



HOLINESS

***Peter 1:15-16***

*"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,  
because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."*



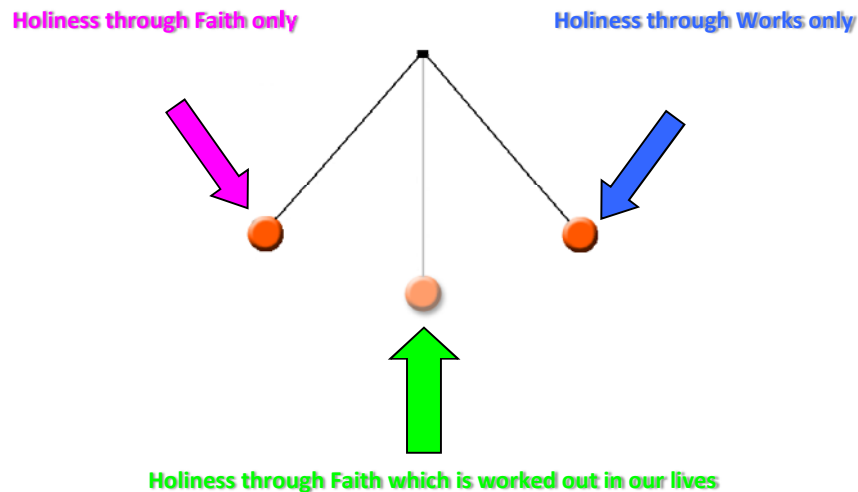
HOLINESS



## WHAT IS HOLINESS?

Holiness can be a confusing topic for most people, including Christians. Some say that holiness is a gift from God of which we can do nothing about, (i.e. we can't lose it and we can't do anything to achieve it). Others believe that the only way to achieve holiness is to live completely holy lives, and God's acceptance of us is based on our actions.

Neither of them is completely true. Each of them is sitting at opposite ends of a pendulum.



Unless you are immovably convinced one way or the other, most of us would tend to swing between the 2 extremes during our day to day lives, for example:

When we are enticed toward temptation we tend to rely on God's grace through Jesus to make us holy, without taking responsibility for our unholy actions = **Holiness through Faith only**.

When we feel unworthy of God's grace we tend to strive to live perfectly holy lives, neglecting the claim of the holiness of Christ over our lives which alone is able to present us holy before God = **Holiness through Works only**.

We need to be able to hold these 2 ideas in tandem. Holiness is 2 things:

1. Positional
2. Progressional

### POSITIONAL HOLINESS

- ✳ Specifically, the act of sanctification as affected by God and passed on to the character of man
- ✳ The work of God in which He separates us from the world for Himself
- ✳ The state of being sanctified

### PROGRESSIONAL HOLINESS

- ✳ The behaviour befitting those separated by, and to, God
- ✳ The process of sanctification and the result of that process upon the individual, proof is necessary at each stage of it's progressive achievement
- ✳ Separation and devotion to the service of God, sharing in God's purity and abstaining from earthly defilement

So I guess to sum up holiness into one sentence, it would look a little like this...

*Holiness is not just **the act of God's free grace** in justifying sinners, but also the result of that justification upon the sinner **in making him just** and **equipping him to recognise** the rights of God on his life and **enabling him to be holy** even as God is holy.*

Now, I'm no theologian, but I think I've learned enough about holiness to understand a couple of things.:

1. The state of holiness is attributed to us by God through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ.
2. Christ's holiness covers our sin stained hearts making them acceptable to God
3. The Holy Spirit, sent to us by God, teaches and enables us to live holy lives
4. You can't have one without the other...if you are claiming Christ's holiness over your life, then you need to live like you are.

I've heard a very good question floating around out there, which asks...

*"Can someone live a holy life (morally blameless) without being a Christian?"*

My answer is - No.

We are called to - Be Holy as God is Holy. No mortal person can achieve the holiness of God without Him in their lives. Sure, someone could live their lives without doing anything apparently immoral, but holiness (or living a holy life), again, is not about our actions and whether they are right or wrong in the eyes of man. We are called to be holy before God, not man. How can we possibly claim to be living a holy life if we are not walking in the holy light of the one true God? Holiness comes from God...that is the only place where we can become completely holy. The Holy Spirit leads us into all holiness, without Him in our hearts we are not capable of becoming holy.

