

Is Addiction the Same as Rebellion?

A better understanding of addiction can help us trust that, one day, the Lord will deliver us from bondage.

By **Destiny Yarbro**

In our fallen world, addiction is a frustrating and life-altering reality for some. When we use something excessively to escape life, such as food, prescription drugs, social media, gossiping, pornography, lying, gambling, or even exercising, we can easily find ourselves stuck in an addictive cycle.

As I have watched wonderful, loving people around me struggle with addiction—not just succumbing to wrong choices—I’ve turned to the scriptures and to current research on addiction to better understand these neurological impulses and compulsions.

The Weeds of Addiction

Navigating an addiction can be like tending a garden. We don’t weed once and expect to be done. We know more weeds will pop up, so we carefully and regularly pull out the weeds to protect the plants.

If we are struggling with an addiction, we might become discouraged when we relapse even after repenting

and seeking help. We may be surprised and frustrated that these temptations are especially strong after very happy or very sad periods of our lives. (Just like even more weeds tend to grow after a refreshing rain or a heavy storm.)

Addiction versus Willful Rebellion

I’ve found that Satan uses addiction as “proof” that we inherently desire evil, that we are doomed from the start, or that the Lord has given up on us. The devil uses shame to discourage us, pointing out that no matter how many times we repent, the temptations continue to pop up.

There are many reasons why people are prone to addiction, but addiction often begins with an attempt to satisfy “deep and unmet needs.”¹ So while rebellion *can* lead to addiction and addictions *can* cause sin, they are often sown in or magnified in weakness rather than willful rebellion.²

Thankfully, we know that weakness can give us the opportunity to learn about grace and develop deep faith in Jesus Christ’s healing power.³



Until Deliverance from Bondage

We find insights into navigating and escaping the captivity of addiction from two groups of people in the Book of Mormon: Limhi's people and Alma's people.

Both groups were in bondage for a significant period of time. Both realized that "there was no way that they could deliver themselves out" of captivity (Mosiah 21:5). Both, with time, turned to the Lord for help.

Limhi's people were in bondage for transgression reasons. Without seeking the Lord's help, they battled their oppressors "in anger" three times. They lost each battle. When they began to humble themselves, "the Lord was slow to hear their cry . . . [but He] *did* hear their cries, and began to soften the hearts of the Lamanites that they began to ease their burdens" (Mosiah 21:15; emphasis added). They were blessed for their increasing humility, but "the Lord did not see fit to deliver them out of bondage" until much later.

Alma's people were in bondage despite their righteousness, but they "did pour out their hearts to [God]." Even knowing their righteous desires, God allowed time between their captivity and deliverance. As they continued to rely on Him, He promised He would "ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are [still] in bondage." In turn, they "did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord" (Mosiah 24:12, 14, 15).

Both groups were eventually delivered. And we too are promised that if we turn to the Lord in our bondage, we "may stand as witnesses for [Him] hereafter" and will "know of a surety that, the Lord God, [does] visit [His]

people in their afflictions" (Mosiah 24:14)—and their addictions!

Be of Good Comfort

If you are struggling with addiction, remember that with the Lord's help, this time can be rich soil for cultivating Christlike attributes. As you increase in humility, you will be able to learn patience, compassion, and meekness.

Meet with your priesthood leaders and those who can offer support, and use the many tools Heavenly Father has provided to help you find freedom. Rely on the Lord; as you follow Him diligently, He can transform this disheartening and frustrating challenge into a powerful opportunity for spiritual refinement.⁴

An early Australian Latter-day Saint, when comparing her past with her present, said: "My past life [was] a wilderness of weeds, with hardly a flower Strewed among them. [But] now the weeds have vanished, and flowers Spring up in their place."⁵

As you and I consistently weed our garden and turn to the Lord in our trials, we will receive the promise given to Alma's people: "Be of good comfort, for on the morrow I will deliver you out of bondage" (Mosiah 24:16).

Keep weeding—the harvest is worth it! ■

The author lives in Texas, USA.

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, "Jesus: The Perfect Leader," *Ensign*, Aug. 1979, 5.
2. See 1 Corinthians 15:42–44.
3. See 2 Corinthians 12:9; Ether 12:27.
4. See Isaiah 51:3.
5. Martha Maria Humphreys, quoted in Marjorie Newton, *Southern Cross Saints: The Mormons in Australia* (1991), 158.

