

BREAKING HABITS

“Preacher, I need victory in my life. I have an area I just cannot conquer. I have a habit I just cannot seem to break and it is hindering my Christian life. What can I do?” These are words pastors often hear. People want to change but cannot seem to make it over certain habits. What can be done? Is just daily prayer and Bible enough?

God never gives us commands without grace to obey them. Here are some steps that, if followed, may very well be your answer.

SPECIFIC SCRIPTURE

When Jesus was tempted by the devil (Matt. 4), all He ever did was quote Scripture:

TEMPTATION

- #1 “And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” (v.3)
- #2 “And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (v.6)
- #3 “And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” (v.9)

SCRIPTURE

- #1 “But he answered and said, it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (v.4)
- #2 “Jesus said unto him, it is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (v.7)
- #3 “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (v.10)

Notice what verse 11 says: “*Then the devil leaveth him,...*” The key to overcoming a certain habit or temptation is not just to quote Scripture, but the certain Scripture that combats that certain temptation.

Use a concordance (there should be one in the back of your Bible) and look up words that pertain to your particular habit or temptation. It will refer you to Scriptures that you can memorize to help you combat and/or conquer that habit or temptation. A few examples:

- Lust - Matt. 5:28; Job 31:1
- Pride - Prov. 6:16-17; James 4:10
- Smoking - 1 Cor. 6:19-20

Temper	-	Prov. 15:1
Example	-	1 Tim. 4:12-16
Bible Reading	-	Ps. 119:9
Gossip	-	James 3

When you quote a scripture (out loud especially) it takes your mind off the desire to sin and also reminds you of God's presence to give you the victory.

WATCH AND PRAY

Matt. 26:41 says: *"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Jesus warned the disciples of upcoming temptation and told them to stay up late praying. They did not obey His command and soon fell asleep. When they awoke, they did not have sufficient spiritual strength to stand for Christ. They all forsook Him and fled. How can a Christian watch and pray? Schedule to stay up perhaps 10-15 minutes past your normal bedtime and beg God specifically for victory in the one area you need it most. Late night praying does much toward victory for the next day.

FASTING

Mark 9:29 says: *"And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."*

Certain habits will never be broken by just normal Bible reading and prayer. Prayer and fasting is necessary. Fasting is not just abstinence from food. Fasting is replacing normal mealtime with extra prayer and Bible. If you fast for one whole day, you would spend your normal meal times in prayer and Bible reading begging God to give you victory over your habit. It will also open your spiritual eyes as to how much glory your habit is robbing from God. Some people choose to fast one day a week until they have victory over a certain sin. Fasting does little, except physically, unless mixed with prayer and Bible. (See also Isaiah 58)

ACCOUNTABILITY

Eccl. 4:9-10 says: *"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."*

It is easy to excuse your failure and lack of victory. We are not very hard on ourselves. It is wise to enlist help to overcome habits. For instance, if you are not getting up early enough to read the Bible and pray, you could have someone call you and wake you up. If you are trying to give up smoking, someone could call you at the end of every day to see if you had victory. Just knowing they were going to call would put positive peer pressure on you to do right.

REPLACEMENT

Matt. 12:43-45 says: *“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”*

The story is given of the evil spirit leaving a man and the man “turning over a new leaf”. He did not replace the evil that was in him; therefore more spirits inhabited him. It is not enough to give up evil - we must replace it with good and right.

II Cor. 5:17 says: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

The old must be replaced with the new!

There are many Bible examples of this concept:

Egypt was replaced by Canaan.

Temple was replaced by Church.

Jesus was replaced on earth by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible speaks of a new song (Rev. 5:9) “And they sung a new song;” a new spirit, and a new heart (Ezek. 18:31) “... and make you a new heart and a new spirit:”.

One teenager gave up rock music at church camp every year for several years. He kept going back to it because he never replaced it with godly music.

If a car engine blows up, taking the engine out does not repair the car. It must have a new engine installed where the old one was.

A FINE

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matt. 6:21) Some Christians have decided to fine themselves financially each time they go back to their bad habit. One man who wanted to quit smoking decided to fine himself \$20 for every cigarette he smoked. The \$20 would go to missions. That’s \$400 a pack! I imagine each time he was tempted to smoke, he envisioned a \$20 bill going up in flames.

Do you have a habit that you just cannot seem to break? Have you considered how it is affecting your testimony, effectiveness for God, power, and boldness for the cause of Christ? Decide today to use these steps as helps in gaining complete victory.

NOTES:

REVIEW BREAKING HABITS - STEP 29

1. What did Jesus use to combat the devil's temptation? _____

2. How many times was He tempted? _____

3. What was the result? _____

4. Did Jesus do anything else besides quote Scripture? _____

5. List a habit, if any, you would like to break: _____

6. List at least two Bible verses you can memorize to break it:

7. Explain what it means to watch and pray: _____

8. Who failed to watch and pray? _____

9. What was the result? _____

10. Define "fasting": _____

11. Fasting alone cannot help break a habit. I must be _____
and fasting.

12. Explain the reason for accountability: _____

13. It produces positive _____

14. Why do many people give up sin and soon go back to it?

15. Where your treasure is _____

16. Explain how a “fine” can work: _____

17. Name the time you will pray at night for victory: _____

18. Who will you be accountable to? _____

19. Will you fine yourself? _____ How? _____

20. Once victory comes, will you share it with others? _____