

Overcoming Habitual Sin

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalms 119:11)

1. Open up about what you're struggling with.

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. (Proverbs 28:13 NIV)

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16 NIV)

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9 NIV)

When you open up you kill pride and find hope that you can overcome through Christ as others have. Pride is antonym for shame. You feel shame because you don't want to lose your pride. Confession allows you to see the Gospel lived out.

They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (Revelation 12:11 NIV)

You kill pride by testifying as well.

Confess = current sin / Testimony = past sin

2. Learn why God allows us to struggle.

And I (God) have also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; they will become traps for you, and their gods will become snares to you.'" (Judges 2:3 NIV)

The people of Israel desired for God to drive out their enemies just like you want God to drive out yours, but God allowed their enemies to remain. If God really wanted Israel to worship him alone why would he allow these "traps" to remain?

These are the nations the Lord left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience): (Judges 3:1, 2 NIV)

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; (James 1:13)

These scriptures reveal that the source of temptation isn't God. God allows sin to snare you because He is teaching you how to fight. If you think about how the Israelites fought the battles to take the promise land, you see that God would give somewhat bizarre instructions (that really have nothing to do with fighting a battle - Joshua 6:1-27), the Israelites would follow the instructions, then God would win the battle for them. This way the people still participated (God didn't just do it for them, they had a part to play) and the people could by no means take credit for the victory (keeping them humble). Each time a battle was won they learned a lesson about trusting the Lord and their faith was increased.

Ask the Lord: What are You trying to teach me through this struggle? What instructions do You have for me in fighting this battle with You?

3. Identify how you deal with the sin

Ray Ortlund wrote a blog posted about the difference between conviction or accusation. It is helpful in identifying how you deal with your sin. He uses the following scripture in his post.

"He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." (John 16:8)

". . . the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down" (Revelation 12:10)

God the Father is the Judge. You are the defendant. Jesus is the defense attorney. Holy Spirit is His co-counsel. Satan is the prosecuting attorney.

Satan wants to take you to trial and have you punished by death. Jesus and Holy Spirit want you to plead guilty to the Judge and let Jesus take your punishment. Your lawyer could never take your punishment in our earthy court systems but since God is the Judge in this court He will allow Jesus His son to take your punishment because of His great love for you.

Sin is a double waste of time because you waste time committing the sin then waste even more time condemning yourself for committing it.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, (Romans 8:1)

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, (Romans 5:20)

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38,39)

The only thing that can separate us from our Father is our choice to separate ourselves from Him. The key to overcoming sin is not focusing on the sin but focusing on Christ.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:1-4 NIV)

4. Remove the temptation.

If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. (Matt 5:29,30 NIV)

Identify cues/temptations and remove them from your life. Change your people, places, and things. What relationships do you need to abandon? What places should you avoid? What things should you sell or throw out?

Examples: Cancel Netflix, Pay for good accountability software like <https://www.everaccountable.com>, Break up with the significant other, Avoid bars or parties, ect..

5. Change your desires.

...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 1:14,15 NIV)

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4 NIV)

Sin comes from trusting in yourself instead of The Lord. If you find happiness in the Lord and spend time with Him your desires will become like His desires. This is "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection" described by Thomas Chalmers in his famous sermon.

.... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith... (Hebrews 12:1, 2 NIV)

...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor 10:5b)

...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

According to the scriptures below you are supposed to mediate on God's Law, His unfailing love, His works and mighty deeds, His precepts and ways, His decrees, His statutes, and His promises

Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2, Psalm 48:9, Psalm 77:12, Psalm 119:15, Psalm 119:23, Psalm 119:27, Psalm 119:48, Psalm 119:78, Psalm 119:97, Psalm 119:99, Psalm 119:148, Psalm 143:5,, Psalm 145:5

Be captivated by Jesus instead of your sin.

6. Change your routine.

...each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. (James 1:14 NIV)

Identify the sanctified desire or reward. What are you truly desiring that you can get from God instead of the cheap substitute of sin?

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. (1 Cor 10:13 NIV)

Find your way out. Create a new routine/behavior that will fulfill the sanctified desire

7. Avoid self-righteousness.

This is the most dangerous sin of all.

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet 11 to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained." (Philippians 3:12-16 NIV)

Jack Miller says, you must "preach the gospel to yourselves every day." You have to constantly remind yourself of the truth of the Gospel to avoid self-righteousness