



SESSION 10: BREAKING THE HABIT (1)

Wrestling with habits can often cause a deep sense of frustration. You can have a tough time beating alcoholism and drug addiction forever. Our previous inability to break addictive habits can create an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and despair. This is especially true for those who have sought to overcome these addictive habits but soon discover that they are not always easy to defeat. We cannot solve this addiction problem with simplistic answers or the quick fixes we were used to. This problem can however be answered through Christ.

Many of us have tried and failed to get and remain sober, probably on multiple attempts. Maybe, we tried to do this in our own strength? Let me tell you that becoming sober on our own will not suffice. There is more to it. The question we need to ask is whether there is genuine hope. Before we can successfully deal with sinful habits, we have to understand that there are no hopeless situations in Christ. Our habits are no exception. By now we understand that we are on the losing end of addiction. We are and were robbed of many things in life, but what does the Bible say about how we used to live?

“ Don’t you realise that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don’t fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, 10 or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. 11 Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Cor 6:0-11

In 1 Cor. 6:9-10, Paul lists the sinful practices which the Corinthians were habitually involved in. He included drunkenness, homosexuality, and thievery.

In verse eleven, Paul said this critical statement: “And such were some of you.” This verse is a strong encouragement for all those seeking a lasting release from life-dominating habits. The

wording is in the past tense, “were”. Paul reveals that God has made it possible to overcome what seems impossible; our old, habitual ways. Jesus did not just provide a temporary or halfway solution. No, He gives a permanent victory over every conceivable practice. If He could do it for them, He can do it for us!

Is There a Solution

Absolutely! This Scripture guarantee: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). However, some Christians believe this is not always possible.

Sobriety can have many unsuccessful attempts at overcoming our habits, so we eventually resign ourselves to failure. We have defeated ourselves before we even begin.

Although we may have lost a few battles, the war has not been lost. Despite our previous failures, we must not settle for total defeat. In order to overcome addiction, we must recommit ourselves to following God's divine instructions. Let us then examine the following scriptural steps for a complete and permanent victory over our sinful habits.

1. We Must Sincerely Repent

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Sincere repentance is the first step.

Before we can defeat addictive habits, we must recognise addiction's sinfulness. It is impossible to overcome addiction unless we understand this fundamental fact.

We must not try to conquer our sinful habits to ease guilt or soothe our troubled conscience. Our motives must not be based on others' persuasion, or to keep our job, your spouse or a friendship. It must be based upon a sincere, godly conviction to please God and appropriate His cleansing power and forgiveness.

2. We Must Appropriate God's Power

Before we can bring God's power to deal with the problem, we must recognise that we have a problem. If we ignore it, minimize it, or overlook it, our addictive habit will only reinforce itself.

We must identify the habit and consider its nature, frequency, and occurrence. When we have given proper attention to the problem area, we can wage effective warfare against it.

After isolating the problem, we should attack it through persistent prayer. If we draw upon Christ's power through prayer, He will provide us with the strength we need. We must not rely upon our own might, as it will not be sufficient, but upon the divine resources of the Holy Spirit to combat our addictive habits.

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; But be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5:18). This verse illustrates both the positive and negative sides of change.

Instead of allowing ourselves to be dominated by old habits, we should strive for the Holy Spirit to be the prevailing influence in our lives daily. When we are filled with His presence, we receive the necessary strength, support, and willpower to overcome the “lust of the flesh” (Gal.5:16, 17 KJV).

We must replace our old habits with constructive alternatives. In Ephesians 5: 19-20 Paul reveals some practical steps for accomplishing this.

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3. We Must Strive for Change.

The scriptures teach us that change is a vital part of our development in Christ (11Cor.3:18). Change is fundamental for overcoming sinful habits.

Without change, our habits and addictive behaviour will persist. Change must be more than just stopping drinking and using drugs. Many attempts have been made to implement this change without lasting success. You must change everything if you want to become sober and break the habit.

Change must involve more than saying, "NO!" Change is not just a matter of willpower or determination. It is not turning over a new leaf or making bold promises to quit. Quitting is not change. This is only a half-way response which provides half-way results. If this is all we do to change, our change will only be temporary and superficial.

Scriptural change involves a two-fold process: Real change is not just stopping addictive or sinful habits, but replacing them with godly actions. Only when we change our practices and relearn positive habits and behaviours can we really win.

Paul points out this two-fold process in Colossians 3:8;10. He exhorts us to "put off" our old practices. He then encourages us to "put on the new man"

This putting "off" is the negative side of change. This is critical, but in itself, insufficient. We must also apply the positive side of change which involves putting "on" biblical alternatives. This is the key to successful change.

We must restructure our lives according to God's Word. We must change and move in the right direction. We must be filled with the Spirit.

4. Apply the Cleansing Power of the Word

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to your word” (Psalms 119:9). The Word cleanses our old ways.

In referring to God’s desire for His church, Paul stated, “That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:26). The Word is a cleansing agent for our thoughts, desires, and inclinations.

We should carefully consider those scriptural passages which have a specific bearing on the need for godly change and His provision for help. If we meditate upon God's Word and take heed to His counsel, it will gradually cleanse our ways and purify our habits.

5. We Must Bring Our Habits Under Subjection

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1Cor.9:27).

We must discipline our habits with firmness. Participating in our old ways must be confronted and suppressed. If we allow our minds to fantasize, flirt with or entertain the thought of using drugs or drinking, we will suffer defeat.

Sobriety and breaking habits depend on decisive action. When faced with temptation to continue our old sinful ways, behaviours and habits, we must challenge that desire with God's Word. Faced with temptation, we should pray to the Lord as a warning signal. Our determination to confront our habits is an effective safeguard against failure. If you’re an alcoholic, you cannot visit pubs and think you will not fall. You cannot go to drug houses and think you can resist temptation. If you play on a rugby field you are bound to get tackled.

6. We Must Form Right Relationships

Scripture reveals the destructive power of wrong relationships: “Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character” (1Cor. 15:33, NIV). Harmful relationships only reinforce sinful habits (Prov.22:24,25).

Old friendships and associates can be destructive. Our old hangouts can also create compromising situations for those trying to overcome addiction and break their habits. **STAY AWAY FROM THOSE OLD FRIENDS! THEY WILL ONLY DRAG YOU DOWN.**

This fact demands a godly alternative. We must terminate those associations that hinder us and surround ourselves with healthy relationships that reinforce godliness. We must strengthen ties with Christian believers and center our activities around the church (Heb. 10:24,25).

7. We Must Not Give Up!

“A just man falleth seven times and riseth up again” (Prov.24:16, KJV). Even if we fall short in our quest for sobriety and breaking the habit, we must rise up and never give up.

We must persevere to achieve freedom and victory. We must not let our failures discourage, frustrate, or disillusion us. Failures must not make us give up. It takes time to establish godly alternatives. There is no instant success, like the quick fix we knew before. Science reveals that it takes approximately 21 days to learn a new habit. Persistence and determination are essential.

We must never entertain a spirit of quitting or defeat. We must press on in the confidence that we “Can do all things through Christ who strengthens” us (Phil.4:13).