

Episode 248

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions Podcast. This is part two of my interview with Rose Anne Forte, author of *The Plans He Has for Me*. I would highly encourage you to watch the first episode where we just discuss the question, is alcohol a sin? And that was really the entire focus in addition to Rose Anne's sharing her testimony and how God led her into this ministry. Today's episode, we're going to be discussing addiction specifically, and that's more, Rose Anne, is it Forte?

Rose Anne Forte

Forte. We can just say Forte.

Shea Houdmann

Exactly. I'm not the first person who thought of that joke, I'm guessing. But, and we talked about this briefly in the first episode that so often what starts as drinking occasionally, drinking in moderation, far too often, we've all heard stories of that's where it starts and then it goes into drunkenness, it goes into addiction. And alcohol addiction, like all other addictions, is extremely difficult to overcome. But with God's help, with following biblical principles and understanding the science behind it, it can be done.

Shea Houdmann

So let me go ahead and introduce you all to Rose Anne again. She's the international best-selling author of a multi-award winning daily devotional called *The Plans He Has for Me*. She helps people put alcohol and other substances to the side for 12 consecutive weeks by educating them with the scientific principles behind excessive substance use using God's foundational principles to renewing your mind. She's the creator of the Choose Freedom program, which helps people solidify a change in their relationship with alcohol and other toxic substances over the long term. And she has a podcast called *Say Goodbye and Imagine*. So we will include links to Rose Anne's book, to her podcast, and just ways you can get to know her and understand her ministry better when these episodes go live.

Shea Houdmann

So Rose Anne, welcome back. So I guess the opening question for this episode is, this is go pretty simple, and then we'll explore from there. What does the Bible say about addiction?

Rose Anne Forte

Well, my favorite, we mentioned this last time, but there is scripture that says, truly, truly, Jesus tells us in John 8:34, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who

practices sin is a slave to sin. And for anyone listening who has gotten trapped in this, for lack of a better word, has gotten deceived about it, has crossed what I call the invisible line of it's not a problem to, whoa, why can't I stop? This is why. Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin becomes a slave to sin.

Rose Anne Forte

And I call addiction psychological slavery, because you want to stop, but something won't allow you, right? And I think that's the perfect verse to describe addiction is, and it matches up with science, right? The science of our brain says that when we do something over and over and over again, it becomes a habit, a neurological habit. But here's the great news. We can change our neurological pathways, we can change our habits, and we can, as God has always told us, renew our minds, as in Romans 12:2 says. So, yeah.

Shea Houdmann

And then in your experience, and again, Rose Anne shared her testimony of alcohol abuse and addiction and how God led her out of that and then led her to this ministry. So please, again, watch the first episode so you can understand a little bit more of her background and perspective on this. But tell us just about The Plans He Has For Me, the book, and what are the biblical principles and life experience and statistics and even science of what actually goes on in your mind that has helped you to overcome alcohol addiction and then you found effective in helping other people to overcome alcohol addiction.

Rose Anne Forte

Yeah. And let me give you the one-minute summary of what I discussed in the other podcast. Leader in the church, loved Jesus, thought alcohol was fine. It's not a sin to drink alcohol, but I started using it for, I started turning to it instead of God to solve a lot of my problems, including a difficult marriage, stress in the workplace, you know, four kids, trying to be a traditional wife, a church leader, all that. So I ended up going to a secular program, learning about the science of the brain and realizing that everything, everybody was teaching and on the scientific part of healing, what I like to call healing, was all based in God's word. And so I ended up writing this daily devotional to match these scientific principles with, wait, God said it first. So the name of the devotional is called The Plans he has for me, right? And the foundational principle for healing from addiction is to have hope that something can change.

