



MENTAL

Of all the things I've lost, I miss my mind the most.

OZZY OSBORN

You can allow your “tastes” to define you, but don’t allow them to separate you. You are a “metal head.” You are on the edge. Your taste in music pretty much defines your taste in clothing, art, and even friendships. Music will always be a driving and defining force in your life. That isn’t going to change. You, at 21, have made a commitment to stay “on the edge wherever the edge takes you.” That decision will take you to a lot of places you have not even dreamt about yet, and put you in situations you cannot even imagine at this point of your life. It is all very exciting! It’s an adventure! You will connect with many people in the coming years who have the same heart and tastes that you have. You will find success as you continue to pioneer in the realm of Christian Rock/Metal music, even though, at times, it will cost you dearly. And your distress will come mostly from well-meaning Christians who truly believe you are “of the devil.” They will tell you “the beat of the music is the same that is used to conjure up demons” or “you can’t understand the lyrics” or “God’s music doesn’t sound like that, it is more mellow and utilizes church organs.” Seriously?! There

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will be times when the “opposition” becomes so strong, that you will most easily find your sanctuary with those who believe and experience things the same way that you do. It’s nice to feel that level of support and safety. But you need to connect with other kinds of Christians as well. Those outside of your comfort zone have a lot to teach you. Their life experiences may parallel yours in ways you don’t yet understand. You will find that those who will mentor you the most will be outside of your normal comfort zone. Keep an open mind and an open heart to those God sends your way. Many will be cleverly disguised as opposers when, in truth, they are guardian angels! You will eventually learn a huge lesson: You don’t have to agree with someone or like them for God to use them. You don’t have to love their musical style for them to be close friends. That will even include Country Western music. But I am sure you have a difficult time believing that now!

You are in charge of your own moral condition. At 21, you have this feeling that you can still get away with a few things secretly. You push a few limits. You experiment in private. You have this sense that what you do in private will have no effect on your ministry or your friendships. You feel in control of your thoughts and emotions, and you believe you can change course or correct these issues anytime. You split your life into two categories: Those things that are “You” and those things that are “Not really you.” You convince yourself that the “You” part will always win over and will be the part of you that people see. And the “not really you” is actually not part of you, and remains hidden from others. As you grow older, you will learn that BOTH of these define you. And those things that are “not really you” have defined you just as much as the ‘you’ parts. You have some difficult discoveries to make. And with these discoveries, you have to decide who you want to be and what you will do with those things that define you. There is no splitting. The concept that you can separate is mental gymnastics. In reality, it has always been completely “you” all along. The strength of your relationship with Jesus, the honesty with which you live your life, and the integrity of your moral condition will be significantly impacted by the decisions you make now.

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The key to fighting addiction? Don't get started! So many of your friends are addicted to porn, cigarettes, and alcohol. Every one of them started with simple exposure, which became an addiction. My greatest advice to you at 21 about fighting addiction is very simple: "don't get started!" Stay a virgin. That will keep you from being tempted to sleep with as many girls as possible. Don't start smoking cigarettes. It's easy to stop smoking if you never get started! Set a limit to alcohol consumption. If you must drink, drink one beer and walk away afterwards. Don't watch porn. If it pops up on the computer without you doing anything, have the strength and the clarity of mind to close the page. That's a whole lot easier than fighting the addiction later on!

Fight the battle before the battle. Realize that you aren't as strong as you think you are. Even Billy Graham would struggle when put in the right circumstances. You are human. You don't have superhuman strength. You will find yourself tempted more than you thought you could be. And you may find yourself failing, when you thought you would succeed. Fight the battle before you even get there. Rehearse what you would do in these situations and let your reaction be automatic. For instance, if you've already decided what you're going to do when porn pops up on your computer, then you have no decisions to make. You've already decided to close the page. And if that's too difficult, you automatically turn the computer off and walk away. You must realize that you have limitations. Therefore, it's very important that you fight the battle before the battle even begins.

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Many times we're tempted simply because "everyone else is doing it!" We feel like the odd duck in the room. And it's difficult to be the only person there who is not smoking, drinking, doing drugs, or hitting on women. We've seen the research, and we know that excess leads to addiction. We know that smoking cigarettes can cause lung cancer, and we realize the implications. But, in a social setting where everyone appears fine, all the research goes out the window. We join the ranks where "everyone else is doing it" and justify ourselves accordingly. God has a bigger plan for you! These temptations are the very things that will keep you from becoming all that you can be. Realize that acting on temptations creates barricades. "...but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 14-15 NIV) Acting on temptations does not put you on the road to success. They will only harm, not help you.