

“Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?” Proverbs 23:29-30 NLT

## lectio // Proverbs 23:29-35

Who? Who - the wisdom writers ask their audience. Who does this describe, do you know someone like this? Yes, unfortunately, we all do. Then the answer: “It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks.” The writer calls out the person who needs something stronger than themselves, stronger even than the wine that leaves one tipsy and sloshy, he calls it “mixed drink.” Alcohol, and its dark side, goes all the way back to Noah, who went through the extraordinarily difficult situation of the world ending! He was saved, he was safe, but he was NEVER in control. And the first opportunity to get a vineyard up and running and a little time to ferment the fruit and he’s wasted, lying naked in the tent. Old 601 year old Noah and his year-long nightmare was too much to bear (Genesis 8:13 & 9:21). A little wine here, a little social whiskey-shot there, what’s the harm? Not much with those boundaries. But managing pain, stress and frustration by self medication is disastrous! We know all about addictions now. We know what they do, how they work and the damage to self, and surrounding family it does. We know all of it, we just don’t know who or why it hits some much harder than others. To the addict, the only friend left is the liquid in a glass, in the needle or the pill in the plastic bottle. What starts out as way to take a break or manage the pain ends up destroying everything they have, even their own soul. This stuff guts your life like a fish and throws you on the rocks! And if you are unfortunate enough to live with an addict or are parented by an addict, you know it tries to swallow you up even though you are clean and sober. I’ve seen this thief called addiction and it stole everything that was precious to me! And it left me with swiss-cheese memories, some good, many bad, but lots of unexplained holes. By the way, this proverb describes my second father perfectly. He was in anguish, sorrow, fights, miserable, beat up and bloodshot most of his life. And the only way he saw a way out, was to take his own life. A life of frayed edges, all sharp with no peace. So I don’t dance with this devil, not even once. I’m not strong enough or smart enough to beat the odds. And, don’t try to talk me out of it with your Christian “liberties.” I choose not to partake.

Dad,

Your grace and mercy have allowed me survive and maybe even thrive after a double decade of darkness in my childhood and youth. It is still a tender subject when I see the loss and devastation in children of addicts. I feel sorry for the addicts, but I grieve for the victims who surround them. I have no idea how I can help heal the pain of single moms (or dads), or bereft children who grow up with fears, co-dependency and rocks in their bellies because they were raised in an addict’s home. Help me to extend love and mercy wherever I can.