

Church resource guide

**HOW TO DEVELOP
AN ADDICTION
RECOVERY
COMPANION
MINISTRY**



FIRST STEPS

Reach your community by offering hope for recovery from addiction, hope for restored families, and hope for transformed life.

Thank you for joining with Glenn Sandifer and the team at Unforsaken Ministry to walk with those in addiction and their families as they work through the journey of recovery.

Extensive research has proven the greatest need for those in addiction goes far beyond sobriety — it's holistic and deeply human — and a church family is the perfect group to step into that space. Addiction is usually the symptom of a deeper problem — emotional trauma.

Use the information in this resource guide to start the conversation within your congregation. Once God surfaces those who are called to take the journey with families walking through addiction recovery, our team can help with the official launch of your new compassion ministry.

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1. Those who have done the research, reached out to **Unforsaken Ministry**, and are already talking about the possibilities should begin praying individually and as a group about launching an addiction recovery companion ministry.
2. As conversations develop, be sure to **communicate the following details** so those expressing interest understand the reality of what's involved:
 - a. **Rehabilitation programs** will be a vital part of the recovery process, but it's important to realize our role in walking with the person in addiction, as well as their family, is to continue a ministry of presence, encouragement, discipleship, and general support before, during, and after the rehab experience.
 - b. **Our job is not to “fix” the person struggling with addiction** but to walk with them, love them, and point them to Jesus.
 - c. To participate in this ministry, we must **see the person in addiction as valuable and worthy** of love and respect. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).
 - d. **Be genuine and compassionate** and realize the person walking in addiction wants to be free from the hold drugs and/or alcohol has on them.
 - e. **Use reassuring language** and the phrase “person in addiction” rather than “addict.”
 - f. **Realize our expectations of how recovery works and how the person in addiction responds will often be different** from what actually takes place, so understanding, flexibility, endurance, and continued prayers are needed.
 - g. **Recovery is messy and will require patience as setbacks and slip ups do occur along the path.** Stay focused on the goal and continue to encourage the person in addiction not to give up, to keep moving forward even when a slip up happens.



3. Once you have a group of volunteers interested, fully understanding the commitment, and ready to move to the next step, **determine whether you have a family within your congregation currently needing this type of ministry** and start there. If not, then begin praying for the Lord

to show you who in your community needs assistance.

4. As you pray and prepare to step out on the journey, be sure to **read through and follow the steps outlined** throughout the rest of this resource guide.



READY TO LAUNCH

1. **Determine the location in your church** where conversations, meetings, and files can be kept related to the addiction recovery companion ministry.
2. **Set up the space to be functional** for the needs and confidential so information can be held in a locked area.
3. **Work through schedules, protocols, volunteer expectations, volunteer selection, and basic steps** for when a family walking through addiction recovery surfaces.
4. **Establish an accessible guide to area service providers** related to resources the families could need.
5. **Establish a relationship with at least one nearby rehabilitation center**, so the leaders know you and your church and understand the ministry effort.
6. **Maintain a list of current rehabilitation facilities and contact information** for quick access. *See Appendix A for a listing that is current as of the date of download of this resource guide.*
7. **Schedule a training session with Glenn Sandifer and the team from Unforsaken Ministry** if you have not already done so. *See the inside cover for the contact information.*

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Truth	Scripture	Meaning
Created in His image	Gen. 1:26–27	We reflect His glory
Personally formed	Ps. 139:13–14	Each life is sacred
Worth more than creation	Matt. 6:26	He meets our needs
Loved enough to die for	John 3:16	Sacrificial love
Jesus valued the outcast	Mark 1:40–41	No one is forgotten
We are His children	1 John 3:1	He delights in us
He wants all to be saved	2 Peter 3:9	Every soul matters

Other Scripture references to review include familiar stories of encounters with Jesus and the overall concept of caring for the vulnerable in society:

- Matthew 7
- Luke 10:25–37
- John 4:1–42
- Luke 15:11–32
- James 1:26–27
- Romans 5:6
- Isaiah 25:4
- John 13:34–35

Understanding the numbers in Alabama:

- **15.6%** (approx. 784,000 people) struggle with a substance use disorder.
- **2.45%** (approx. 122,000 people) face illicit drug addiction.
- Only **19,628** people are currently in treatment in the state.
- Alcohol, opioids, meth, and cocaine are the most commonly treated substances.



“LOOK AT THE BIRDS OF THE AIR: THEY NEITHER
SOW NOR REAP NOR GATHER INTO BARNES,
AND YET YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER FEEDS THEM.
ARE YOU NOT OF MORE VALUE THAN THEY?”

