

Give It to God

As a teacher of God's Word, I often have people ask me, "Joyce, how do you live the Christian life?" My answer surprises a lot of people. I tell them, "You can't live the Christian life, but God can live it through you!" One of the greatest lessons I have ever learned is that we can't change ourselves—it is only by God's grace that we can overcome our weaknesses and become more like Him.

In John 15:5 (ESV), Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

When we try to do things apart from God's grace and strength, we will just struggle. One of the best prayers we can pray is "God, help me!"

Years ago, when I first started reading the Bible and getting serious about my relationship with God, I began seeing all of the things I needed to change. There were so many! I needed to clean up my mind and my mouth; I had to overcome being so negative and judgmental; and my behavior toward my husband, Dave, also needed to improve. I immediately went to work trying to do it myself, but I just ended up very frustrated and made little progress because I was spending all of my effort trying to do what only God can do. It was so wonderful when I finally got this revelation: God doesn't expect me to do it alone.

The key is to abide in Christ. When we abide in Him, we study God's Word, especially in the areas where we have weaknesses, and spend as much time with the Lord as we can—whether it's talking to Him in prayer or even just sitting quietly in His presence.

As we diligently and humbly seek the Lord and receive His grace, the Bible says we will change into His image "from

glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18, MEV).

The apostle Paul, who wrote a large part of the New Testament and is widely regarded as a great leader of the early church, realized he could do nothing without God's help. He says, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ... For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out" (Rom. 7:15, 18, ESV).

Have you ever wanted to do the right thing but still struggled and couldn't make it happen regardless of how hard you tried? Paul was going through the very same thing, but he provides us with the answer in verses 24b-25a: "Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Paul is saying we can't do it on our own, but God will do it for us if we let Him.

This same principle applies to our relationships with other people—we can't change them, but God can.

When my children were young, I was certain that a couple of them would never make it on their own. My daughter Laura was extremely messy, unorganized and seemingly couldn't keep track of anything. My youngest son, Daniel, struggled his way through school, and I was convinced I would be taking care of him the rest of my life. I spent so much time worrying and trying to change them on my own. Most of the time, my efforts only seemed to make things worse! Yes, I needed to be a good mother and help them in every way I could. But instead of worrying, struggling and making us all miserable, I could have been praying, trusting God and choosing to believe everything would work out well in the end.

Today, my daughter Laura is so organized that one of her jobs is to help keep my life organized! And Daniel? The boy who

barely made it through school is now the CEO of Joyce Meyer Ministries, and he does a fantastic job! Now I look back and realize how much time and effort I wasted worrying and struggling when God had things under control all along!

You see, whether it's ourselves or someone else, the Lord wants us to seek His help, then rest in the knowledge that He is on the case. God doesn't want us to struggle; He wants us to believe. He wants us to relax and enjoy our lives even while we're waiting for change.

What are you struggling with today? Your behavior, your finances, your kids or maybe other people? Here's the best advice I can give you: Run to God for help, receive His grace, then make a firm decision to relax and enjoy your life while you trust Him to change things. As you do, you will find freedom from struggling and have God's peace and joy in the process. {eoa}

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