

5 Phases of Sin You Need to Watch For

Once you defeat Satan, he is guaranteed to return for a rematch.

Sophia Ruffin knows a thing or two about staying in a right relationship with God. After becoming a Christian, she embarked on a journey to overcome her pre-Jesus temptations.

It wasn't easy. In fact, life after the altar is even harder.

"Were you expecting to give your life to Christ and—poof!—all of your demons would be gone, never to return again?" Ruffin challenges readers in her book *Set Free and Delivered: Strategies and Prayers to Maintain Freedom* (Charisma House, 2018).

There's no getting away from it. By becoming a follower of Christ, we become a threat to evil.

With this reality in mind, Ruffin examines five phases of the sin cycle where Christians need to guard their hearts against spiritual attack.

Temptation

"This was the place I found myself numerous times during my process," Ruffin admits.

The enemy seeks to destroy the seed of our faith as early in the process as possible. When the door is ever-so-slightly creaked open, Satan will barge through.

Ruffin encourages Christians to be mindful of these access points. After all, the Bible doesn't just warn about sin. It also warns about the *door* to sin.

When Proverbs 5:8 instructs Christians on how to resist an adulteress, it says: "Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house."

Ruffin urges Christians to "be sober and watchful" because the enemy constantly "walks around as a roaring lion" (1 Pet. 5:8) and seeks opportunities to upend your faith.

Guilt

Too guilty to open her Bible. Too guilty to pray. Too guilty to face God.

Ruffin shares her experience of feeling crippled by guilt and spending hours in silence while the enemy tormented her. Despite feeling sincerely sorry for her sin, she could not move on.

While God desires us to have a repentant heart, He also wants us to then "go and sin no more" (John 8:11). In this place of extreme guilt, we need to be assured that if we confess our sins, then God will be "faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Shame

"I did whatever I could to keep the presence of God from me."

Ruffin writes about how shame and humiliation drove her away from God. But the reality is, when sin goes unaddressed, the enemy maintains his stronghold.

"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

When an old sin habit suddenly returns, it can be tempting to suffer in silence out of shame. But confessing your sin to a trusted brother or sister in Christ will give you a leg up in overcoming the attack.

Ruffin encourages transparency in the church because “if someone might overpower another by himself” then “two together can withstand him” and “a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl. 4:12).

Condemnation

For Ruffin, feeling condemned meant feeling unfit to be a Christian. It was as if she needed to be deserving of salvation in order to receive it.

“This is the trick of the enemy,” she says, “making you believe you can do something to earn God’s grace.”

In this phase, we need not only to recognize the pride in our hearts and come to Jesus with our failures. We should also recognize how we are saved only through the blood of Jesus. Not by our strength. Not by our works.

Forgiveness

God is not a deadbeat Father. Ruffin reflects on how He restored her when she cried out to Him.

“God hears the groans of His children, and when you cry out, He will deliver you from your bondage,” she says.

We should not only be assured that if we confess our sins, we will be forgiven. We must also “endure discipline” because “what son is there whom a father does not discipline?” (Heb. 12:7). God the Father will use our cry to grow us up as His follower.

Through these different phases of dealing with sin, Ruffin shows how having the right heart posture builds us up in the faith. In the midst of struggles and spiritual attack, we are called to remember that “tribulation produces patience, patience produces character, and character produces hope” (Rom. 5:3-4).

“Don’t allow what you are experiencing right now in the cycle to make you quit,” Ruffin says. “Get back up, dust yourself off and get back in the game. God is cheering you on.”{eo}

*This article is based on Set Free and Delivered: Strategies and Prayers to Maintain Freedom (Charisma House, 2018) by **Sophia Ruffin**. Ruffin is founder of Dope Chic but Holy Chic Ministries in Chicago. Gifted with a strong prophetic anointing, she has ministered throughout the United States, bringing power and a radical message of deliverance. Ruffin is a prolific minister, a sought-after conference speaker and the author of From Point Guard to Prophet, Shame and After the Altar. She resides in the Chicago area with her mother, Doris Ruffin.*