

Maranatha Baptist Seminary

ALCOHOLISM IN IRELAND: THE NEED FOR BIBLICAL COUNSELORS

A Report

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Course
GBC 540 Counseling Addictive Behavior

by

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April 2013

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INTRODUCTION

Much of Irish society and culture revolves around alcoholism; one need only look at the Guinness family whose famous alcoholic beverage is synonymous with Ireland. Sadly the Irish accept and at times flaunt their love for alcohol. The thick brogues, friendly faces, and charming conversations only mask the true emptiness and sorrow found in the hearts of the Irish people. The Irish are in desperate need of the gospel to point them to true joy, peace, and meaning in life.

Numerous newspaper articles and scholarly journals detail the problems of alcoholism in Ireland. What once was viewed as a societal norm is now being viewed as a blight on Irish society, especially on young people. The government and numerous organizations are devoting time and resources to curbing the problem of alcoholism in Ireland. While these methods may work at a surface level, the true problem the alcoholic faces can only be resolved through a relationship with God. Thus, the need for biblical counseling becomes imperative. The Irish people are desperately in need of biblical guidance and the redemption found through the gospel. This paper will seek to understand the problem of alcoholism in Ireland and how biblically based counseling methods can provide hope, joy, and peace for alcoholics.

ALCOHOLISM IN IRELAND

The Irish press is laden with articles detailing the current alcoholic problems in Ireland. Numerous articles in the press highlight the rampant alcoholism in Ireland and the affect it is having upon families and children. According to one Irish health article,

Irish adults binge drink more than any other European country, with one-quarter of Irish adults reporting that they binge drink every week...Over half of drinkers here have been identified as having a harmful drinking pattern. This equates to nearly 1.5 million adults in Ireland drinking in a harmful pattern. The report says Irish children are drinking from a younger age and drinking more than ever before - over half of Irish 16 year old children have been drunk and one in five is a weekly drinker.¹

Alcoholism is certainly a debilitating problem not only for adults but also for children.

The Irish government and health organizations are concerned about the impact alcoholism is having medically, criminally, and financially.

The impact alcoholism has on the human body is undeniable. One website, dedicated to informing the Irish public about the risks of alcohol consumption, goes to great depth describing the effect of alcohol on the human body. The website notes that alcohol has a significant effect on the mouth, stomach, circulatory system, brain, kidneys,

¹ Niall Hunter, "Booze Nation –Shock Alcohol Stats," *Irish Health.com* (February 2012), <http://www.irishhealth.com/article.html?id=20342> (accessed April 1, 2013).

lungs, liver, and heart.² Alcoholism impacts numerous parts of the body and often leads to heart attack, stroke, cancer, and cirrhosis.³ Not only is alcoholism causing damage to the physical body, but it is also a leading cause of death in Ireland. In 2010, Dr. Tony Holohan, the Irish government's medical expert, noted the sharp increase of alcohol related deaths in Ireland and estimated that around one hundred people were dying a month due to alcoholism.⁴ Studies also showed that alcoholism was a significant influence on increased suicide rates for both men and women, even more so than unemployment.⁵ Alcohol abuse is also contributing to an increase in self-harm among Irish people.⁶ Not only is alcoholism causing significant health concerns for the Irish, but it is also costing the government billions of dollars.

The Irish government recently began taking steps toward limiting alcoholism in Ireland due to the cost on the Irish taxpayer. Alcoholism is costing Ireland significantly as evidenced by the following yearly estimates: average cost for Irish taxpayer €3,318; cost for the state €3.7 billion; cost to the healthcare system €1.2 billion; crime costs €1.2

² P. Anderson and B. Baumberg, "Alcohol in Europe," *A Public Health Perspective. A Report for the European Commission* (2006), http://www.drugs.ie/alcohol_info/about_alcohol/how_alcohol_effects_the_body/ (accessed April 1, 2013).

³ For more information see Appendix A – Long Term Health Effects of Alcohol.

