the last five years or so. His life is still very unstable in that he often has to move because of not paying his rent, or he constantly has injuries due to his drug use, but he hasn't had more than a few days on the streets for the last couple of years. For someone who lived on the streets for seven years, that is a big deal. He is still struggling with drug addiction. He may go for a few days or weeks sober but relapses often. Truth be told, given his background of so much trauma that includes abuse, extreme poverty, abandonment, violence, and prostitution, when I look back over how we have tried to help him in the past, I know that we just did not have all of the resources to offer that he needed. (We still don't.) He started using drugs at the age of 9—his brain developed around the role substances play in his emotional regulation. I still don't know how to help Josuan at this time. We maintain relationship with him, and we haven't given up on him and the work God is doing in his life. Please join us in praying for him and his recovery. *Sarah and Raúl*