

LESSON 3

American Character Builders Opioid Awareness Faith-Based Curriculum

CONNECTION FROM THE VIDEO

You may have noticed people from all walks of life represented in the American Character Builders' opioid awareness video. This is because the epidemic of opioid abuse has impacted a wide range of people regardless of age, social status, or community.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

No one is exempt from the temptations and pitfalls of opioid abuse. Therefore, we must prepare for temptation by following the strategy from scripture - flee, pursue, and fight.

INTRODUCTION

Ask your group to take a moment and think of people who have been trapped in opioid abuse. This could be people they know or those who are well known (celebrities, athletes, etc.).

Now ask your group the following series of questions:

- ***Are all these people from one economic background (wealthy, poor)?***
- ***Are all these people from one ethnic background?***
- ***Are all these people from one place in America?***

The point of this exercise is to show that opioid abuse and addiction affects people from all walks of life, as illustrated in American Character Builders' opioid awareness video. Because of this reality, we understand that no one is exempt from the temptation of drug abuse and addiction. Therefore, everyone should be ready to face this temptation with the strategy that scripture suggests. You might say something like:

- Opioid abuse and addiction could affect all of us, regardless of how much money you have, what kind of family you come from, or the community that you reside in. It even impacts people who have faith in God. We need to be ready to fight against this kind of temptation in our own lives.

SCRIPTURE

1 Timothy 6:11-12

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Apostle Paul mentored Timothy during his ministry. First Timothy is a letter Paul wrote to Timothy to encourage him as a young leader in the church. In the verses leading up to 1 Timothy 6:11-12, Paul outlines many temptations that could come against Timothy - envy, slander, the love of money, and more. These are all common temptations everyone faces. Though Paul never mentions substance abuse, the strategy he suggests for standing against temptation certainly applies.

LESSON CONTENT

I. FLEE - 1 Timothy 6:11a

Paul has just listed a number of temptations that come against a young man like Timothy. Now he is giving him practical advice about overcoming temptation. The first course of action he gives is to “flee these things.” In other words, run in a different direction. He encourages young Timothy to get away from the things that could tempt him away from God’s best for his life.

Ask your students the following question:

- *If you were near a cliff with a 3000 ft drop, how close would you stand to the edge?*

The point is to get your students thinking that being near disaster is a bad idea. We are wise to keep our distance from anything that could threaten our lives. The same principle applies to temptation.

Often, those who end up in opioid abuse didn’t go looking for those drugs. They could have become available as part of a prescription, from a friend, or from a parent dealing with pain. While these drugs have their proper use, we have to flee the temptation to abuse them. This could mean getting rid of the rest of a prescription when you don’t need it any longer. It could mean refusing to take them from a friend who offers it. We shouldn’t flirt with temptation. Flee from it.

II. PURSUE - 1 Timothy 6:11b

The second piece of wisdom Paul gives his young protégé is to “pursue.” What are the things Paul encourages Timothy to pursue? - Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness.

Ask your students to take a few of those terms and define them. Have them put those concepts in their own words so they will understand what they mean and what it looks like to pursue them.

The things Paul encourages us to pursue are God's priorities for His followers. It's not enough to simply refuse to be around temptation and flee. We have to choose to be near to God and His priorities for our life. As we pursue these things, we experience the joy of living the life God intends for us, a life full of meaning.

Many people find themselves in addiction because they are struggling with finding meaning, purpose, and enjoyment in life. As one addiction counselor commented, "People are coping with some really hard things and they are looking for something that will help them out . . . We have to show them there are better ways of coping."

While following God and His priorities will not always make our lives perfect, He does promise to make our lives better. As we pursue God, we find what we need most in life and we do not have to turn to a mind-altering substance to fill the void.

III. FIGHT - 1 Timothy 6:12

Paul says dealing with temptation can be a fight. He encourages us to "Fight the good fight of the faith." Battling temptation isn't easy. Fleeing and pursuing sound like simple concepts, but they can be difficult to apply when we come under pressure. This is why Paul tells Timothy that he must be prepared when the battle comes.

Ask your students to think of ways they can fight the temptation toward opioid abuse. Ask them to think of ways your group can help fight the battle against this epidemic problem in your community.

Ultimately, our courage and strength to fight the battle against temptation comes from our relationship with God. Paul says, "Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

Timothy knew God through his faith in Jesus Christ. He had confessed his faith publicly. Paul encouraged him to lean into his relationship with God so that he could find help and strength to fight against temptation. When we flee temptation and pursue God, He promises to aid us in the power of the Spirit in the fight we face against temptation. We can only fight this battle in God's strength!

Opioid abuse (and addiction) is not just a cultural problem - it is spiritual problem (one that cannot be solved without God). Faith in God is essential to overcoming any temptation. If you are a follower of Jesus, run to Him and ask for His strength to help you battle the temptations you face.

If you are not a person of faith, God desires to help you as well! Many mistakenly believe that you have to never succumb to temptation in order for God to accept you. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Jesus came because we were not perfect, because we disobeyed God, because we were sinners. He came for the purpose of paying the price for our sin. Even those who have faith in God struggle to obey Him and sometimes fail. When we trust in Jesus, we receive grace and mercy for all our faults and failures!

Paul wrote, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) Jesus knew that our penalty for sin would be death, so He died in our place on the cross. If we choose to believe in Him and surrender our lives to Him, we receive the free gift of eternal life with God. We also begin a relationship with God in which He strengthens us to stand against temptation in its many forms.

Share the gospel message with your students and call any who do not know God to respond to Jesus. Encourage them to let someone know about their decision so they can be encouraged to take next steps in their faith.

Close your time in Prayer. Invite your students to pray for:

- Strength to fight the good fight against temptation
- Those in your community who struggle with opioid abuse and addiction
- For God to move in power to draw people into a relationship with Himself so that others may experience freedom from temptation and addiction

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do we find it difficult to “flee” from temptation? Why do we find it difficult to do this with substance abuse?
- What are some steps you are taking to pursue God and His priorities for your life?
- How do you see our church getting involved in the fight against opioid addiction?
- Who can you share the Gospel message with so they may find their hope in Christ and not something else?

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