⁴ Cormac O'Keeffe, "100 People Dying a Month in 'Alcohol Epidemic'," *Irish Examiner* (September 2010), <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/health/100-people-dying-a-month-in-alcohol-epidemic-130936.html> (accessed April 1, 2013).

⁵ Cormac O'Keeffe, "Alcohol Consumption has 'Significant' Influence on Suicide Rates," *Irish Examiner* (May 2011), <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/health/alcohol-consumption-has-significant-influence-on-suicide-rates-154014.html> (accessed April 1, 2013).

⁶ Evelyn Ring, "Rise in Self-harm Linked to Recession and Alcohol Abuse," *Irish Examiner* (July 2011), <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/health/rise-in-self-harm-linked-to-recession-and-alcohol-abuse-162590.html> (accessed April 1, 2013).

billion; road collisions €526 million; and lost output due to work absences €330 million.⁷ These staggering numbers are a serious concern for Irish politicians who wish to curb the costs of rampant alcoholism in Ireland. Alcoholism is also costing the Irish in the area of criminal activity. It is estimated that 70,000 crimes were directly linked to alcohol in 2010.⁸ The Irish government has been called upon by many in the journalism and medical fields to enact stricter regulations and taxes on alcohol in order to remedy the financial strain and criminal activity linked with alcoholism in Ireland.

Alcoholism is certainly taking a huge toll on the Irish; however, before attempting to biblically counsel an Irishman in the area of alcoholism, one must first understand some cultural and historical reasons for the “drink problem” in Ireland. One Irish researcher, Roger Blaney, outlines the following potential explanations: the weather and climate of Ireland (dark and rainy), poor food, lack of alternative drinks, ease of access (i.e. pubs), a supposed physical and psychological disposition to alcohol, socio-cultural events (i.e. preparing for fights, rebellion against the English), treatment of illness, and economic reasons.⁹ While some of these assertions are not necessarily reliable, they do help the biblical counselor gain a better perspective of the cultural reasons for the pervasiveness of alcoholism in Irish society.

⁷ Unknown, “Overview of Alcohol Related Harm,” *Alcohol Action Ireland*, <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/health/rise-in-self-harm-linked-to-recession-and-alcohol-abuse-162590.html> (accessed April 1, 2013).

⁸ Cormac O’Keeffe, “70,000 Crimes Directly Linked to Alcohol,” *Irish Examiner* (May 2011), <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/70000-crimes-directly-linked-to-alcohol-153726.html> (accessed April 1, 2013).

⁹ Roger Blaney, “Alcoholism in Ireland: Medical and Social Aspects,” *Dublin Journal of The Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland* 23, no. 1 (1973/1974): 109-111.

Understanding the history of alcoholic related counseling services in Ireland will greatly aid the biblical counselor in understanding the current need for biblical counseling in Ireland. During the first part of the twentieth century, there were no real counseling services in Ireland for alcoholics. In 1898 a Roman Catholic temperance movement called the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association began. This movement viewed alcohol as a Divine gift which Catholics could voluntarily abstain from.¹⁰ Into this climate came the founding of the first Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) branch in Europe. The founders of AA in Ireland were confronted with heavy opposition from the Roman Catholic Church because the church hierarchy saw AA as an organization with its roots in Protestantism. Despite facing initial opposition, the AA movement gained significant momentum due to its pragmatic nature and lack of conflict with the healthcare system in Ireland.¹¹

The founding of AA in 1946 was a significant landmark in the history of alcohol treatment in Ireland and Europe. This event started the slow process of establishing more counseling and rehabilitation centers around Ireland for alcoholics. In 1978, the Rutland Centre became the first residential alcohol rehabilitation center in Ireland.¹² This rehabilitation program employed new techniques in working with alcoholism. Instead of taking the medical approach, the Rutland Centre used confrontational counseling and education techniques to help their clients recover during a four to six week period. A

¹⁰ Shane Butler and Tony Jordan, "Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland: AA's First European Experience," *Addiction* 102, no. 6 (June 2007): 880.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 883-884.

