

Have You Neglected This Vital Step to Addiction Recovery?

In Bible college, I cried out to God and constantly looked for Scriptures to help me get free from my addiction. Early in my walk with Jesus, I found a very familiar Scripture that anyone who fails again and again can cling to for forgiveness. Here is what I found:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

When I messed up, I did what you probably did as well. I knelt down, sometimes crying for Jesus to forgive and cleanse me. Like you, I experienced true forgiveness. I felt the forgiveness of Jesus. I believed his blood had more power than my sin in which I was choosing to participate. I felt cleansed, and this would last for days or weeks until I acted out in the sin again; then wham-o! The guilt and shame came back and I would be forgiven again.

I think you get the picture. Most of you lived the same movie: Act out in your addiction patterns (sin), ask for forgiveness and do it all over again. This pattern is all too familiar for most of us.

I was confessing my sin to Jesus. He was forgiving me. Why wasn't I getting any better?

I had a client once say: “Yeah, I would ask Jesus to forgive me and then ask Him to keep my behavior a secret and not tell my spouse, partner, friends or anybody else. Imagine me asking Jesus, who is truth, to keep my secret.” This was me, too, for years; confessing, wanting secrecy and staying forgiven but not healed or free.

Why wasn't I getting free? Why wasn't God helping me? Why was I falling again and again? Well, quite simply, I was using the wrong principle to get the result I truly needed. Instead of just hanging out with 1 John, I needed another Scripture that I'll share with you in a minute.

God often tells me to do something first (obey); then He shares with me the Scripture or principle (revelation). This was no different. So now I'll tell you the obedience part that preceded the revelation part.

My desire for alcohol and drugs left me at my salvation commitment at 19 years of age, though I first accepted Christ as a youth in a Salvation Army camp (thank God for the Salvation Army!). I struggled with my sexual addiction (mostly self-sex behavior). I was in seminary, working on my master's degree, preparing to go into full-time ministry.

I had a roommate in my dorm who was slightly different from me; a really awesome and gracious man of God. One day, I genuinely felt the Lord tell me to let my roommate know every time I participated in self-sex behavior. I was not excited about this at all, but my deal with God was to do 100 percent of what he told me to do, so I told my roommate what the Lord told me to do, and he was OK with it.

Not even a week later, I needed the courage to tell my roommate I had fallen. I never felt so humiliated in my entire life. He graciously forgave me. About a week or so later, I fell again and felt really humiliated when I told my roommate. However, something wonderful happened after that second time. I genuinely did not want to do the behavior anymore. The desire to act waned greatly. I had a few more slips, but they were many weeks apart.

"Confess your faults to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much" (James 5:16).

“If” is really a critical part of this verse. This means “if” I confess, I can be healed or made free. If I don’t confess, I am guaranteed to stay sick, or in my case, addicted. I was utilizing the principle of confessing my faults (acts or behavior) to another Christian of the same gender, so recovery and healing came to my life and stayed.

If you truly want to get free and stay free from your addiction behavior, be it alcohol, drugs, sex, codependency, work, carbohydrates, sugar, nicotine or caffeine, you *have to* confess to another person. To be free, you have to be honest and accountable to another person of the same gender. {eoa}

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