



**CHURCH  
AMBASSADOR**  
NETWORK OF GEORGIA  
A MINISTRY OF FRONTLINE POLICY COUNCIL

# BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES ON **BONDAGE & ADDICTIONS**

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Luke 4:18-19



A Shepherd's Guide to  
Freedom and Policy Solutions

[www.frontlinepolicy.org](http://www.frontlinepolicy.org)

2026



## FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE: UNDERSTANDING THE CRISIS

In the Church Ambassador Network, a ministry of Frontline Policy Council, we adhere to the teachings of the Bible, which hold that true freedom is found solely in the work and person of Jesus Christ. Through Christ's work on the Cross and His resurrection, the debt of our sin was paid, and the power of sin through death was defeated. Christ provides a way and hope for all who have been impacted by bondage and addictions.

## THE PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

As we seek to imitate Christ, our heart is to see those who have been taken captive set free, and we want to partner with the State of Georgia in helping make that a reality for more Georgians. This guide provides both biblical wisdom and practical policy solutions for government shepherds.

### GAMBLING

- \$336M annual social cost to GA
- \$249M correctional costs tied to problem gambling
- 2.5M Americans meet criteria for severe gambling disorder
- 5-8M+ experience moderate gambling problems
- Only 3% of pathological gamblers receive formal treatment

### PORNOGRAPHY

- Georgia ranks #9 among all 50 states for porn views per capita
- Average age of first exposure in Georgia: 10 years old
- 1 in 3 Georgia teenagers viewed porn at least once in previous year
- 47M pornography videos viewed daily by 7-14 year olds in U.S.
- Only 7% of churches have a ministry for those addicted to pornography

### MARIJUANA & HIGH- POTENCY THC

- 31,000 Georgians enrolled in Low-THC Oil Registry (2025)
- 74% certified for intractable pain or PTSD
- 250+ poison control calls in Georgia involving children under 6 exposed to Delta-8 since 2021
- Delta-8 and hemp-derived THC products can exceed 90% THC
- 3 in 10 people who use marijuana develop Cannabis Use Disorder



# Biblical Foundations: Understanding Addiction

## 01

**Addictions seem innocent in the beginning, as they promise life and entertainment. However, they end in bondage and the loss of control of one's own life.**

All addictions start the same. They promise life and entertainment, and at first, they are. You want to go back. You want to bring your friends. It is innocent and cheap at first. It begins as a choice. That once innocent choice over time becomes an addiction. Now, a person may desire to quit, but they can't. They keep going back, even against their own will. It is no longer entertaining, life-giving, or cheap. It will now cost them everything. It will cost them their time, resources, physical health, and relationships.



**“EVERYTHING IS PERMISSIBLE FOR ME,” BUT NOT EVERYTHING IS HELPFUL.  
“EVERYTHING IS PERMISSIBLE FOR ME,” BUT I WILL NOT BE BROUGHT  
UNDER THE CONTROL OF ANYTHING.”**

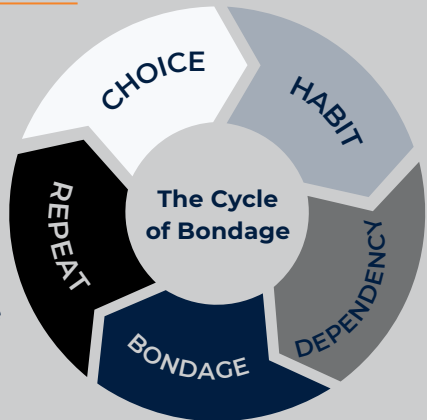
**1 CORINTHIANS 6:12**

## Application for Government Shepherds

Just as addictions disguise themselves as harmless choices, predatory industries market their products as entertainment. Government shepherds have the responsibility to protect citizens from deceptive practices that lead to bondage.