Rose Anne Forte

So I love Jeremiah 29 11, for I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord plans to prosper you and not harm you plans to give you hope in a

future. And we talked in the first episode about how God's word is truth. And this is truth, right? And I love my story and testimony, because I didn't quit drinking till I was 60 years old. And so one would think that there wasn't a lot of hope left for me to do something different. I had, I had explained that I was praying for God to be done with me on this earth. But he had a plan, he had a plan for me to prosper and not harm me. And that's why I named that devotional, The Plans He Has For Me, because no matter where you are, you can never say it's too late. God promises he will use your story for his purpose and kingdom. And so that I think is foundational principle number one, for lack of a better term, we need to have hope in something that can change. And we need to believe God's word is truth that he has a better plan for us. So that's, that's the first foundational principle of kind of being ready, knowing that something can change.

Rose Anne Forte

I would say that the other thing that matches scripture and science together is, again, we have practiced something that has created a new brain structure for us, right, called a neurological pathway. But neuroscience and habit change say that we can create new pathways.

Rose Anne Forte

And again, now I'm going to bring this back to scripture. First Timothy 4:15, practice these things, immerse yourself in them so that all may see your progress. And he's talking about God's word. And that's what the devotional is doing. It's keeping you in God's word, it's keeping you in practice, it's keeping you focused on him. And we're also focused on Romans 12:2, because God did say we can renew our minds by testing things. And so while we're in this devotional, we are testing is my life better or worse because of it. And we can't assess whether it's better or worse in a week, or two weeks, we have to give it time to set patterns. And so the devotional is for a 12-week period of time to test over time, is my life getting better? And people who go through it say, heck yeah, I love my life.

Rose Anne Forte

And then I personally, I like the choice-based model after that period of time where we're being refined and tested and creating neural pathways, because God gives us choice, right? He always gives us choice, whether it's sin or not sin. And I used to be a cigarette smoker, which is a very addictive substance. I used to be an alcohol, excessive alcohol drinker. And now my hardest choice deals with chocolate cake. It's not cigarettes, it's not alcohol, it's whether or not I want to engage in chocolate cake, because it also has consequences.

Shea Houdmann

Different and not as bad consequences, but yes, there are consequences.

Rose Anne Forte

But what I started noticing for me is it started creating the same high that I wanted it excessively. It disrupted my sleep. It made me struggle with weight loss, right? So all I'm saying is we're always tempted. We're always, we just have to be strong in our resolve and our direction about what's best for us, what God wants for us. And so in Romans 12:2 do not conform to the patterns of this world. And this world certainly calls for normalcy and drinking on every possible known occasion, which is what I did. And it says, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, changing neural pathways. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will. And when we can make it 12 weeks and a new mindset, we can now know what is pleasing to God versus not. We have strong evidence. So that's, that's one of the basis of the devotional.

Rose Anne Forte

Again, in, in the science world, we're told about the necessity of, of being aware that the, of the story we're telling ourselves, of being aware why we reach for it, you know, it's going to give me, it's going to solve for anxiety. It's going to make me fit in better. It's going, you know, it's, it's being aware of the stories we're telling ourselves and, and understanding the lie. Well, we go to first Peter five, eight, be sober minded, be watchful your adversary, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. So we always have to be aware of what's going on. We can go back to the, to the garden, right? Be aware of there's a story that he is going to tell you. That is not true. And we can only understand that story when we're sober minded.

Rose Anne Forte

Another thing that I learned when I went through the secular program was the importance of gratitude. And it activates something called the reticular activating system of our mind. It shares when we state or write down what is good in our lives, our brains go, that's important. I'm going to remember that. And it causes us to look at the glass half full versus half empty. And it's incredible. This practice of gratitude, which I have in the devotional people will start like, Oh, it's so hard to even find three things. And then they go, I can't, I don't have room. There's 15 things. There's 20 things, right? You know, I'm sleeping better. I'm losing weight. I'm feeling more connected with my spouse or my significant others. I'm more productive at work. And you just start noticing, but you can't notice when you're not sober minded.