Matthew 6:26

CORE NEEDS

OF THOSE STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION

1. Connection Over Isolation

“The opposite of addiction is not sobriety. The opposite of addiction is connection.” – Johann Hari

- Most people in addiction suffer from deep loneliness, shame, or trauma.
- They need authentic relationships where they are loved, known, and not judged.
- Churches and support networks can provide this consistent community.

2. Hope and Identity

“No one wants to keep using more than the person who can’t stop.”

- Addiction often rewires a person’s identity around guilt, failure, or survival.
- They need to hear: “You are not your addiction — you are loved by God.”
- Scripture affirms this:
- “While we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly.” (Romans 5:6)

3. Trauma-Informed Healing

- Many in addiction have underlying pain (childhood trauma, abuse, neglect).
- Healing requires more than willpower — it involves counseling, grace, and time.
- Compassionate, non-condemning care is vital.

4. Practical Support

- Needs like:
 - Safe housing
 - Transportation to rehab or work
 - Job training or recovery-friendly employment
 - Help navigating legal issues
- Churches can partner with recovery ministries to offer this stability.

5. Faith-Based Recovery & Discipleship

- A relationship with Jesus brings lasting transformation, not just behavior change.
- Discipleship, prayer, and Scripture can fill the spiritual void addiction often masks.
- Many find freedom when they hear:
- “Go and sin no more.” (John 8:11)

6. People Who Don’t Give Up on Them

- Recovery is rarely linear. It’s messy. There are relapses and setbacks.
- The need: faithful presence — someone who still answers the phone, prays, listens, and walks with them.

THE GREATEST NEEDS

Relational — Unconditional love and community

Spiritual — Identity in Christ, forgiveness, grace

Emotional — Trauma healing and patient support

Practical — Resources like housing, work, and rehab

Ongoing — People who walk with them, not ahead of them



MAINTAINING THE MISSION THROUGH THE MESSINESS

The work of walking with someone through addiction will not be easy, and some days it will create frustration and disappointment, but churches and ministries truly do have a unique opportunity to step into a major gap in our communities with an addiction recovery companion ministry.

Being approachable, genuine, caring, compassionate, consistent, committed, resourceful, and able to truly listen will make the difference in how well received and helpful the ministry becomes.

As important as with walking with the person in addiction is, it's also vital to walk with the entire family and to help them understand how to love with enabling and how to avoid burning bridges. The **Unforsaken Ministry** team helps teach how to mentor families in this area.

A few basic tips to remember:

- 1. Love like Jesus** and show everyone involved respect. Even people in addiction have been created in the image of God and has a soul that will spend eternity in one of two places.
- 2. Be cautious** with what you expect and how you communicate.
- 3. Ask questions** such as "What can I do for you right now to help?" (Answers might include food, rent, utility bill, doctor visit, etc.)
- 4. Enhance your listening skills.** Truly listening is more than merely hearing words. It comes from a place of love and compassion for others. Genuine listening means putting the one talking before yourself.

Suggestions for purposeful communication from author Warren Haynes include:

- a. Be present** in the moment, make eye contact, and stay focused on the person talking. Avoid interrupting the person talking.
- b. Identify points of interest and specific events mentioned** as the person shares their story. Try not to look shocked as they share and stay engaged no matter how long they take to tell their

story. You may be the first person to genuinely care and be willing to listen, which means they may have a lot of stored-up words to unload.

- c. Ask them to repeat certain parts of the story** to fully understand and show them you are truly invested but be careful not to ask about specifics they have purposefully avoided. They will eventually unravel their full story, but they may need to do that over time.



TESTIMONIES

"I met Glenn when I was active in addiction. Glenn and his wife, Marti, were the first and only people I knew who loved me correctly. Through their example I was finally able to grasp how relentless and unconditional God's love for me is. They stuck with me for years while I tried and failed multiple times. Every single word spoken in the midst of failure was nothing but LOVE.

– AMBER B.

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"In the direst of situations, Glenn is able to show how a combination of discipline and compassion can strengthen relationships, resolve conflicts, and heal lives."

– DONNA B.

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"My wife, Shana, was referred to the Lovelady Center in Birmingham by some members of our church and two days later, she embarked on a life-changing opportunity. As my wife began her journey to recovery in Birmingham, I began mine at home. On April 19th of the following year, I watched my wife walk across the stage and receive her diploma for graduating from the Lovelady Center. We are now closing in on four years of sobriety. We never lost contact with Glenn. By caring for us with that very first phone call, he showed us you can have a huge impact on someone's life. So now my wife and I seek to help others around us find the help they need with addiction and Glenn (and Unforsaken Ministry) has been our "go to" as I call him to help us help them."