¹² Shane Butler, "Addiction Counsellors in the Republic of Ireland: Exploring the Emergence of a New Profession," *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy* 18, no. 4 (August 2011): 297.

number of similar centers opened up in the years after the founding of the Rutland Centre. Thus, addiction counseling began to be viewed as an important profession and the Irish Association of Alcohol and Addictions Counsellors (IAAAC) was soon founded in 1990. In 1992, the IAAAC claimed to have 103 accredited members; however, in 2009 the association has jumped in its ranks to almost one thousand members, thus illustrating recent growth that addiction counseling has experienced in Ireland.¹³

While addictions counseling is growing significantly in Ireland, there is a major flaw with the current system. Most of the counseling and rehabilitation centers, government officials, and medical experts view alcoholism as a “disease” that needs treatment. One scholar writes,

The prevalent view of 'alcoholism' among the psychiatric fraternity in Ireland would be that 'alcoholism' is a 'disease' in the sense of a progressive condition with identifiable symptoms such as 'craving', 'compulsion', 'lack of control' etc. and that 'alcoholics' are qualitatively different from other disorders. This may have influenced the general approach to the problem. Certainly treatment endeavours have far out-flanked prevention and research.¹⁴

The “disease” concept of alcoholism is inaccurate because it ignores the spiritual elements involved with addictions. This is where biblical counseling becomes absolutely imperative. Biblical counseling views alcoholism as a sinful condition man finds himself in when he is worshipping himself and his idols rather than worshipping God. While the biblical counselor may find rehab centers or medical facilities helpful in treating the

¹³ Shane Butler, “Addiction Counsellors in the Republic of Ireland: Exploring the Emergence of a New Profession,” 300.

¹⁴ Dermot Walsh, “Alcohol and Alcohol Problems Research 15. Ireland,” *British Journal of Addiction* 82, no. 7 (July 1987): 748.

physical symptoms of recovering alcoholics, the biblical counselor still recognizes the importance of guiding the alcoholic to Scriptural truth and a relationship with God.

In some portions of Ireland there is a severe need for biblical counselors to minister to the Traveller community. The Travellers (also called *Pavee*, Tinkers, and Gypsies) are a minority group in Ireland. There are about 30,000 Travellers living throughout Ireland.¹⁵ The Travellers maintain their own unique culture and are subject to discrimination from the Irish because of their tendency to cause problems. They once were a nomadic people but today mostly live in poor government housing estates. The Traveller community is known for their criminal activity, communal living, promiscuity, alcoholism, fighting, and staunch Catholicism. Much more could be said about this fascinating group of people; however, it suffices to say that they face significant discrimination and are largely poor and illiterate people. As one might suspect, there is a tremendous alcoholism and drug problem among the Traveller community. One scholar studying the Traveller community writes,

The Traveller community, and in particular Traveller men, are presenting with increasingly problematic alcohol use, because of dissipation of their culture and their experiences of marginalisation, discrimination, depression, illiteracy and poverty...Alcohol use was identified as a coping mechanism in order to deal with increasing fragmentation of their culture, experiences of discrimination, difficulties gaining employment, lack of positive leisure opportunities and poverty with agency workers observing: ‘Majority use alcohol in order to cope with their problems’; and ‘Escaping from alienation and wanting to be part of the community they live in’.¹⁶

¹⁵ Exchange House National Travellers Service, “FAQ about the Traveller Community,” Exchange House National Travellers Service, http://www.exchangehouse.ie/fag_travellersingeneral.php (accessed April 2, 2013).

¹⁶ Marie Claire Van Hout, “Alcohol Use and the Traveller Community in the West of Ireland,” *Drug and Alcohol Review* 29, no. 1 (January 2010): 59-61.