Rose Anne Forte

But so it's this practice of gratitude. God asks us to be thankful for things all through scripture, but I'm going to just call out Philippians 4:6, which says,

don't be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your request to God. So we always need to praise God for what we're grateful for before we, we give our requests to him. And that way, when a situation presents itself to us, as a matter of fact, I mean, I have a really cool practical example of this. Somebody's going through the devotional right now for issues other than alcohol, but she, she said this gratitude practice is crazy. She'll have a really bad day. Something will trigger her. It actually has to do with being in an abusive relationship, right? And she'll get all wound up that day. And then by the next day, she'll go, yeah, I'm really thankful that happened because I learned so much from that situation, right? It's just crazy how, how gratitude can cause you to reflect on all that is good on all that you're learning because the world doesn't, doesn't always hand us, you know, sunshine and roses, right? Sometimes there's some real struggles.

Rose Anne Forte

The devotional and science also calls for kind of meditating on what's going on again, this awareness thing. And God asks us to meditate on his word. Keep Joshua 1:8, keep this book of the law always on your lips, meditated on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. That's what the devotional asks us to do meditate on these scriptures that deal with the truth about deviating from his word, the truth about our circumstances and how, how awesome your life is getting because you're abstaining, right?

Rose Anne Forte

Another principle, I I'm embarrassed to say that I actually learned how to process forgiveness of self in the secular program better than I did in the church. And that is because I could separate, they taught me how to separate facts from my feelings. So a lot of us can understand that we're forgiven intellectually, but we don't feel it. And our feelings aren't always accurate. We have to, we have to take the feelings and look at facts and look at truth. Well, the truth is Jesus died on a cross and he suffered greatly for my sins. And when he says I'm forgiven, when we say, but I don't feel it, we're saying God's word isn't true. Right.

Rose Anne Forte

And one of my coaches, I love that.

I love it. He says, let's just agree with God. Like we can feel not forgiven, but again, that's the enemy's lie. We are forgiven and we're forgiven so that we don't have to look in the past that we can be excited about a future. Right. And, and so the, the devotional calls for that, the forgiveness of

others as well, and trying to release this bitterness that's created in us by what was done to us and to accept the fact that God is going to deal with it. And we can move forward. We can look forward because God has a plan, right?

Shea Houdmann

Rose Anne, so much of what I hear you saying, you said it earlier, that's to be hope. You have to have hope that you, it is possible to overcome the addiction and that once the addiction has been overcome, once victory has been achieved, it will be better. You will, you can find other solutions that you know, way more about the brain science than I do. But like the fact that programming new neural pathways, that when something triggers that previously led you to want to drink or abuse drugs or whatever, now it leads you to something positive, a positive way to fulfill that desire. But just knowing that that's out there, hope is huge.

Rose Anne Forte

And just very recently, it wasn't even that big a deal, but it was an issue where I was feeling hopeless and I was like, I can't see how this is going to get any better. So I'm, I want to give up on this. And then thankfully God through my wife corrected my attitude and not giving up and I'm very glad that I haven't. But it's that lack of hope, I think is what keeps people trapped, enslaved, mastered by alcohol, by other drugs. And that they know it's hard. It's hard to stop doing something like that when your body's literally craving it, your brain wants it. But until you have hope that I can do this with God's help and in the end it will be better. I will feel better. My life will be better. So many things will be better until you have that. It seems to me it's virtually impossible to, to overcome that people will try different drugs or medicines that supposedly help you overcome. I'm not dismissing those, but ultimately without hope addictions are exceedingly difficult to overcome.

Rose Anne Forte

Yeah. They're the foundation of being ready to encounter it because it's, you know, it's not easy. I'm not going to say it's easy to change neural pathways, check in with any habit you have that you want to change. Is it easy? No, but I'm here to tell people it's worth it. There are many people that have done it before you that it's worth it.

Rose Anne Forte

I have one more concept that biblical concept that matches up with science and then I can close it out with my favorite scripture, but it's science of positive intelligence, which tells you that you can capture your thoughts and redirect them. And it lights up an area of your brain. Get this that deals with empathy, love, compassion, and creativity. The science of switching negative thoughts

to positive lights up a part of your brain that deals with love, empathy, compassion, and creativity. Isn't that where God wants us to be? And it just so happens to match up with Second Corinthians 10:5, right?

And think about this on temptation. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. And we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. What is it saying? Not God capture redirect, not God capture redirect. And the more we practice that just like your personal experience, it becomes second nature. Gratitude becomes second nature. Understanding the lies of the enemy becomes second nature. It all becomes second nature. And then I'm, go ahead.

