

# Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction

Ed Welch

*This article is an excerpt from the introduction to the Facilitator's Guide for Ed Welch's [Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction](#). In the Guide, Welch walks leaders through the process of loving, connecting with, and speaking truth to a group of addicts. This book contains helpful observations about the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual state common to most addicts. With access to Welch's solid theology on addiction and years of counseling experience, counselors, pastors, and others with a heart for hurting people can play an active role in God's restorative work in the lives of those enslaved to an addiction.*

## 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.
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- 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 to 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 in the margins. You will notice that the sidebars 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 sidebar. 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:
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- A short passage of Scripture that is relevant to the meeting's topic
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- A hymn
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<http://www.ccef.org/crossroads-step-step-guide-away-addiction>

(Dichotomist, Reformed sanctification, Nouthetic model - JBW)