Some Travellers see the need to curb alcohol abuse in their community; however, they do not see any hope because alcohol is their way of coping with their problems. Obviously there is a huge need for biblical counselors to work with the Traveller community and help them realize the hope there is in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

BIBLICALLY COUNSELLING ALCOHOLISM

After discussing the problem of alcoholism in Ireland and the secular attempts to remedy that problem, one should turn to the Scriptures to discover truth for dealing with alcoholism. It is important to first study Scripture to understand what the Bible says about drunkenness and then it is imperative to examine a biblical counseling method which one might employ while working with an alcoholic.

While the secular world views alcoholism as a “disease,” the Bible calls alcoholism sin. When one labels alcoholism as a “disease” one is removing the responsibility from the person who is struggling with alcoholism. This perspective views alcoholism as something a person cannot control and the only solution one can think of is to seek medical help. One biblical counselor writes, “There are essentially two views regarding alcoholism and most other addictions: a medical one and a moral or religious one. The medical view says that alcoholism is a disease; the moral view says it is sin or disobedience against God. Which view you accept has implications for the way you live your entire life.”¹⁷ The biblical counselor should respect and utilize the medical field; however, examining biblical truth is imperative.

The Bible does not use the word alcoholism; however, it does have much to say about drunkenness. There are a number of examples throughout Scripture of men who yielded to drunkenness including the following: “Noah (Gen. 9:21), Lot (Gen. 19:33, 35), Nabal (I Sam. 25:36), Uriah made drunk by David (II Sam. 11:13), Amnon (II Sam.

¹⁷ Edward T. Welch, “A Letter to an Alcoholic,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 20.

13:28), Elah, king of Israel (I Kings 20:16), Benhadad, king of Syria, and his confederates (I Kings 20:16).”¹⁸ These passages of Scripture might be used during counseling to illustrate the destructiveness and sinfulness of these Bible characters’ drunkenness.

Not only are there numerous examples of drunkenness in Scripture, but there are also prohibitions against drunkenness. Drunkenness is named in the list of vile sins found in I Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21. The statement at the end of each verse is that those who participate in these sins “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” I Corinthians 5:11 goes even further by stating that believers ought not to keep company with a drunkard. These passages of Scripture clearly prohibit drunkenness and also warn of keeping close company with drunkards.

Furthermore, Proverbs 20:1 states, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” This verse emphasizes the fact that strong drink results in mocking and raging which are unwise activities. The word raging in the Hebrew is *hamah* (הַמָּה) which has the idea of being loud, boisterous, and causing an uproar.¹⁹ This verse implies that alcoholism enflames other sinful actions such as mockery and fighting. Scripture also says the following in Ephesians 5:18, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;” this verse is clearly condemning becoming intoxicated by alcohol. Instead of being controlled by a substance, one should be “filled with” and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God.

¹⁸ Glen Rosenberger, “Alcoholism and You,” Biblical Counseling Center of Napa Valley, 29. <http://www.biblecounselingnapa.com/alcoholism.html> (accessed April 2, 2013).

¹⁹ *The New Strong's Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible* (1995), s.v. “*hamah*”

Another key passage which addresses the problems of alcoholism is found in Proverbs 23:29-35. This important passage states,

²⁹ Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

³⁰ They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

³¹ Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

³² At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

³³ Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

³⁴ Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.

³⁵ They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

This passage of Scripture clearly addresses problems associated with alcoholism. The first verse in this passage mentions some of the feelings that accompany alcoholism such as sorrow, woe (turmoil), contention, and babbling (v. 29). The verse even mentions the “redness of eyes” that often accompanies alcoholics (v. 29). The alcoholic devotes time to their drink and they even participate in certain rituals (v. 30). They exert effort into making their wine stronger by mixing it with other strong drinks (v. 30). The alcoholic becomes enthralled and totally consumed with the very appearance of the wine as it moves about in the cup (v. 31). Although the drink looks so delightful, in the end it “bites” and “stings” (פָּרַשׁ *parash*); the alcohol wounds the person (v. 32).²⁰ The alcohol leads the man’s heart into wicked and immoral desires (v. 33). The alcoholic is likened to a man who lies in the middle of the sea or on the top of a mast of a ship. The thought in this verse is that the alcoholic is completely out of control (v. 34). The proverb is

²⁰ *The New Strong's Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible* (1995), s.v. “parash.”

summarized in the last verse when it states that the alcoholic will suffer physical abuse and will not even remember what happened when he awakes. When he finally awakes from his drunken stupor, the alcoholic will once again seek comfort in the alcohol (v. 35). Clearly the alcoholic is suffering because he fails to seek God and instead seeks the alcohol for relief from his woes and concerns.

