

Overcoming Bad Habits



By Pastor Don Nicely

Our lives are filled with habits-some are good and beneficial and some are harmful to our health. We human beings are creatures of habit by our human nature. And because of this throughout the course of our lives we are destined to develop a few of them.

Most habits have no lasting consequences and are innocent and hardly noticed by people except those that are in our most intimate circle.

As for harmful habits once we embrace Christ, we must renounce all sinful habits and practices of the past. Sometimes it's quite difficult to forsake well-established patterns and habits. In this teaching we are going to discuss the subject of bad habits and overview some liberating steps to lead us to forsake them.

Just what is a habit?

It's a well established pattern, practice or manner of behavior. It is an acquired behavior pattern that has been acquired by repetitive practice. Sociologists tell us that it takes 21 days or 3 weeks to break a bad habit and another 21 days to form a new one.

A habit also implies that we have learned to do something unconsciously by repetitive action. These can be things as simple as which shoe we put on first or as serious as drug and substance abuse. Since habits can be serious business and can affect our eternal destiny we must not ignore them or take them too lightly. Habits that are healthy and beneficial should be reinforced and practiced and harmful ones should be eliminated immediately.

Although we know what should be done some bad habits are so firmly established in our lives they can seem like insurmountable barriers. At first bad habits seem impossible to change. Frustration is the word that most people face when confronting bad habits. Some bad habits like alcoholism, smoking, drug dependency and the like can be a grueling experience to be delivered from. And then there is always our past track record of failures to consider. Sometimes when we have an inability to defeat bad habits we can be over whelmed with a sense of hopelessness and despair.

Now before you decide to give up and concise to your old way of life, know that through Christ there are no hopeless situations. And bad habits are no exceptions.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 the apostle Paul lists several sinful practices that the Corinthians had been involved in and had been delivered from. He even says of such were some of you. If he can deliver them- he can deliver us.

If you're someone who had been unsuccessful at defeating bad habits in the past, the first obstacle you must overcome is you. Recommit your life today to follow these divine instructions to achieve the victory.

8 steps to breaking bad habits

1) Sincerely repent...

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

Before Christians can defeat sinful habits they must see them as sinful habits. If we fail to understand this fundamental fact, we will not be successful at overcoming them. When your motive to be delivered from sinful habits is a sincere godly conviction to "please God" victory is sure to come.

2) Use prayer power... when we recognize our bad habits as sinful practices and call on God for his power we can attack them at the root. If we ignore or make excuses or even over look our bad habits they will reinforce themselves and get a stronger foothold. Don't rely on your own strength, but draw on the Holy Spirit. He is your divine source of strength.

3) Strive for sincere change... The bible teaches us that change is a vital to our development in Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

You must desire to change in order to overcome sinful habits. If you don't change, your bad habits will continue. Some people mistakenly think change is a matter of human will power and sheer determination. Friend it's more than just saying no! Quitting something is not change it's only halfway. Usually this type of change is only temporary. Colossians 3:8 exhorts that we must put off our old practices and put on the new man.

Colossians 3:8 (NKJV) ⁸But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Successful change involves replacing bad habits with biblical alternatives. Our lives are to be restructured according to the word of God.

4) Use the power of the word to cleanse your life...

Psalms 119:9 (NKJV) ⁹How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

The word has the power to cleanse us. God's desire is to cleanse his church;
Ephesians 5:26 (NKJV) ²⁶*that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,*

Consider carefully the passages which have a specific bearing on your habit and apply to your life and watch the process of cleansing take place.

5) Seek the infilling of the Holy Spirit...

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,*
The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives will give us the necessary strength and will power to successfully overcome the lust of the flesh.

Ephesians 5:19 - 20 (NKJV) ¹⁹*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,* ²⁰*giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

We should replace old habits with new ones and the above verse gives us practical steps to replace old ones with constructive alternatives.

6) Discipline your body...

1 Corinthians 9:27 (NKJV) ²⁷*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

Only by exercising a firm hand against sinful habits are they brought under subjection. Our sinful tendencies to participate in our old ways must be confronted and suppressed. We can't allow our minds to flirt with, fanaticize, or entertain the justification of sinful habits. We must challenge these desires with the word of God.

7) Develop the right relationships...The bible warns us of the dangers of wrong relationships.

1 Corinthians 15:33 (NKJV) ³³*Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."*

Proverbs 22:24 - 25 (NKJV) ²⁴ *Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go,*
²⁵ *Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul.*

Our old unsaved friends can be a destructive influence in our lives. Remove all your old haunts, hangouts and unhealthy relationships and replace them with Christian fellowship that reinforces godliness.

8) Don't quit!...

Proverbs 24:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again, But the wicked shall fall by calamity.

In the process of striving for victory, never give up. Even if we fall short get up and continue to press on. Sometimes it takes time to reestablish a godly habit. Therefore, remain persistent and determined. Remain confident and don't quit!