

Dealing with Addictions to Bad Habits

Seven teachings or principles dealing with addictions:

What is a bad habit?

A bad habit is usually a sin of the flesh or a sin of the heart that is practiced so often that it becomes the character of that person; it becomes part of their nature. Many a time it has turned into an addiction and people have confessed to God the sin of these habits, but they still have the addiction.

God forgives us when we confess our sins to him. A lot of times because it has become a fabric of their nature, it has been practiced so often it becomes an addiction. It actually becomes a part of the character of that person. They don't mean to be but it becomes a sin of our flesh.

Sins of the flesh are such things as cigarette smoking, alcohol, drugs, gluttony, and laziness. One of the biggest addictions of our day is television. (It is always on from the first thing in the morning until the last thing at night. To many, it is their source of comfort, their source of and strength. They actually get very nervous if it is not on. It becomes their personal comforter.)

To have it on all the time, I think that, that is wrong! Our Comforter is the Holy Spirit of God. The television for many is the substitute for what God has provided you with.

Then there are the sins of the heart. These can just as much become bad habits or addictions. Pornography is the sin of the heart called lust. Gambling is the sin of the heart called covetousness. Then there is...

Col 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

Pride! Some folks are addicted to pride! Addicted to constantly exalting themselves, and putting others down!

These are addictions that can be recognized and sure enough if you deal with people long enough you will find individuals with these types of addictions.

A character flaw in their nature that is produced by a constant practice of some sin of the flesh or some sin of the heart.

So... What do we do for them? Let me give you seven principles to help those who are struggling with bad habits.

I. The principle of CONFESSION:

Almost all counselors agree that a person must admit to himself or herself that they have this addiction before they can be helped.

Whether you go to gamblers anonymous, or alcoholic anonymous, narcotics anonymous or whatever you go to, there first has to be an admission of addiction. "I have a problem!"

My friend that is based on scripture!

James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.

It may no longer be a sin in your life because you have confessed it and Jesus has forgiven you for it. But it still can be a fault in your life. A horrible character flaw that must be broken. There must be a confession of that. A person must be honest.

In the Book of Ephesus, where it talks to the Christian about putting on the whole armour of God, the first piece of armour speaks of being truthful and honest.

Eph 6:13-14 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

You must be honest with yourself and those around you if you are going to get victory in the battle, victory in your life over these addictions or bad habits.

You have got to be honest enough to say, "I have got a problem." "I have got a fault."

My friend that is the principle of confession. You and I know when they continually deny that they have a problem when it is as clear as the nose on their face, there is NO hope for them.

There has to be the principle of confession!

II. We need to teach them the principle of FREEDOM:

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

We see from these passages of scripture that freedom comes from two sources. They are truth and the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

You must convince the person that you are counseling with, that Jesus Christ cares about their need and that freedom is God's will for their lives.

Turn with me to Rom. Chapter 7. Here we see that even good people, that even great men have struggles. Here we see the Apostle Paul telling us of his inward struggles.

Outwardly, the Apostle Paul looked like a man who had it all together, didn't he? He said...

Phil 3:4-7 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

But inwardly he said this... *Rom 7:15-24 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

I don't know about you, but I am glad that is in the Bible. I'm glad that he took a whole chapter to show us just what a rotten person he thought he was, so we don't picture him as some super human being whose example was unattainable. He said of himself that he was rotten to the core! "That in me that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing!"

Don't we all feel that we fall short of the glory of God and His expectations of us? I'm glad that God uses ordinary people with ordinary problems like the Apostle Paul, you and I.

He said in this passage, "I am struggling!" It is very important that you show people who are in the same boat this verse that Paul writes here in vs. 25. What does it say? *Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

This is the principle of freedom! Then he goes on in chapter eight as the victory chapter, as the Holy Spirit is now filling him and controlling him. We are weak in the flesh but Jesus Christ can help us. He can and will set you free. And if the Son of man will set you free ye shall be free indeed!