Another matter which deserves attention centers on whether alcohol in today's world and the wine of Bible times are the same. Some verses in Scripture talk about drinking wine; however, it is important to remember that this wine was far different than the wine people drink today. Wine today is essentially what the Bible calls "strong drink" whereas the wine mentioned in the Bible was similar to purified water and contained minimal alcoholic content.²¹ In his article on the wine of the New Testament times, Robert Stein concludes that the wine made in the New Testament was significantly watered down and thus had a minimal alcoholic content compared to alcoholic beverages today.²² These observations help one gain a proper understanding of the differences between the wine of the New Testament and wine today.

When helping a recovering alcoholic, it is important to clearly explain the concept of proper worship. The alcoholic is worshipping the bottle rather than worshipping the God that loves them. Ed Welch writes,

I suggest instead that we acknowledge that addictions is [sic] a *disorder of worship*. By doing this we are not ignoring the out-of-control experience of

²¹ Norman L. Geisler, "A Christian Perspective on Wine-Drinking," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139 (1982): 50.

²² Robert H. Stein, "Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times," *Christianity Today* (June 1975): 11.

addictions, and we are not being blinded by the complexities of an addict's inner world. However, we are gaining important insights into our hearts and our relationship with God. Such a view of change immediately reminds us that we are in a battle between the worship of God and the worship of ourselves and our desires. It explains why we feel so guilty after a night of self-indulgence. And, since we don't have to wait for a physical cure to provide lasting change, it offers great hope through confession of sin, faith in Jesus' forgiveness of sins, and obedience.²³

The alcoholic must realize their need to direct their worship toward almighty God instead of worshipping their own satisfaction and their idol of alcohol.

The three tiers of addiction provide the biblical counselor with an excellent guide for guiding the alcoholic to biblical truth. The tertiary level of addiction concerns the surface level of addictions. For the person struggling with alcoholism, alcoholic beverages and the temptation to drink those beverages form the tertiary level. One might give the alcoholic verses to memorize when the temptation to drink arises. Other methods for aiding the alcoholic in the tertiary level include planning a route home from work to avoid pubs and bars, calling the alcoholic to help keep them accountable, listening to Scripture or sermons. While it is important to provide insight and help at the tertiary level, it is imperative to keep investigating the situation and probing deeper.

The secondary level reveals the behavior that the alcoholic is seeking to medicate through alcohol. Some alcoholics drink because they are angry, others are sad and lonely, some have never dealt with deep pain and bitterness, and still others drink with friends in order to have fun and relaxation. The biblical counselor should point out to the alcoholic that drinking alcohol is only medicating their pain, loneliness, anger, or other feelings.

²³ Edward T. Welch, "A Letter to an Alcoholic," 25.

They need to realize that there is no true comfort in the alcohol because when its effects wear off the alcoholic returns to the problems they were seeking to medicate (Proverbs 23:35). There is still more to uncover deeper within the alcoholic's heart.

Once the biblical counselor reaches the primary level with the alcoholic, true biblical change can begin to take place in his heart. The core of the issue of alcoholism is centered on the heart. Is the alcoholic yielding his heart in obedience to God or is he serving his idol? In essence, the entire issue of alcoholism boils down to an issue of worship. Is the alcoholic worshipping God with his heart or is he yielding his heart to idolatrous sin? Numerous passages of Scripture deserve exploration with the alcoholic in order to help him realize the importance of yielding his heart in worship to God (II Timothy 3:2-4; John 15:1-15; John 14:15-26; Romans 12:1-2; II Corinthians 10:3-7). The biblical counselor could turn to numerous passages of Scripture regarding worship and the need to lay aside idolatry. Ultimately the alcoholic must come to realize that the work of Jesus Christ on the cross has made possible a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It is through the gospel of Christ that the alcoholic can experience forgiveness of sins (I John 1:9), a right relationship with God (I Peter 3:18-22), and a source of victory over temptation (I Corinthians 10:13-14).

