

## The Stinging Serpents

“My name is Buster James. I was born in a coastal British Columbia village, where most of the people on my reserve fish for a living. I was raised by good parents. As a boy my father taught me how to be

a good fisherman. Everyone wanted me to work on their fishing boat. We had several fishing seasons when we made a lot of



money. I began to save money, and I looked forward to the day when I would own my own boat. I got my own fishing permit and boat when I was 21. But it was then that I began drinking with my friends. At first it didn't seem to hurt me, because I made a lot of money. But soon that changed.

**I** tried many times to quit drinking, because I didn't want to lose my kids. Finally, when Ella talked about leaving me, I began to realize I was losing everything.

“Ella and I have four wonderful kids. But when they got into their teenage years, they didn't get along with me because of my drinking. One by one the kids left home to live with someone else. I tried many times to quit drinking, because I didn't want to lose my kids; unfortunately, I never knew a sober week for more than 22 years. It bothered me when people called me the town drunk. I was always involved in barroom fights. Finally, when Ella talked about leaving me, I began to realize I was losing everything.

“I wanted to quit drinking, but I had no idea how to do it. Then one day a friend who had quit drinking came to see me at the bar. He said Ella had sent him and had told him the doctor said it wouldn’t be long until my body would be so worn down that I would soon die if I kept drinking. For Ella, sending my friend to talk to me was her last attempt to help me. My friend visited just a short time with me. He said Ella was planning to divorce me, if I didn’t change. I asked how he quit drinking. He said it wasn’t easy to quit; he’d tried to quit dozens of times until he learned ‘the secret.’

**I** asked my friend how he quit drinking. “It wasn’t easy,” he said. He’d tried often until he learned the “secret.”

“I was interested in this ‘secret,’ but I was confused when he first told me the secret. He explained he could never quit drinking permanently, until he learned to ‘hold on’ to Jesus Christ day by day and minute by minute. I asked him what it meant to ‘hold on.’

“‘Start praying,’ he said, ‘and when you are tempted to drink, pray and hold on to the Lord. Don’t think about anything else.’ I think that’s all he ever said. The next morning I got stone-drunk. After two days I woke up in the bushes in the middle of the village park. I had no idea how long I had been there. I felt horrible! This is when I uttered my first prayer. I asked the Lord to help me ‘hold on’ to Him.

“Every time after that when I was tempted to drink, I cried to the Lord, ‘I’m holding on. Please help me not to let go!’ My struggle was horrible and intense, and I found my friend’s counsel not to think of anything but holding on was indeed the secret answer. To hold on was my one thought and goal. As long as I held on by turning to the Lord when tempted to drink, I was okay. After I had quit drinking for two weeks, my family began to ask questions. After the first month my friends



began to wonder about me. But after three months the whole town knew something had happened! Almost everyone encouraged me. But my drinking buddies kidded me saying, 'It won't be long before you'll be back here with us.'

"Unfortunately, I fell off the wagon again about six months after I quit drinking. I then discovered that I had to start holding on all over again, not only then but every day, every hour, and sometimes every minute. I've learned



*I had no idea how long I'd been there. Feeling horrible, I uttered my first prayer. I asked the Lord to help me "hold on" to Him.*

that to hold on to Christ is my only answer, no matter how I feel about it or how good I seem to be doing.

“I have been dry for 11 years now. My two boys have started to fish with me and our girls like to be around our house. Our grandchildren are so wonderful! I can’t believe how much I would have lost if I hadn’t learned how to hold on to Jesus Christ with everything I have, day by day, hour by hour.

“We fish for halibut in the early spring, and it reminds me of the great secret of ‘holding on’ more than any other way I can explain. In bays around our village we have large halibut. Some grow to more than 300 pounds in size. When they are hooked they are hard to bring into the boat because of their great strength. These halibut which have grown so large we call ‘homesteaders,’ because they have been around for a long time. This gives them the chance to grow big. Catching one or two homesteaders each week can mean a lot to the paycheck.