Jesus Christ can set us free, the truth can set us free, and we have got to teach them that God loves you, God cares for you and that freedom from your sins is part of His perfect will for your life.

Rom 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you:

2 Cor 1:9-10 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

Past, present and future deliverance is found in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ!

III. The principle of SEPARATION:

When Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage, they escaped into the wilderness. God told them to put some space between them and the Egyptians.

Ex 14:13-14 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. 14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

God will fight for you! Jesus Christ will strengthen you and help you. We don't get saved by ourselves, or keep our salvation by ourselves or deals with our problems by ourselves. He is always there to help and to heal.

We don't get saved from our sins by the work of Christ and then delivered from our habits by our own flesh. Jesus Christ strengthens us to do that.

Phil 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

You have relied on the lord for your salvation, now it is time to rely upon Him for your deliverance and strength and victory over your faults.

God did put distance between Israel and Egypt. He put a boundary there called the Red Sea. He told them, Get out of Egypt, get away from those people, get across the Red Sea and burn those bridges behind you!

The problem with most people is that they do not separate themselves from the cause or the source of their supply, which continues the addiction. "Don't leave sin a forwarding address!" Do not flirt with your sin, do not keep temptation around.

Eph 4:27 Neither give place to the devil. In other words, don't set a plate at the table for him!

Put distance between you and your fault, you and your bad habit, you and your addiction, you and that old crowd you use to hang out with, you and the source of supply for that addiction.

That is the principle of separation.

Make a clear separation from Egypt (which is a type of the world) and get out into the promise land where the blessings of God are found, where the milk and honey flow!

1 Thess 5:22-24 Abstain from all appearance of evil. 23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

The principle of separation must be taught. We have got to stay away from it and its evil influences on your life.

IV. The principle of REPLACEMENT:

When Israel was in the wilderness they got to lusting after the leeks, onions and the garlic of Egypt, do you remember that? So what did God give them to replace their desires with? He gave them manna from heaven. He gave them a replacement for what they were lusting for. You have got to replace things.

When I got saved, God saved me out of the rock n roll culture. I had many albums and decided to get rid of all of them. I replaced it with Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. The problem with many Christians is that they want to have "the best of both worlds." They want Jesus and their rock n roll. I got rid of my alcohol and

replaced it with root beer, or ice tea, or lemonade. I got rid of my gambling for recreation and replaced it with Bible studies, and fellowship with other saints of God.

Some people replace cigarettes with chewing gum or candy and find that it helps.

Some folks have to receive medication to help them over addictions or bad habits.

Sometimes these problems are caused by something more deep rooted like fear, worry, anxiety, or depression. We must endeavor to get them to trust in the Lord with all their hearts and experience His peace and His joy. Then these things tend to go away.

We show them how to replace these fears with the joy of the Lord and the peace of God, and help them to realize that He will supply all their needs.

Hopefully they will come to a point where they can turn to their cigarettes and their drugs and say, "I don't need this anymore!"

It is strange that some people get miraculous deliverance over these things the day they are saved, while others toil over the grip that they have on their lives for years to come.

(Ex. Bobby Garnier' God delivered him from cigarettes right here at this altar in Aug. of 1996. I was preaching a message on the Lord's supper. His step-mom got saved, and he was delivered from tobacco. He will give you that testimony if you talk with him.

The principle of replacement: God gave his people manna to replace what they had been lusting for. God miraculously fed them there. We need to starve the old man and to feed the new man. The one that is the strongest is the one that we feed the most. If we feed the new man we will find him getting stronger and healthier and that old man or that old nature getting weaker and starving to death.

Christian friend, we have a responsibility. *Rom 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

That is the principle of replacement.

Some of you may have to replace your old friends with some new friends. Some of your junk food for something healthier, gambling with giving, or evil works with good works.

There needs to be a replacement of these things in our lives to fill those voids. We are going to fill it with something. We are going to fill our time with something. We are going to fill our minds with something, so we have got to teach them a replacement.