This includes:

- Truthful advertising requirements
- Warning labels on addictive products
- Restrictions on marketing to vulnerable populations (especially minors)
- Age verification and access controls





# Biblical Foundations: Understanding Addiction

02

## Addictions and bondage come at a very high cost for the individual, family, and community.

Addictions don't only come at a financial or time cost. They come at a great relational cost, which is the greatest cost of them all. Addicts, over time, lose marriages, parental rights, and friendships. Those costs that were once only a personal cost now come at a great cost to the family and community.



**"BUT EACH PERSON IS TEMPTED WHEN HE IS DRAWN AWAY AND ENTICED BY HIS OWN EVIL DESIRE. THEN AFTER DESIRE HAS CONCEIVED, IT GIVES BIRTH TO SIN, AND WHEN SIN IS FULLY GROWN, IT GIVES BIRTH TO DEATH."**

**JAMES 1:14-15**

## THE COST IN GEORGIA

### GAMBLING

- 53.5% divorce rate among pathological gamblers (vs. 18.2% among non-gamblers)
- 61% of pathological gamblers report missing work to gamble
- 57% of Gamblers Anonymous members admitted stealing to fund gambling
- \$135,000 average amount stolen per gambler who reported theft
- 98% more likely to require ER treatment

### PORNOGRAPHY

- Porn consumers are 2x as likely to experience divorce or breakup
- Studies show pornography increases desire for suicide, lowers self-esteem, increases loneliness
- Partners of porn consumers experience more psychological distress, feel more objectified, and have poorer body image

### MARIJUANA

- Employees testing positive for marijuana: 85% more injuries, 75% higher absenteeism, 55% more industrial accidents
- Adolescents are 2-4x more likely than adults to develop Cannabis Use Disorder within 2 years of first use
- 52% increase in marijuana-related ER visits in California (2008-2022)
- In Colorado, 25% of traffic deaths involved THC (2022)

## Application for Government Shepherds

These aren't just statistics — they represent broken families, lost jobs, and shattered communities. Government has a divine mandate to protect the vulnerable and promote the common good. The social costs far exceed any tax revenue generated.



# Biblical Foundations: Understanding Addiction

03

## Addictions and bondage require brokenness and intervention in order for a person to be set free.

It is very difficult to help someone who doesn't want help nor desires to change. In the Scriptures, salvation follows repentance and recognition of the need for a Savior. Repentance is a 180-degree turn; it is recognizing that you did wrong and want to do right. If someone is going to be set free from their addiction, they must have a humble, repentant spirit with a desire to change.



**"IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST AND WILL FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND PURIFY US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS."**

**1 JOHN 1:9**

### Application for Government Shepherds

**Government cannot force repentance, but it can:**

- 1. Remove barriers to treatment -**  
Make help accessible and affordable
- 2. Fund evidence-based programs -**  
Support what actually works
- 3. Partner with the Church -**  
Leverage the spiritual dimension of recovery
- 4. Create intervention points -**  
Court-ordered treatment, workplace programs, family support services

### THE TREATMENT REALITY

- Gambling addiction has a 20:1 benefit-to-cost ratio for treatment
- 82% of clients who experienced a spiritual awakening during treatment were completely abstinent at 1-year follow-up, compared with 55% of those who did not.
- States spend an average of \$0.37 per capita on problem-gambling services
- Treatment works best when it addresses spiritual, relational, and physical dimensions

The Church offers what secular programs cannot: genuine spiritual transformation through Christ. Government can amplify this by directing resources to faith-based recovery programs with proven track records.



# Biblical Foundations: Understanding Addiction

## 04

### The Law is a tool and guide to protect people from bondage and addictions.

The law cannot save people, nor can it eliminate wrong behavior. The law is not, and must not, be the final solution. However, it must be a part of it. The law has been used as a tool to serve and assist people for generations. Laws will never eradicate addictions, but they can guide people away from addictions and protect them from those who desire to make them addicted. Laws must continue to be used as tools to both help people break free from addictions, and more importantly protect them from ever getting addicted.



