

The value of a life

In a recent discussion with a knowledgeable official we were informed of the many dangers posed by individuals who are addicted to illegal narcotics. Unlike other addicts, the alcohol and drug addict is especially dangerous as their personality is often altered. We are all familiar with the criminal aspect of the addict. Many resort to crime to feed their addiction, this includes theft, fraud, robbery, hijacking and often murder. Many women resort to prostitution to cover the cost of their addiction and that of their partners. In most cases women are misled by a boyfriend to use drugs.

According to research, the issue of addiction has exacerbated the burden of disease which in the short term includes vehicle accidents and limits other patient access to emergency hospital treatment. Medium term issues include Tuberculosis, HIV & Aids and Liver Disease. Long term complications include children born with physiological and psychological challenges. This precludes the psychological issues like paranoia and various phases of psychosis that addicts may suffer from. The list of problems associated with addiction is infinite.

The addict's journey into hell is also connected to the utter chaos and mayhem that they continuously sow. We all know of parents who have lost all their material possessions to save an addict. There are many families who were financially and emotionally destroyed by the behaviour of one member.

We also know that the only reality to an addict is the craving to feed the emptiness that consumes them. In this selfish world where the desire of the addict is paramount, why does society not mitigate this harm with more decisive action? Despite their best efforts, the authorities are unable to stop the influx of narcotics. Unfortunately, for as long as there is a demand for a product there will be a supply. For example, those who seek and desire the rhino horn will not stop until the last rhino is killed. This is the nature of the addict's world.

In the Bible, Psalm 97:10, God says **"Let those who love the Lord hate evil"**. In Psalm 94:16 God challenges the believers with the words, **"who will rise up for Me against the wicked?" Who will take a stand for Me against evildoers?"** Now, who amongst us are worthy of this challenge?

What we need in our society is "Restorative Justice" this is a biblically-based approach to solving crime that seeks to maintain the balance between punishment and individual responsibility on one hand and reparation and healing of both the victim and the offender. The key to success in the "Restorative Justice" approach is that the public feels safe, the victim is compensated and the criminal has a change of heart, leading to a new way of life.

Finally, for the sake of all that who have and will continue to suffer at the behest of criminals, is it not appropriate that we re-open the discussion around the **"Death penalty"**, for those who are able but unwilling to change their evil ways e.g. dealers and addicts?

Cllr Y Adams - Cape Muslim Congress

Cllr A Williams - National Party of South Africa

Cllr G Siljeur - African Christian Democratic Party