“Getting a large halibut into the boat after hooking it can be a real challenge. When you reel one alongside the boat, it sometimes takes two or three men to gaff and ‘hold on’ to the halibut while it beats and slams against the side of the boat until it dies. Only when it is dead can it be pulled up onto the deck. The strength of a live,

I

can't believe how much I would have lost if I hadn't learned to hold on to Jesus Christ day by day. There is power in His name.



flopping halibut can seriously injure a fisherman. I know of some men who have been killed by being slammed about by a big halibut which wasn't completely dead.

"It's the same way with my drinking or any other bad habit. I've learned the greatest lesson of life when it comes to overcoming these huge 'homesteader' bad habits. The only thing a person can do is to hold on to the Lord until these horrible habits die. To hold on has become a way of life for me. As a result I have everything back again. I now own my fishing boat and have my own permit, which I have been able to buy back. I can hardly believe this happened in such a short time. I'm so glad I have learned the habit of 'holding on' so God can bless me." *(Names were changed to protect privacy—used by permission: NMNW, 2000.)*

**T**o hold on to Christ has become a way of life for me. As a result, I have everything back again.

**Key Thought.** Alcoholism, drug abuse, and smoking are all compulsive addictions. These habits become "friends" and an escape from problems, loneliness, boredom, and insecurities. Temporarily drowning our troubles in booze or drugs is one way to get around our problems, but these "stinging serpents" in turn will quickly destroy us.

God has designed a way to take care of these addictions. The answer is to "hold on" to the Lord by prayer and meditation. This is the only way we can really know victory over these addictions. By holding on to Jesus we



o begin drinking is a choice,  
and to quit is also a choice.

are able to become a blessing to our friends and families. Seek help from supportive family members, friends, and elders whom you respect and love. Often we will need to seek professional help, as well, in order to overcome addictions. God can work through godly counselors and other professional health workers to provide healing.

## BIBLE ANSWERS


**1. What does the Bible say alcohol is like? Proverbs 23:30-32.** “Those who linger long at the wine, . . . When it sparkles in the cup, . . . at the last it bites like a \_\_\_\_\_, and stings like a \_\_\_\_\_.” *(All quotations from the Bible in these lessons are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.)*

**Note.** To be bitten by a viper often means death. When we begin drinking or taking drugs, which brings both physical and spiritual death, we are actually destroying our body which is “the temple of the Holy Spirit.” The Bible says, “Or do you not know that your body is the



temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

To begin drinking is a choice, and to quit is also a choice. Choosing to quit is to decide to continually hold on to the Lord and allow Him through His Holy Spirit to deliver you. Jesus died on the cross to make our deliverance from harmful and sinful things possible. What Jesus did when He was on the earth gives Him control over Satan and evil powers today to help us.

 Alcohol not only destroys you physically, it also destroys your character and influence.

**2. What does God call alcoholic wine? Proverbs 20:1.**  
“Wine is a \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Note.** Alcohol will not only destroy your physical life, but it will also destroy your character and influence with your friends and family. A person who drinks is usually one who isn't able to follow through on his/her promises or commitments. Drinking often causes a person to act like a fool—sometimes a violent fool. A parent can't take pride in being a good parent if he or she is unable to take care of the family financially, physically, and emotionally. Very quickly friends, neighbors, and relatives learn they can't depend on one who drinks. His lifestyle doesn't back up his promises and dreams.

What happens inside a person with these addictions

is even worse. Even their commitment to themselves can't be kept. Because of not living a decent life due to drinking, a person soon loses respect for himself. Though a person may feel good and talk big when drinking, when sober he feels he is nothing but an empty shell. One who drinks often becomes angry and tries to defend his actions, but deep inside he knows he is wrong. He knows the mess he has made of his life comes by his own choices to allow drinking and drugs to control and destroy him.

**J**esus died on the cross to make our deliverance from harmful and sinful things possible. His love has bought our redemption, and He offers true freedom.

Usually people who drink or use drugs begin to lie, cheat, and even steal from their loved ones and employers in order to make ends meet and to satisfy the cravings for their addictions.

All this makes a person feel worthless. Yet how wonderful it is that, no matter how often we may have fallen, there is One who still loves us and is yearning to help us to get rid of these habits which destroy us.

**3. What is guaranteed to happen financially to the habitual drinker and drug abuser? Proverbs 23:21.**

“For the drunkard and the glutton will come to \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Note.** The Bible doesn't pronounce a curse on our finances. It simply points out the natural consequence of our compulsive addictions. These not only destroy our health and minds, but they will also ruin us financially. As a result our families and children also suffer.

