

Greg Laurie: How Believers Fall Into Sin One Step at a Time

Every now and then, I read an article about some fairly well-known person who says, “I was a Christian, but I’m not a Christian anymore.”

So how does this happen? How does someone get to that point?

I can guarantee that the steps that led to that statement go back a long way. It doesn’t happen suddenly. They didn’t wake up one morning and say, “I’m going to deny my faith and turn from God today.”

No, it’s a series of steps and compromises that always lead to something like that.

For example, we know about Simon Peter’s open denial of Christ. But where did it start? It began with a prideful attitude. In the upper room, Jesus told His disciples that one of them would betray Him and that He would be crucified.

But Peter said, “Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will” (Mark 14:29, NLT).

Then Jesus told him, “I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me” (Mark 14:30).

Peter thought there was no way this could happen. That was pride. And the Bible says that pride goes before a fall. This was Peter’s first step down.

His next step down was sleeping when he should have been praying. Jesus took his three friends Peter, James and John to the Garden of Gethsemane and said, “Keep watch and pray, so

that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!" (Matt. 26:41).

But instead of praying, they fell asleep. Then, when the temple guard came to arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant.

The problem with Peter was that he boasted when he should have been humble, he slept when he should have prayed and he fought when he should have trusted the Lord. Then he ended up openly denying Him.

Those smaller steps led to bigger steps. Small things turn into big things. And little sins become big sins.

Let's remember that mighty Goliath, whom David faced in the Valley of Elah, wasn't always a giant. He was a baby once (probably a large baby). But that baby became a giant, and one day David was facing a nine-foot-six-inch hulk of a man covered in body armor.

That's what happens. We neglect sins, we negotiate with the enemy and we make deals with the devil. And all of sudden we have a bona fide giant we're facing in life because we underestimated the power of sin.

Samson is another good illustration of this. He was such a mighty warrior that no one could bring him down on the battlefield. On one occasion, he killed 1,000 Philistines.

So the devil sized him up and thought, *I know how to get this guy*. He sent the beautiful Delilah, whose name means "delicate." She said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength *lies*, and with what you may be bound to afflict you" (Judg. 16:6, NKJV).

By the way, if someone says that to you, it isn't the start of a good relationship. But Samson thought it was a joke. And that was his undoing.

So how does it happen? How do people fall into sin?

It happens through compromise, one step at a time.

Don't ever think you couldn't fall. You are capable of falling to the worst sins imaginable, and so am I.

Has compromise begun to infiltrate your life? It often happens when people have walked with the Lord for a time. This usually isn't an issue when you're in the first bloom of your relationship with Christ.

But when you've been a Christian for a time, you can become weakened by certain things. However, there are some safeguards you can set up in your life that will help you deal with the so-called gray areas of life.

There are certain black-and-white areas you don't need to think about or pray about, of course, because you already know what God says.

For instance, is it OK for you to steal?

No. The Bible says, "You must not steal" (Ex. 20:15, NLT).

Is it OK for you to have an adulterous relationship?

No. The Bible says, "You must not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14).

OK, but what about those things we're uncertain about? We're not sure whether they're right or wrong.

You can ask three questions before you engage in those activities.

First, does it build you up spiritually, or does it tear you down? The apostle Paul wrote, "You say, 'I am allowed to do anything' –but not everything is good for you. You say, 'I am allowed to do anything' –but not everything is beneficial" (1 Cor. 10:23).

So instead of asking, “Can I technically do it?” ask yourself whether it will build you up spiritually or potentially tear you down.

Next, does it bring you under its power? Again, Paul wrote, “You say, ‘I am allowed to do anything’—but not everything is good for you. And even though ‘I am allowed to do anything,’ I must not become a slave to anything” (1 Cor. 6:12). If you can’t go an hour without doing a certain thing, that isn’t good. You’re under its control.

Finally, do you have an uneasy conscience about it? The Bible says, “If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning” (Rom. 14:23b). Just because someone else does something, it doesn’t mean that you should.

Have you allowed compromise into your life? There’s only one thing to do. You’ve got to clean house. You have to acknowledge it, be specific about it, and then ask God to help you change those areas that need to change.

Little compromises can lead to big sins. Don’t let it happen to you. {eoa}

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