V. The principle of RESISTANCE:

Let me explain what I mean here. When Jesus was tempted of the devil, He resisted the devil using scripture. We are taught in the scriptures... *James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

We have got to put up a fight! As you are counseling individuals who have these bad habits, you have to inform them that this may be the biggest battle they have ever fought, but they will have to fight in order to get the victory.

1 Peter 5:8-9a Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith...

One of the flaws in the devils character is that he cannot stand being resisted! He cannot handle that! We have a promise from God's Holy Word that if we resist the devil, he WILL flee from you!

The principle of resistance is very important. And to resist we need some tools at our disposal. The first is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. When Jesus was tempted of the devil after fasting for forty days in the wilderness, in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, He met every single temptation by quoting a verse of scripture.

Eph 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

That is what Jesus did. When tempted by the devil He took the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and was able to fend off the enemy, by quoting a corresponding piece of scripture to the temptation. Now what happened? The devil left him for a season.

The Word of God works, when people use it. If you have all the armour on that Eph. 6 talks about but you don't have a sword to fight back with, you can last a while in the battle, dodging darts and enemy fire. But you're not going to gain without an offensive weapon. And the only offensive weapon that is available and works, is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. You need this book more than you realize!

That Bible says, "Take the Sword of the Spirit..." Does that mean you have to carry around with you an old King James Bible everywhere you go? Not really, But it needs to be in your heart!

Ps 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Find out what and where your weaknesses and faults are in your life. Look up and find about five verses of scripture that deals with the subject and will help you get the victory over that sin and memorize them!

I have seen people with weaknesses and faults in their lives and I have asked them, "Tell me honestly, can you quote for me, word perfectly, one verse of scripture that pertains to your problem?"

You may ask, "Will it help me?" YES, it will! When those bad habits start controlling you and the addictions begin to grasp their hold on you, you will have some ammunition to fight back with. Jesus did! When He was tempted of the devil in the wilderness, He would quote scripture saying, "As it is written."

You may have a problem or addiction is anger. If so, then it probably has become part of your character. You are prone to constantly "fly off the handle," and explode when things don't go your way. You're a hot head! You throw your little temper tantrums and are prone to yelling, screaming, throwing things, slamming doors etc.

I don't believe that God wants you to live like that the rest of your life. So, We need some verses to memorize so that we can deal with it.

Eph 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

When you are ready to explode reminds you of His Word, by using the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Commit some verses of scripture to memory so the Holy Spirit has something to fight with when the times of weakness arise.

If you don't know any verses, you will fall, fall, and fall! That's when people begin to make their stupid excuses like, "that's just the way God made me!" NO IT ISN'T!

By using scripture, you can get victory in your life! If your problem is being a habitual liar, then get some verses of scripture that deal with lying.

If it is dealing with dishonesty; Alcohol and drug abuse; smoking etc. Find appropriate verses of scripture that will help you.

VI. Principle of Association:

We need to learn to disassociate ourselves with people and certain influences in our lives. Abraham Lincoln said, "You are going to be the same person you are a year from today, except for the people you meet, and the books you read."

There is a whole lot more influences today than what Abraham Lincoln had to deal with like computers, internet, TV, movies and magazines.

We may have to disassociate ourselves from evil and other people.

1 Cor 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Associate with good people – Go To Church! There is a greater percentage of them there than anywhere else!

Ps 1:1-6 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

This type of man gets into the law of the Lord, and hangs around God's people.

We must spend more time around God's people and with God's Book, so good habits will rub off onto you verses having bad habits rubbing off onto you from being with the devils crowd.

None of us are self made men and women. Our lives have been a collection of influences by everyone and everything around us.

VII. Principle Of Praise

1 Cor 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

It is Jesus Christ who gives us the victory! If you are saved, you can look back and see something that He has changed in your life for the better.

2 Cor 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

My God is the one who can help you!

Prov 24:16 For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again:

(times= years!) Get up again!