**4. What are the main reasons God wants us to keep our minds clear and our bodies healthy? Romans 12:2.** (*Circle one*) (1) So we can clearly see God's will for our lives. (2) Only through a clear mind can God change our life for good. (3) Both reasons.

**Note.** The only way God can speak and work with us is through our mind. God is best able to change us into a better person when our body is healthy and our mind is clear. His greatest desire today is to get us ready for Jesus' soon coming and the new country He has planned for us.

**N**o matter what our situation,  
God has promised to deliver  
us from any struggle.

**5. What principle should we who are preparing for eternity live by? 1 Corinthians 10:31.** “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.”

**Note.** As we get older we begin to realize more than ever how important it is to take care of our health. Happy is the person who learns this early in life. The older we get the more responsible we should try to be, because more people depend on us and look to us for guidance as their parents and elders. If we have taken care of our health, we will be better able to help care for others in an honorable way. This brings great satisfaction and contentment to us in later years.

**N**o matter how old you are or how big a problem you may have with any addiction, God can deliver you.

**6. What is God’s promise to those who feel helplessly addicted to alcohol, drugs, and other habits when they turn to Him for help? 1 Peter 5:6.** “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He \_\_\_\_\_ in due time.” (Read also verses 7-10.)

**Note.** No matter how old you are or how big a problem you may have with any addiction, this promise holds true for each one of us. The only thing that will give us happiness is the “mighty hand of God”—His delivering power in all the affairs of our life.

By “holding on” to God, we will receive the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit working for us. God will help us get help from the right people in the right



*Trusting, praying, turning our problems over to Christ, and holding on to Him is the secret to defeating addictions. Jesus is the great bondage breaker.*

places. This may be through Alcoholics Anonymous, another organization, or friends who can give help to us when we struggle with individual withdrawal from addictions. Most of these organizations now know that without God's help even the best ideas and plans won't work permanently for anyone. Jesus Christ, our Creator, is the answer, and "holding on" to Him is the key to our deliverance.

**7. Do we ever come to the time when we don't have to hold on to the Lord anymore? Philippians 3:12-15.** (*Circle one*) (1) Yes. (2) No.

**T**here are organizations that are skilled in working with those who are addicted to destructive habits.

**Note.** Here is a great truth we all must learn. Like the principle—once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic—we are all sinners and will always be weak. Sometimes we may have to cry out to God for help minute by minute instead of just day by day. God has promised to deliver from any struggle those who give Him permission to do so. His power is a free gift to all who ask.

Those who will be citizens of heaven learn to hold on to (trust) God who "is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). Holding on to God is something that we all have to continually learn to do better and better throughout our lifetime.

**Closing Thought.** Individually, the Holy Spirit knows every little thing about you and knows exactly what you need. He is able to work in a mighty way to deliver you from addictions or any other problem. There are organizations that are skilled in working for those who are addicted to alcohol, tobacco, or other destructive habits. The Holy Spirit works through these organizations and people who care and are pleased to be a support. But our work is to cooperate and humbly turn to Jesus in every temptation and frustration. As you do this God will keep His promises and help you gain victories.

Won't you make it your spiritual motto to "hold on to Jesus"?

**Next Lesson.** The next lesson is the last one in this series of 30 Bible studies. We will discuss what it means to sincerely follow Jesus.

### ◆ THE CREATOR'S PROMISE ◆

I give you peace, the kind of peace that only I can give. It isn't like the peace that this world can give. So don't be worried or afraid (John 14:27, paraphrased).



*The Creator wants us to bring Him the concerns of our hearts.  
Prayer is not a lot of words; it is talking to God as a friend.*



## Native New Day

P. O. Box 53055, Los Angeles, CA 90053-0055

EDITORS: NATIVE MINISTRIES NORTHWEST EDITORIAL COMMITTEE;

RUSSELL HOLT

ILLUSTRATIONS: A. J. McCOY

DESIGN & PHOTOGRAPHY: ED GUTHERO DESIGN: MICHELLE C. PETZ

COPYRIGHT © NORTH AMERICAN MULTILINGUAL MINISTRIES