SUMMARY

After exploring the problems surrounding alcoholism in Ireland, one should fully appreciate the opportunities for biblical counselors to direct Irish alcoholics to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. At this time, Ireland is desperately struggling with numerous problems surrounding alcoholism. The medical officials and government of Ireland realize the need for change to take place, but as long as doctors and counselors treat alcoholism as a “disease”, there is no real hope for long term change in people’s lives.

Instead of treating alcoholism as a disease, Ireland is in need of biblical counselors who will treat alcoholism as a worship problem. Alcoholics must be guided through Scripture and pointed to the fact that alcoholism is a choice to drown out fear, anger, and sadness; through the bottle. Biblical counselors must work to guide alcoholics to the realization that there is freedom from alcoholism, but only through a relationship with God. The alcoholic must be willing to sacrifice their desire for drink and self satisfaction and instead focus their heart on seeking God. It is God who deserves all the glory and worship, not alcohol, and it is God who will faithfully work in the hearts of the lost as biblical counselors guide them to truth in Scripture and a right relationship with God.

APPENDIX A – LONG TERM HEALTH EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

Central Nervous System (brain and spinal cord)

- impaired senses
 - vision, hearing, dulled smell and taste, decreased pain perception
- altered sense of time and space
- impaired motor skills, slow reaction
- impaired judgment, confusion
- hallucinations
- fits, blackouts
- tingling and loss of sensation in hands and feet
- early onset dementia (alcohol related brain damage)
- Wernicke's Syndrome and psychosis (delirium)
- mood and personality changes
- feeling anxious or worried

Circulatory System

- high blood pressure
- irregular heart beat
- damage to the heart muscle
- increased risk of heart attack and stroke

Liver

- swollen, painful inflamed
- cirrhosis
- cancer
- fluid build up (oedema)
- increased risk of haemorrhage
- liver failure, coma and death

Pregnancy and Babies

- fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effects
 - small head, possible brain damage, retarded growth and development

General Body

- weight gain
- headaches
- muscle weakness

Gastrointestinal System

- stomach lining inflamed and irritated
- ulcers of the stomach or duodenum
- inflammation or varicose veins of the oesophagus
- loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhoea and vomiting
- cancer