**“THE LAW, THEN, WAS OUR GUARDIAN UNTIL CHRIST,  
SO THAT WE COULD BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH.”**  
GALATIANS 3:24



**“WHAT SHOULD WE SAY THEN? IS THE LAW SIN? ABSOLUTELY NOT! BUT I  
WOULD NOT HAVE KNOWN SIN IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE LAW.”**  
ROMANS 7:7

### Application for Government Shepherds

Paul teaches that the law serves as a guardian—not a savior, but a protector. Government shepherds have the authority and responsibility to establish laws that:

#### PROTECT THE VULNERABLE

- Age restrictions and verification
- Limits on marketing to children
- School-based education programs
- Parental notification and control tools

#### GUIDE AWAY FROM HARM

- Warning labels on addictive products
- Mandatory cooling-off periods
- Self-exclusion programs
- Public awareness campaigns

#### RESTRAIN PREDATORY PRACTICES

- Limits on gambling expansion
- Restrictions on high-potency THC products
- Enforcement against illegal operations
- Corporate accountability for harm caused

### The Biblical Role of Government

**Romans 13:4** says the governing authority "is God's servant for your good." The law doesn't replace Christ, but it protects people long enough for them to encounter Christ.



# Biblical Foundations: Understanding Addiction

05

## Opressors want to keep people in bondage.

Oppression occurs when someone intentionally uses power and authority to maintain control over another person. A lot of money can be made from someone who is addicted. They are a guaranteed repeat customer that does not require clever marketing or good service to maintain. You just have to sell them once, and then they're yours for life. Companies or individuals who make money from products that cause addiction have a vested interest in keeping people addicted.

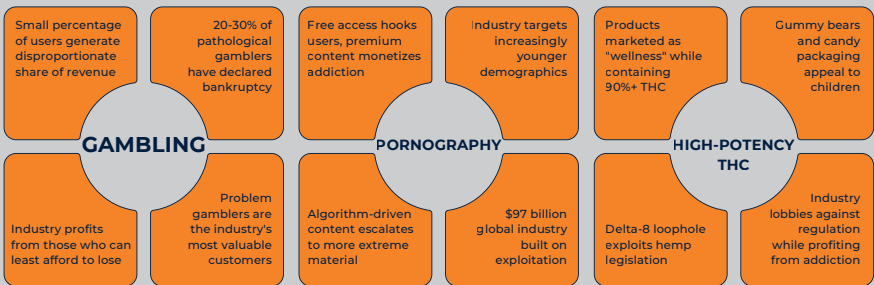


**"LEARN TO DO GOOD; SEEK JUSTICE, CORRECT OPPRESSION; BRING JUSTICE TO THE FATHERLESS, PLEAD THE WIDOW'S CAUSE."  
ISAIAH 1:17**



**"WHOEVER OPPRESSES THE POOR TO INCREASE HIS OWN WEALTH, OR GIVES TO THE RICH, WILL ONLY COME TO POVERTY."  
PROVERBS 22:16**

## THE BUSINESS MODEL OF ADDICTION



## Application for Government Shepherds

Isaiah calls shepherds to "correct oppression." This isn't about restricting freedom—it's about protecting citizens from exploitation. Government shepherds must:

1. Expose the truth about industry practices
2. Regulate predatory marketing especially to vulnerable populations
3. Hold industries accountable for social costs they create
4. Prioritize people over profits in policymaking



# Filling An Empty Void

Addiction is caused by a deeper issue in the soul, and is an attempt to numb a wound and fill a void. Understanding these deeper longings helps both pastors and policymakers address addiction more effectively. Here are some of the voids and what the soul is truly longing for.

## Boredom

↓  
Desires joy, and addiction is an attempt to find it.

## Loneliness

↓  
Desires a friend, and addiction promises to be a faithful one.

## Stress

↓  
Desires a comforter, and addiction brings temporary comfort.

## Negative Self-Image

↓  
Desires to silence those thoughts by using addiction to create the desired self-image.

## Fatigue

↓  
Desires life, and addiction brings a fleeting jolt of it.

## Hurt

↓  
Desires refuge, and addiction brings an empty sense of it.

## Betrayal

↓  
Desires revenge, and addiction becomes a means to deliver it.