– JOSH

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"I love Unforsaken Ministry. They have been there for me when nobody else was at my lowest point in my life."

– ASHLEA C.

"I am beyond grateful for Unforsaken Ministry and their love for me and so many others. Because of this ministry I can smile again. I don't have to be embarrassed in front of my daughter and can confidently go anywhere with my head held high because I am loved and valued. I met them at my lowest point, and they loved me back to life. I still cry when I tell people how Unforsaken Ministry so graciously gave me a gift that impacted me in so many ways — not only my outward appearance, but also my spirit and my mind and how I see myself."

– AMY R.



SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION

The Bible consistently
affirms humanity
is deeply valued by God.

1. We are created in God's Image.

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ...' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:26–27, ESV).

Being made in God's image means we reflect His nature — spiritually, morally, and relationally — which bestows intrinsic dignity, purpose, and worth to every person.

It can be easy to judge someone in addiction due to their current circumstances. However, when we listen to their stories and try to understand their circumstances, it typically changes our view of them. God cares for the downtrodden, outcast, and sick. While addiction is usually brought on by a person's own actions, it also is a disease that must be battled.

2. God knows and forms each person individually.

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made ..." (Ps. 139:13–14, NIV).

God is intimately involved in our creation. Every human life is intentional and precious to Him.

3. God cares for human needs.

"Look at the birds of the air. ... Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matt. 6:26, NIV).

Jesus teaches that if God cares for birds, He certainly cares much more for people. Our value to God is far greater than anything else in creation.

4. God sent His Son to save us.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, ESV).

God's love for humanity is so great He gave His Son to redeem us. The cross is the ultimate expression of our value in God's eyes.

5. Jesus shows compassion for individuals.

"A man with leprosy came. ... Jesus was indignant [or moved with compassion]. He reached out His hand and touched the man ..." (Mark 1:40–41, NIV).

Jesus consistently valued people others rejected, and He restored the sick, honored the poor, and defended the outcast.

6. We are called God's children.

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are" (1 John 3:1, NIV).

Believers are not just servants but adopted into God's family. This shows the depth of His desire for relationship with us.

7. God desires all to be saved.

"The Lord... is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, ESV).

God values every soul, desiring none to be lost. His patience is evidence of His love and mercy.



APPENDIX A

Rehabilitation centers recommended

by Unforsaken Ministry

The Lovelady Center (for women)

7916 2nd Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35206
Phone: 205-833-7410
Fax: 205-833-9997

The Foundry — Men's Center

1804 6th Avenue North
Bessemer, AL 35020
Phone: 205-428-8449

The Foundry — Women's Center

1800 4th Avenue North
Bessemer, AL 35020
Phone: 205-425-7737

Olivia's House (women and mothers with children)

8017 2nd Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35206
Phone: 205-833-5708

Jimmie Hale Mission — Shepura Men's Center

3420 2nd Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35222
Phone: 205-323-5878
Email: info@jimmiehalemission.com

Jessie's Place

2305 5th Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203
Phone: 205-323-0170
Email: info@jessiesplace.com

Alabama Adult and Teen Challenge — Hayden Women's Center

(Women 18+)
1726 Rickwood Caverns Road
Hayden, AL 35079
Phone: 205-647-6563

Alabama Adult and Teen Challenge — Main/Admissions

P.O. Box 270
Lincoln, AL 35096
Phone: 205-763-0909
Email: charrison@alatc.org

Alabama Adult and Teen Challenge — Men's Center South

9280 Hurricane Road
Bay Minette, AL 36507
Phone: 251-580-0091

Life House University — Appalachian/Birmingham Campus

Phone: 225-644-3762
Email: Info@thelifehouse.fm

Turning Point Foundation (for men)

1881 County Road 627
Thorsby, AL 35171
Intake/Office: 205-955-2890
Emergency: 205-281-3096

Turning Point Foundation (for women)

Trafford, Alabama
Phone: 205-835-0818

The Foundry Farm (for men)

575 County Road 1676
Cullman, AL 35058
Phone: 256-796-1440

Restoring Joy Recovery (for women)

Phone: 205-725-9917
Email: restoringjoyrecovery@gmail.com

Guardians of Grace

1410 McCaig Road
Lincoln, AL 35096
Phone: 256-405-7845



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