Pancreas

- painful, inflamed, bleeding,

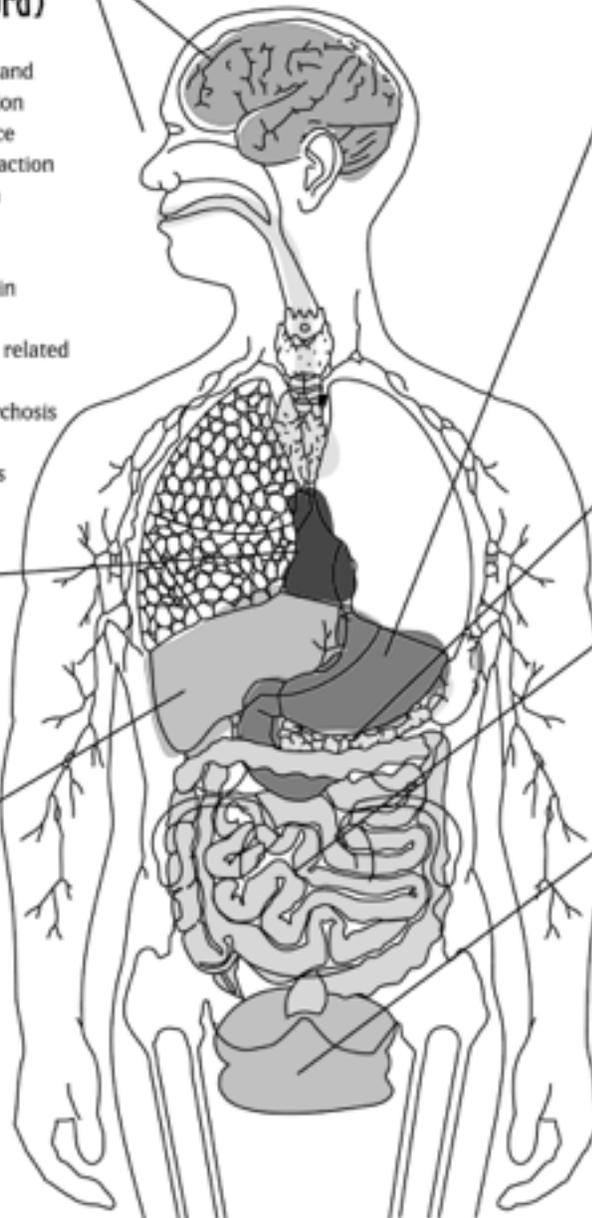
Intestines

- irritation of the lining
- inflammation and ulcers
- cancer of intestines and colon

Reproductive System

Male and Female

- reduced fertility
- impaired sexual performance
- impotence
- decreased sperm count and movement
- increased risk of breast cancer in females
- early onset of menopause
- irregular menstrual cycle



APPENDIX B – REFORMERS UNANIMOUS

After discussing several secular counseling and rehab centers in Ireland, it is important to note the presence of one group of biblical counselors that is seeing great progress by God’s grace. The Reformers Unanimous program in Ireland is seeing great growth and progress in the lives of men who have been in bondage to alcohol and drug addictions. The main branch of Reformers Unanimous (RU) is run by Lifegate Baptist Church in Tallaght, Dublin.²⁴ A smaller branch of the program exists in the southwest corner of Ireland at Bible Baptist Church in Ballincollig, Cork.²⁵ The RU program in Tallaght not only holds RU Friday night services (as does the branch in Cork), but it also runs a men’s home where recovering addicts receive more intense counseling and treatment. The program at the men’s home is constructed in the following way:

We provide accomodation and a structured, programme based on Christian principles for men who are wanting to find victory over their addiction. We believe that no matter how deep your addiction is, you **can** be absolutely free. You do not have to be a recovering addict forever. We will take you in for twelve months, and provide therapeutic work programs, intervention plans, counseling in a variety of life areas, and a drug-free environment. The staff and the other men at the home are supportive and friendly, providing an atmosphere of peers who help challenge and support you in your journey to liberty.

The first stage of six months is designed to provide higher levels of housing support with twenty-four hour staff supervision. The personal support plan in this stage focuses on key life skills which will ultimately lead to living in the community again.

The second stage of six months is designed to help the students move on with support. There is not a very high level of support given or needed at this point, but there is always a staff member on hand to give advice and support. As residents

²⁴ Layton Kelly, “Breaking the Chains of Addiction,” Reformers Unanimous, <http://www.reformu.ie/> (accessed April 2, 2013).

²⁵ Tony Mahony, “Reformers Unanimous, Cork,” Reformers Unanimous, <http://www.biblebc.com/rucork/index.htm> (accessed April 2, 2013).

begin to move on to working outside the home, work experience, practical training, and education are integrated into the support programme. Each resident is given their own room and are encouraged to prepare to move into independent living.

In the last stage, residents are helped to find independent accommodation. An aftercare plan for support is drawn up, and we maintain contact to help assist them in their new lives.²⁶

The men who have completed the program at the men's home in Tallaght truly understand what the Bible means when it says in John 8:36, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." The author has personally worked with the Reformers Unanimous program in Tallaght and has seen the power of the gospel transform the lives of Irish men and women.

²⁶ Layton Kelly, "Breaking the Chains of Addiction," Reformers Unanimous, <http://www.reformu.ie/> (accessed April 2, 2013).

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