## Failure

↓  
Desires success, so through the addiction, you make a fantasy world where you always win.

## Rejection

↓  
Desires comfort, and the addiction becomes your means for comfort.

## Weakness

↓  
Desires power and use addiction to feel powerful.

Effective policy and ministry address not just the behavior, but the underlying need. This is why integrated approaches—combining legal protection, medical treatment, and spiritual care—have the highest success rates.



# GOD DESIGNED WORK AS A GIFT, NOT A CURSE.

ONE ROOT CAUSE OF ADDICTION — ESPECIALLY GAMBLING — IS THE REJECTION OF GOD'S DESIGN FOR DILIGENT WORK.

**Scripture teaches that God designed work as a good gift, not a curse.** Before the Fall, God "took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Work was part of paradise. It is how we contribute, provide, and reflect God's creative nature. But when men reject the call to earn their keep through diligent labor, they become vulnerable to the false promise of easy money — the idea that you can prosper without toil, gain without contribution, and profit at another's expense.

This is the spiritual engine behind gambling. It isn't just entertainment; it's a counterfeit gospel. It promises abundance without faithfulness. And the gambling industry is built on this lie — profiting most from those who can least afford to lose.

Paul's instruction to the early Church speaks directly to this: "**Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need**" (Ephesians 4:28). The alternative to taking is not just stopping — it's building. Honest labor that serves others.

But the problem runs deeper than gambling. Across Georgia, young men are disengaging from the workforce, from responsibility, and from the identity that meaningful labor provides. The Church has a unique role here that government cannot fill: discipling men in the goodness of God's design for work.

**✝**  
"WHATEVER YOU DO, WORK HEARTILY, AS FOR THE LORD AND NOT FOR MEN, KNOWING THAT FROM THE LORD YOU WILL RECEIVE THE INHERITANCE AS YOUR REWARD."  
COLOSSIANS 3:23-2

## Application for Government Shepherds

### Preach the theology of work

Teach that diligent labor is worship, not punishment. Ground men in the dignity of providing for their families and contributing to their communities.

### Address the "easy money" lie directly

Name gambling, get-rich-quick schemes, and passive income culture for what they are: counterfeits of God's provision. Disciple men to find their identity in faithfulness, not financial shortcuts.

### Mentor young men into vocation

Create church-based mentorship programs that pair working men with younger men who lack direction. Connect them to trades, apprenticeships, and career paths.

### Build accountability structures

Small groups that ask hard questions about finances, work ethic, and stewardship. Normalize conversations about debt, gambling losses, and financial integrity.



# POLICY SOLUTIONS

## WHAT GOVERNMENT SHEPHERDS CAN DO: GAMBLING

### LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

#### 1. RESIST EXPANSION

Oppose legalization of sports betting and online gambling. Study Georgia's current gambling landscape before any expansion. Require independent addiction-impact assessments for new gambling proposals.

#### 2. INCREASE TREATMENT FUNDING

Establish dedicated funding stream for problem gambling services - Currently states average \$0.37/capita— Georgia should lead with \$5/capita. Support grants for church-based recovery programs.

#### 3. REQUIRE INDUSTRY ACCOUNTABILITY

Mandatory contribution to treatment programs (2% of gross gaming revenue). Warning labels on all gambling advertising and platforms. Self-exclusion programs with teeth (criminal penalties for violations).

#### 4. PROTECT VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Prohibit gambling advertising during sporting events watched by minors. Ban credit card use for online gambling (where legal). Require income verification to prevent those on public assistance from gambling.

### TREATMENT WORKS

20:1 benefit-to-cost ratio. But only 3% of pathological gamblers currently receive formal treatment. Government-church partnership can change this.

### EXECUTIVE BRANCH

#### GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Sign legislation that protects Georgians from gambling expansion. Veto bills that prioritize tax revenue over public welfare. Use executive authority to study social costs.

#### DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Direct funding to evidence-based gambling treatment (20:1 ROI). Partner with churches for community support networks. Appoint pastors to gambling addiction advisory boards.

#### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Public awareness campaigns about gambling addiction. Training for healthcare providers to screen for gambling problems. Data collection on gambling's impact on Georgia families.

### JUDICIAL BRANCH

- Problem gambling courts (like drug courts)
- Treatment alternatives to incarceration
- Family support services in family court cases involving gambling

### THE CHURCH'S ROLE

- Recovery programs modeled on successful addiction ministries
- Financial counseling and debt management
- Family support groups
- Accountability partnerships



# POLICY SOLUTIONS

## WHAT GOVERNMENT SHEPHERDS CAN DO: PORNOGRAPHY

### LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

#### 1. AGE VERIFICATION

Georgia law already requires age verification technology on adult websites. The path forward is enforcement with teeth. Impose significant fines for non-compliance (\$10,000 per violation). Create civil liability for platforms that allow minors to access pornographic content despite the law. Empower parents with a private right of action against violating platforms.

#### 2. RESTRICT EXPLICIT CONTENT

Regulate social media algorithms that expose minors to explicit content. Require parental controls as default settings on devices sold to families. Ban pornographic content in public libraries and schools.

#### 3. STRONG ENFORCEMENT

Establish enforcement mechanisms with real penalties. Empower Attorney General to prosecute violations. Create a task force to monitor compliance and hold platforms accountable across state lines.

#### 4. EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Fund age-appropriate education programs in schools. Support parent education workshops (partner with churches). Public awareness campaigns about pornography's harms.

Georgia has already taken a bold step by requiring age verification on adult websites. Now we must lead the nation in enforcement, accountability, and protecting the next generation. It takes courage from government shepherds and partnership with the Church.

### EXECUTIVE BRANCH

#### GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Sign legislation that strengthens Georgia's age verification law and closes enforcement gaps. Establish a task force of law enforcement, tech experts, and pastors. Use the bully pulpit to raise awareness and call the industry to account.

#### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Develop age-appropriate curriculum on digital safety. Train teachers to recognize warning signs. Partner with churches for parent education programs.

#### DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Establish grant program for pornography addiction treatment. Fund research on pornography's impact on Georgia youth. Appoint pastors to child protection and mental health boards.

#### ATTORNEY GENERAL

Aggressively enforce Georgia's age verification law. Prosecute platforms that violate Georgia law. Coordinate with other states on multi-state enforcement to prevent platforms from ignoring state-level requirements.

### JUDICIAL BRANCH

- Treatment options for those arrested for possession of illegal content
- Family court consideration of pornography use in custody cases
- Victim support services

### THE CHURCH'S ROLE

- Recovery programs for men and women
- Parent education workshops
- Youth protection training
- Accountability software and support groups
- Resources: CAN will develop comprehensive toolkit for churches



# POLICY SOLUTIONS

WHAT GOVERNMENT SHEPHERDS CAN DO: MARIJUANA & HIGH-POTENCY THC

## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

### 1. REGULATE DELTA-8 AND HEMP-DERIVED THC

Close the hemp loophole that allows high-potency THC products. Limit THC content in hemp products to trace amounts (0.3%). Ban products designed to appeal to children (gummies, candy-like packaging). Require child-resistant packaging and warning labels.

### 2. PROTECT CHILDREN

Prohibit sale of any THC products to minors. Ban marketing that appeals to youth. Criminal penalties for selling to minors. Require ID verification at point of sale.

### 3. WORKPLACE SAFETY STANDARDS

Support employer rights to maintain drug-free workplaces. Establish impairment testing standards for safety-sensitive positions. Protect employers from liability when employees are impaired.

### 4. DUI ENFORCEMENT

Fund research on reliable roadside impairment testing. Establish THC impairment standards. Train law enforcement on marijuana impairment recognition. Increase penalties for drugged driving.

### 5. LIMIT MEDICAL MARIJUANA EXPANSION

Maintain current Low-THC Oil program restrictions. Resist pressure to add qualifying conditions without evidence. Prohibit smokable marijuana (no legitimate medical use). Ensure physician oversight, not dispensary recommendations.