Shea Houdmann

No, go ahead.

Rose Anne Forte

I'm just going to close out with my favorite verse. And that's what I named the Choose Freedom program after it's Galatians 5:1. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Now think about that psychological slavery, right? Stand firm then that's about temptation and do not let yourself be burdened again by a yoke of slavery, right? Psychological slavery, freedom, capturing your thoughts, hope God has a better plan. It all works together. Isn't that wonderful?

Shea Houdmann

It does. Amen. Just thinking through, again, like questions we've gotten over the years about alcohol, other drugs, other addictions, the scripture keeps coming back to me. It helped me to think through it is the First Corinthians 6:12, where it's read the ESV. All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything. We kind of, as we talked in part one, sure, the Bible does not forbid drinking alcohol. So it's lawful. You can do it, but not all things are helpful. We discussed this in the first episode. It's like, is alcohol, even in extremely small quantities with extreme moderation, is it actually helpful? Is it doing you any good to do this?

Shea Houdmann

And then follow up, all things are lawful for me, but I'll not be dominated by anything. And far too often, what starts as drinking occasionally, drinking socially, drinking in moderation, turns into something where it dominates you, becomes an addiction.

Rose Anne Forte

I love that you use that scripture. It's certainly part of one of the days and the devotional, and we can talk about deep fried donuts. We can talk about marijuana.

Shea Houdmann

Hold on. Wait, don't go donuts.

Rose Anne Forte

Deep fried donuts. They're lawful, but are they good for you?

Shea Houdmann

Now you're just meddling in my life.

Rose Anne Forte

Yeah, but marijuana, gambling, pornography. I'm not sure pornography is illegal, right? There's lots of things that are lawful. And I love that you pointed out that scripture, because where is your attention focus? What are we called to do? We're called to be light. And while I was a person who loved Jesus, and I worked in the kingdom, I loved it. I'm sure I had some impact, but my light was very dimmed by a lot of my behaviors. And it's not a fun way to live. I'm living my best life today, today, knowing that he is my focus, knowing that his word is true, knowing that I don't want to deviate anymore. I'm just tired of suffering the consequences of turning my back on God. Not that I don't, I'm still a sinner, but the freedom that I have found in believing and understanding the truth of his word is worth the world.

Shea Houdmann

So Rose Anne, thank you for both these episodes discussing two issues we receive a lot of questions about, and even beyond questions. These are issues that a lot of Christians struggle with, both the question of, is it okay to consume alcohol? And then very sadly, so many people who start in one place end up in 1 Corinthians 6:12 being dominated by it. So we will include links to where you can purchase the plans he has for me, 12-week devotional that Rose Anne wrote, highly, highly recommended. It's very scriptural, but it's an amazing combination of both. Here's what scripture says, and here's how reality of the world, reality of how the mind works, and how God's truth is in both places. And to see all that come together, I think this is a wonderful way for you to both understand both what scripture says about alcohol, and also to overcome, and either this addiction, or possibly other principles are the same. So highly recommended. We'll include links in the show notes at the description when this video goes live on YouTube, and also at podcast.gotquestions.org.

Again, Rose Anne, excellent job on this devotional and following God's lead, and taking something, a trial that he brought you through, a struggle, a sin you had to overcome, and then allowing him to then turn that into a ministry for you. That's powerful, and I love seeing how God works. So thank you for joining me on the conversation today.

Rose Anne Forte

Thank you for having me. It was a pleasure to know that you see this as an issue too. I want people to understand that this is a lot more prevalent than people think. The statistics are through the roof in terms of the people dealing with, whether it's a substance or behavioral addiction, you're not alone.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely. So this has been the Got Questions podcast with Rose Anne Forte discussing in part one, kind of what does the Bible say about alcohol? Is it a sin to drink alcohol? In part two, what does the Bible say about addiction within specific principles that Rose Anne has learned through her life, through her experience on how to overcome addiction? Got questions? The Bible has answers, and we'll help you find them.