

Quit Trying to Be Good

Why you should stop trying to change yourself ... and instead  accept the gift of conviction

I used to be a very frustrated Christian, trying to be “good,” trying to have some sense of worthiness and righteousness in my relationship with Christ.

But then I found out the good news: I was put in right standing with God by His grace, because He loves me. I am made the righteousness of God through Christ and not by anything I do myself. However, for me to become all that God created me to be in Christ and really experience His righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, obedience to His will is important. But we can't be obedient in our own strength. Let me explain ...

When we receive Christ, we step into a lifetime journey—a journey in which we can continually grow in obedience. When we become a Christian, God's righteousness, holiness, fruit of the Spirit, hope—all the good things of God—are placed inside us as seeds. And if we're willing to walk with the Holy Spirit, water those seeds with the Word and follow in simple acts of obedience, our behavior will improve.

But we have to remember it can't be in our own strength. God isn't expecting us to grow and change on our own. It doesn't do one ounce of good to receive Christ as your Savior and then try to change yourself, because all you're going to be is frustrated. God wants to help you and work through you step-by-step.

The first thing you can do is learn who you are in Christ, study Scriptures about the love of God, and get rooted and grounded in God's love so you can know without a doubt that He loves you. This is what helps us understand righteousness and the role God plays in making us the righteousness of

Christ. *He* actually makes us holy. *He* perfects us in spirit.

God will never ask us to do something that He doesn't give us the ability to do. So He's not going to ask you to have right behavior without first making you right on the inside. But while it's true that God gives us the ability to do what's right, we still have to do our part and yield to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is like the caution light in our life. You're going along, you have a green light, everything's fine. Then, eventually, you start having some stinkin' behavior, and here comes a yellow light. If you respond to God like you react to traffic lights when you're driving, you're probably in a hurry and just think, *I can make it through this*. The problem is: That will end up causing a lot of wrecks in your life.

The truth is, we should rejoice and be happy when we feel the Holy Spirit giving us that yellow light—that conviction of wrong behavior—and happily hit the brakes. We need to realize the wonderful gift that conviction is. I've noticed the longer I serve God, the more sensitive I become to sin in my life and the quicker conviction comes. And that's what should happen. I am convicted about things now that I wouldn't have even recognized years ago. That means I'm growing in my walk with Christ.

It's also important to understand the beauty of conviction so the devil can't take advantage of us and turn that beautiful gift into condemnation. Until we understand the difference between conviction and condemnation, it will be a struggle to really grow in our relationship with Christ.

As you're going through this process, I want to encourage you to celebrate your progress. The devil will try to come along and remind you how far you have to go, what you're not, what you should be. That's why you need to know who you are in Christ. Then, when he tries to tell you what you're not, you

can tell him who you are.

Wherever you are in your relationship with God, know that He loves you regardless of your behavior. He doesn't want you to try to obey Him to *get* Him to love you—He wants you to obey Him, by His grace, because He loves you and to show that you love Him. When we live this way, our lives glorify God and we can receive the fullness of what He has for us. We can become all He created us to be in Christ!

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