Georgia's Low-THC Oil program serves **31,000 people**. But VA and DOD recommend **AGAINST** marijuana for PTSD—the condition **74%** of registrants have. We must be honest about what helps and what harms.

## EXECUTIVE BRANCH

### GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Veto legislation that expands access to high-potency THC. Sign legislation regulating Delta-8 and hemp-derived products. Direct agencies to prioritize child protection.

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Public awareness campaigns about marijuana risks. Educate on difference between low-THC oil (Georgia's medical program) and high-THC products. Poison control coordination and reporting. Track health impacts on Georgia families.

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Train law enforcement on marijuana impairment. Develop testing protocols. Data collection on THC-involved accidents.

### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Strictly enforce THC limits in hemp products. Regular testing of products on shelves. Shut down operations violating regulations. Coordinate with Public Health on child safety.

### LOW-THC OIL COMMISSION

Resist pressure to expand qualifying conditions. Maintain physician oversight. Monitor for abuse and diversion. Report to legislature on program outcomes.



# POLICY SOLUTIONS

WHAT GOVERNMENT SHEPHERDS CAN DO: MARIJUANA & HIGH-POTENCY THC

## JUDICIAL BRANCH

- Treatment options for marijuana-related offenses
- DUI prosecution training on THC cases
- Family court consideration of marijuana use affecting children

## THE CHURCH'S ROLE

- Education on marijuana risks (especially for youth and pregnant women)
- Support for those seeking to stop marijuana use
- Alternative pain management resources (prayer, counseling, community support)
- Advocacy for evidence-based policy

# THE SCIENCE

### Employees testing positive for marijuana experienced:



More Injuries



Higher Absenteeism

### Scope of Addiction



**3 in 10**

people who use marijuana develop Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD)

### Pregnancy & Infants



Dispensary staff recommend marijuana for morning sickness — *despite medical warnings*

**THC** crosses the placenta and enters breast milk



Adolescents are **2-4x more likely**

Than adults to develop CUD within two years of first use



# PARTNERSHIP FOR TRANSFORMATION

To effectively support individuals dealing with addiction, it's crucial to employ a comprehensive approach that ensures help is not only immediate but also **focused on rehabilitation and long-term development.**



**Achieving the greatest impact requires a collaborative effort between churches and legislative bodies.** This collaborative strategy combines the spiritual guidance and support provided by the church with the legal and regulatory measures enforced by the government. By working together, these two entities can not only help individuals in immediate need, but also ensure their long-term recovery and development.



# PARTNERSHIP FOR TRANSFORMATION

## WHAT GOVERNMENT SHEPHERDS CAN PROVIDE

- ✓ **Legal Protection**  
Laws that guard citizens from predatory industries
- ✓ **Financial Resources**  
Funding for evidence-based treatment programs
- ✓ **Institutional Support**  
Task forces, enforcement, data collection
- ✓ **Systemic Change**  
Policies that address root causes, not just symptoms

## WHAT THE CHURCH PROVIDES

- ✓ **Spiritual Transformation**  
The only power that truly sets captives free
- ✓ **Relational Support**  
Community, accountability, and discipleship
- ✓ **Holistic Care**  
Addressing spiritual, emotional, and practical needs
- ✓ **Long-term Commitment**  
Walking with people through years of recovery

## YOUR ROLE AS A GOVERNMENT SHEPHERD

**Romans 13:4** says you are "God's servant for your good." This isn't just a political responsibility—it's a divine calling. As a shepherd of government, you have the unique authority to:

### PROTECT

those who cannot protect themselves

### PROVIDE

resources for healing and restoration

### PARTNER

with the Church in transformational work

### PROCLAIM

truth about what harms and what heals

We invite you to partner with the **Church Ambassador Network** and pastors across Georgia to address bondage and addiction with both biblical wisdom and practical policy. Together, we can see Georgians move from despair to hope, from bondage to freedom.

**All of us, including the addict, need to find true freedom in and through Jesus Christ.**



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