

How to Overcome Sin

“Sin enslaves; the truth will make you free.”

Steps to overcome

I. Recognize your sin.

II. Confess your sin.

III. Decide on a behavior or habit to replace a particular sin.

IV. Focus on solution -- not the problem.

(focus on new behavior or habit) (not sin you are overcoming)

V. Come to hate sin.

Scripture basis for each step

I. Recognize your sin.

A. “Sin” is the Greek word “hamartia”.

1. Means to “miss the mark”; “err”
2. Originally it was an archery term.

B. In Romans 7:7, Paul said, “*I would not have come to know sin except through the Law.*” The Law of Moses defined the problem, but did not provide the solution. “*Sin is lawlessness*” (1 John 3:4).

C. In John 16:7-8, Jesus said when the Holy Spirit came, He “*will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*”

D. In I Peter 3:21 the Christian is given a “*good conscience*” through the indwelling Holy Spirit received at baptism. The Christian’s upgraded conscience recognizes sin much more acutely.

1. “*Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin*” (James 4:17).

2. “*Whatever is not from faith is sin*” (Romans 14:23b).

II. Confess your sins.

A. In Proverbs 28:13, God promises that “*he who confesses and forsakes his transgressions will find compassion.*” Confession first mandates our admitting responsibility for and taking ownership of one’s sin. Confession of sin then provides the means to overcome sin.

B. In Mark 1:4-5, John, the forerunner for Jesus and His new covenant, baptized people for the forgiveness of their sins as they confessed their sins.

C. In James 5:16, God directs Christians to “*confess your sins to one another*” in order to be spiritually healed.

D. According to I John 1:8-10, as Christians, “*if we confess our sins,*” God promises “*to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” The cleansing here **removes** unrighteousness.

III. Decide on a behavior or habit to replace a particular sin.

A. In Ephesians, chapters 4 and 5, we are given examples of replacement behaviors for specific sins, as follows:

1. Chapter 4:

- a. v. 25-- “falsehood,” which is lying and deceit
- b. v. 26-27--anger producing sin
- c. v. 28--stealing, theft
- d. v. 29--foul language
- e. v. 31-32--slander, malice, clamor

2. Chapter 5:

- a. v. 3-4--immorality, impurity, greed, coarse jesting
- b. v. 11--deeds of darkness (note: “Expose” means “to bring to bring to light,” not necessarily to make accusation.)
- c. v. 18-19--drunkenness

B. In Ephesians 4:22-24, the pattern for overcoming sin is specifically stated in Scripture:

- 1. v. 22-- “*Lay aside the old self*”; that is, put off our sinful behaviors.
- 2. v. 23-- “*Be renewed in the Spirit of your mind*”; decide what you are going to do with God’s help.
- 3. v. 24-- “*Put on the new self*,” which is patterned after the man Jesus Christ: the One who was “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:5)

IV. Focus on solution--not the problem.

A. Proverbs 23:7 says, “*As a man thinks within himself, so he is.*” What a person thinks about constitutes much of who he is presently, and what he will become in the days ahead. Therefore, all of our outward behavior starts with our thoughts and mental focus.

B. A New Testament verse, Romans 8:6, states, “*The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.*” If the mind is set on the problem (sin and the flesh), then the result is sin and death. But the mind set on the solution (new attitudes and behaviors inspired by the Holy Spirit), results in the abundant life Jesus came to give us.

C. According to Romans 8:12-13, the indwelling Holy Spirit is the inner power source for the Christian to “*put to death the deeds of the body,*” which are sinful, fleshly deeds. Simply put, for the Christian, overcoming sin doesn’t come by “trying harder,” but instead by “believing more” in the power of the Holy Spirit residing in our bodies.

D. According to Romans 12:2, we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. So, what the mind absorbs is of utmost importance from books, magazines, music, movies, and/or computer imagery. And of course, the people we associate with and the environment we place ourselves within have much to do with our overcoming the sin; Proverbs 13:20, 1 Corinthians 15:33.

E. According to II Corinthians 3:18, transformation comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit receiving the Word of God through the Christian's sense gates; reading and hearing the Word.

F. 1 John 3:3 states: "*And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*" This hope consists of what we will be when Jesus returns for us; in our glorified bodies having intimate fellowship with our Lord in Heaven forever. When one concentrates on this hope, the Scripture promises an innate, programmed result that the person will "*purify himself, just as He [Jesus] is pure.*"

G. In II Corinthians 5:17, "*If...*" the "*old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*" For the Christian, the old sinful way of life is in the past tense, the "*new things*" are in the present tense.

V. The Outcome.

A. God empowers the Christian to overcome the world.

1. "*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith*" (1 John 5:4).

2. "*You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world*" (1 John 4:4).

B. God expects Christians to overcome sin.

1. "*Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has **ceased from sin**, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God*" (1 Peter 4:1-2).

2. Jesus, after saving the adulterous woman from being stoned to death, told her: "*Go. From now on sin no more*" (John 8:11).

C. God rewards those who overcome: Revelation 2:7, 2:11, 2:16, 2:26-28, 3:5, 3:12, 3:21, 21:1-7.

D. Therefore, the way to overcome sin is now available to all who are in Christ Jesus. The only question that remains is: "Will you take it?"

VI. Come to hate sin.*

A. In Romans 12:9 the Christian is to "*abhor what is evil.*" The word abhor means to find something so foul and disgusting, that one gets as far away from it as possible. We need to learn that all sin is evil.

B. In Jude 22-23, Christians are described as "*hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.*" In this context, God commands us to love the person, but hate his sin. This is especially important as to how we view ourselves.

C. I John 3:8 says, “. . . *the one who practices sin is of the devil.*” If one abhors the devil, then he must hate the practice of sin.

D. Psalm 38:3-8,18 reveals David’s anguish and inner torment brought on by his sin. David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 14:13).

E. Proverbs 8:13 says, “*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride, arrogance, and the evil way.*” As Christians we are to concentrate on our own sin first and foremost. Being judgmental of others constitutes sin: notice “pride” and “arrogance” are listed before “the evil way.”

1. Jesus puts it this way: “*Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye*” (Matthew 7:1-5).

2. Looking to overcome one’s own sin keeps us humble and in the Way. As the Scriptures often repeat: “*God is opposed to the proud*” (1 Peter 5:5, Proverbs 3:34).

F. Ultimately Jesus is our example. The sons of Korah prophesied of our Lord in the Psalms: “*YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS*” (Hebrews 1:9/ Psalm 45:7). Therefore a true love of righteousness will produce a hatred for sin.

*Note: If one does not learn to hate a particular sin, he will never be able to completely and permanently overcome it!

Steve Compton

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