

How to say **NO** to a **STUBBORN** Habit

Lesson 4: Getting God's Perspective

*In order to break that sinful habit,
it is essential that you see your problem in perspective.*

George: *Involved in an affair. Desperately tried to break the relationship. Prayed for strength to overcome, & earnestly pleaded that the passions would evaporate. He had guilt, fear, shame, and eventually divorced.*

Ken: *Promised to quit smoking. Tried, but failed too many times. Eventually gave up trying.*

Susan: *Her 1st husband died of heart attack at a young age. Her 2nd husband of 20 years became involved in affair. She tried to forgive but couldn't. She prayed that God would remove the bitterness and anger but nothing changed. Eventually she became divorced.*

John: *Explosive temper, sharp words, over-disciplined children in anger. Asked God for deliverance from his temper. Eventually gave up trying since change seemed impossible.*

What went wrong?

1. The reason they reverted to their sinful habits was because they misunderstood the full extent of their problem.
 - A. They wanted to be free of the symptoms of their problem, without having a full examination of their life that would reveal deeper problems that needed work.
 - B. Sinful habits usually indicate unresolved conflicts and underlying problems. We must treat these causes instead of simply treating the symptoms.

What does God want to accomplish?

1. God's larger purpose in our struggle is to show us our inner self but too often we clutch to the smaller purpose.
 - A. We want deliverance in order to avoid embarrassment, relieve our guilt, save our reputation, or our marriage.
 - B. God wants us to see our rebellion against Him in numerous areas of life!
 - C. Genuine repentance is agreeing with God that you have sinned, and also agreeing that your sin must be forsaken.
 - D. God wants to use your struggle to lead you into Godly living.
 - a. He wants to conform you to the image of His Son, and deliverance from your habits is only a step in this process.
 - b. Your sinful habit can be either a monument to the false god you have fashioned or a challenge to display God's grace and power in your life.

- c. God uses your struggles to give you a thorough housecleaning and teach you to depend on His grace.

Getting a larger focus.

1. Temptation is not a sin: it is a call to battle.
2. Praying for no temptation is asking to die and go to heaven. We will always be tempted, so we must learn to handle it God's way.
 - A. Thank God for the temptation and the opportunity it represents.
 - B. Write down all the areas in your life that need work.
 - C. Give yourself and your problem completely to God.
 - a. Don't be afraid of what God might demand of you. He will not demand more than you can do.
 - D. Realize that your ultimate goal is not victory but God Himself.
 - a. "O Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their all in Thee." - Augustine
 - b. Not even victory over sin can satisfy. Only God can do that.
 - c. God wants you to have your own Copernican revolution. He longs to be brought from the circumference to the very center of your life.

Questions for thought and discussion

1. Often the temptations (stubborn habits) that we struggle with are just the tip of the iceberg. Discuss why God will not just remove the tip, and leave the iceberg below the surface alone.
2. George, Ken, Susan, and John wanted to overcome their problem for their own benefit. Why is this an incomplete perspective?
3. Why is it futile to address the symptom(s) without addressing the cause?
4. What is God's perspective in allowing us to struggle with temptations and stubborn habits (why does He allow it and how does He want to use it)?
5. Why do you think we are more concerned about avoiding embarrassment, relieving guilt, and saving our marriage than we are about our rebellion against a holy God?
6. If I confess my sin to God, but I am unwilling to part with it, why are my intentions self-centered?
7. Why is it hard to honestly thank God for the temptation?
8. Why do we hesitate to give ourselves and our problem completely to God?
9. Why is God, not victory, the ultimate goal?