

The One Thing You Must Do When You're Struggling With Sin

Many years ago, when the Lord first called me into ministry, I felt Him prompting me to quit smoking. I had smoked since I was 9 years old, and frankly, I liked it. My flesh did not want to quit smoking ... and it was hard.

My husband, Dave, used to smoke, but when he decided to quit, he just did it one day with seemingly no struggle at all, which only added to my frustration. I, on the other hand, quit and started again multiple times before I was successful.

I had to “get it” that, until I loved God and wanted to please Him more than I wanted to smoke, I was going to keep going back to it. And the key to loving God more than anything and anyone else meant spending time with Him, getting to know Him and developing a close, personal, intimate relationship with Him.

See, the truth is, you resemble whomever you hang out with. The more time I spent “hanging out” with Jesus, the more I began to resemble Him. And the more I became aware of the things in my life that were *not* like Him.

We all have attitudes, habits or mindsets that we wrestle with and want to change. But it's important to understand that on our own, we can't change our heart—only God can do that. So we have to learn to receive His grace, which gives us the ability to do what's right, in order to successfully overcome the things that are holding us back.

This happens as we experience true intimacy with God, because the more we know who we are in Christ—that we've been made righteous, or right with God, through His blood—the more we'll

do what's right (see 2 Cor. 5:17, 21.) It's not always easy, but God will never tell us to do something without giving us the ability to do it!

We also have to trust that God loves us and realize that salvation is a gift we must receive, not something we can earn or deserve by doing good works. The truth is, we could never do enough good things to earn God's love and forgiveness. When we really get this, we can cooperate with the Holy Spirit, who lives in our spirit and works in us to change us into the image of Christ (see 2 Cor. 3:17-18).

I love what Galatians 2:21 (AMP) says about the grace of God. In this verse the apostle Paul says, "I do not ignore or nullify the [gracious gift of the] grace of God [His amazing, unmerited favor], for if righteousness comes through [observing] the Law, then Christ died needlessly. [His suffering and death would have had no purpose whatsoever]." We desperately need the gift of God's grace to be made righteous before God!

This is how God's grace works in our lives: First, grace saves us; then grace changes us. A *sinner* is justified by grace, but *sin* is never justified. Some people think they can live any way they want to, and God will forgive them. But we should never take the grace of God in vain—sin can never be justified.

Honestly, if a person is truly born again and they love God and want to live for Him, they won't *want* to keep sinning. That doesn't mean they are suddenly perfect when they accept Christ as their Savior, but it does mean they are making a little more progress each day in their relationship with God. As 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, they "are progressively being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory."

The changes you're looking for may not happen overnight. I

didn't quit smoking overnight. But I assure you that if you will come into close fellowship with God, it will do more to change you from the inside out than anything else in the world.

Don't think you can't fellowship with Him if you have sin in your life.

If you're struggling with a particular sin—a behavior, attitude or mindset you really want to change—humble yourself before God and receive His forgiveness. Be honest with Him (He knows it all anyway), sincerely repent and turn away from it, and trust Him to do *in you* what needs to be done.

Ultimately, the best thing we can do when we want to change is simply say, "God, please help me! I know You love me and Your Word has the power to change me. Help me receive Your grace and strength to do what's right. Thank You for Your faithfulness to me!"

Jesus loves you so much. He loves you just as you are right now, and He loves you too much to leave you that way. Don't settle for less than being everything He created you to be! Spend time with Him, and you *will* conquer the sin in your life. {eoa}

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