

## session 8 study guide

# substance abuse involving friends or family

### message

When our friends and family members abuse drugs and alcohol, the consequences can be ugly. We can be the victim of their out-of-control behavior and/or verbal attacks. We can see them destroying those things that are good in their lives. We can be left to pick up the pieces.

But Jesus' message is clear: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35). Jesus calls us to the incredible task of showing love to everyone—friend or foe, family member or stranger, sober person or addict.

The book of Luke includes the story of "the good Samaritan," which demonstrates the kind of love God calls us to have for one another. Read the following passage in Luke 10:30-37. As you read, consider the following questions: (1) Why is it strange that the first two men passed the man without helping? (*Note: A Levite was a member of the tribe of Levi and was designated as an assistant to the Temple priests.*) (2) To what lengths did the Samaritan go to help the injured man?

*In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took*

*him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'*

*"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"*

*The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."*

*Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

## dig

If you're familiar with the story of the Good Samaritan, you'll remember that Jews and Samaritans did not like each other. In fact, Jews were so disgusted with Samaritans that they would walk hundreds of miles out of their way so that they wouldn't have to walk through Samaria. But in this story, it is the Samaritan man who goes out of his way and spends his time and money to help an injured Jewish man.

1. The Bible is full of verses that remind us that we need to help those in need. But the story of the Samaritan goes even further. What lesson can we take away from this story about helping others?

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2. Why is it strange that both the priest and the Levite passed the injured man by, not only ignoring him, but also actually walking on the other side of the street to get farther away from him?

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3. What steps did the Samaritan take to help the injured man?

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4. Describe the Samaritan's attitude about helping the injured Jewish man.

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5. How can we relate this passage to loving friends or family members who are dealing with drug or alcohol abuse?

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6. In the final verse of the passage, Jesus commands His listeners to go and show mercy in the same way that the Samaritan did. What is mercy?

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7. What would showing mercy to a friend or family member struggling with substance abuse look like? What actions would show mercy?

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### **apply**

Assume for a moment that you have a friend named Sean. Sean is a great person. He is doing well as a pitcher on the varsity baseball team and is well liked by his peers. Sean's funny personality makes him popular, and others think of him as the class clown. Lately, however, you've smelled alcohol on Sean's breath and heard rumors that he has been using marijuana.

So far, Sean's athletic abilities haven't been affected. His grades have slipped a little, but he definitely isn't flunking out. As one of Sean's best friends, you've noticed some subtle changes in his behavior. He's not as friendly when he has beer on his breath. In fact, sometimes he can be downright mean. He is also getting a little freer with his language, and he hangs out with girls who are known for sleeping around. You know it's been a hard year for him, because his mom and alcoholic dad finally split up after several really rough years together.

1. What are all the issues affecting Sean's life?

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2. What can you do to be a good friend to Sean?

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3. What advice would you give Sean about his actions?

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Now assume you have a friend named Laura. Laura tells you that she suspects her brother Mike is doing drugs. Though they used to practically be best friends, Laura and Mike have fallen away from each other and aren't as close as they used to be. Laura doesn't feel like she can say anything to him. "It's just a phase. I'm sure everything will work out fine," Laura says.

4. As Laura's friend, what advice would you give her?

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5. What steps could Laura take to help her brother?

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6. What are some ways or techniques you could use to start a conversation with a friend or family member about his or her substance abuse?

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7. Keep in mind that you can't force a person to stop using drugs or alcohol. The decision must be his or her own. So, what can you do to help a person with a drug or alcohol problem? Brainstorm a list of steps you could take to help a friend or family member dealing with substance abuse.

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### **reflect**

1. If you were to notice that a friend or family member was having a problem with drugs or alcohol, what would the natural tendency be to do?
- a. Back off the friendship
  - b. Confront the issues
  - c. Do nothing, as long as it didn't affect you
  - d. Preach at him or her
  - e. Encourage him or her to get some help
  - f. Other:

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2. Have you ever had to confront a friend or family member with a substance abuse problem? What did you say?

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3. What are the risks in confronting someone about his or her substance abuse problem?

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4. What are the risks in *not* confronting someone who has a substance abuse problem?

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5. Would it be easier for you to confront a Christian friend or a non-Christian friend? Why?

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6. If you were struggling with drugs and alcohol, do you have friends or family members in your life who would be there to intervene?

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7. Do you currently have someone in your life who you think (or know) is struggling with drugs or alcohol? List three actions that you could take to try to help that person.

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## meditation



God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.

PSALM 46:1