## WHAT MAKES US HOLY?

Nothing you can do will make you holy. Holiness is the quality of our character as we are made new through Christ. The only one that makes you holy before God is Jesus.

### **2 Corinthians 5:21**

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

### **Galatians 2:20**

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

### **1 Corinthians 1:30**

*But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption —*

## HOW DO WE KNOW WE ARE HOLY?

Because God said we are. It all comes down to whether or not we believe the truth of the Word of God. If you believe the Word and live according to it then you have been made holy through Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 3:17**

*...for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.*

### **Ephesians 4:24**

*and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

Don't be fooled though. It is not enough to say that you believe you've been made holy, yet then turn around and live a life of sin. Jesus challenges us...

### **John 14:15**

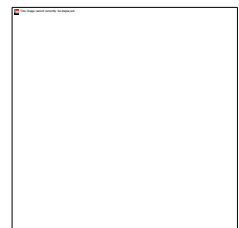
*"If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

## WHATS THE BIG DEAL ABOUT HOLINESS ANYWAY?

Well, if the pursuit of holiness has not been laid on your heart out of reverence and fear of God, then perhaps you need some other reason. What about the fact stated in Hebrews 12:14...

### **Hebrews 12:14<sup>b</sup>**

*...and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*



Those of us who do live in reverent fear of God, also want to get closer to Him in Spirit. But God indicates in 2 Chronicles 29:31 that we need to be consecrated (set apart or holy) before we can draw near to Him.

### **2 Chronicles 29:31**

*Now that you have consecrated yourselves to the LORD, come near...*

Who are we to think that the holiest of holies is going to defile Himself by coming near to a sin-saturated being like us? He will, if we present ourselves holy before Him, and the only way that we can do that is to live under the blood of Christ, which means to walk as He walked...in holiness and abandonment to God.

**John 5:30**

*I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.*

**Luke 22:42**

*...not My will, but Yours, be done."*

## **WHAT IS GOD'S WILL?**

There are some things that we know clearly from the Bible that are God's will for everyone.

### **IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT I HAVE MY SINS FORGIVEN**

**2 Peter 3:9**

*...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

### **IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT I BE SANCTIFIED (MADE HOLY)**

**1 Thessalonians 4:3**

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification:*

**Romans 12:1-2**

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

**1 Thessalonians 4:7**

*For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.*

### **IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT I WALK IN OBEDIENCE**

Be saved, be sanctified (filled with the Holy Spirit), walk in obedience with the Lord, and He will **show you** step by step what His will is for you.

**1 Peter 1:1-2**

*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:*

### **AND THE LIST GOES ON...**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

**Micah 6:8**

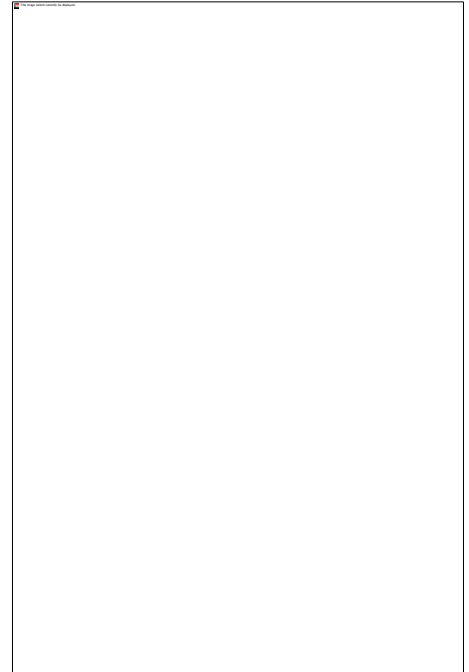
*And what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

It is in the daily trusting in God with everything in your life that He will make His will known to you. Our part is to stay close to Him in prayer and in reading our Bible, and in trusting Him for everything. "Knowing God's Will" is not some mystical thing that we have to struggle to grasp for. It is simply knowing our master and walking with Him in obedience day by day so He can give us His assurance that we are doing His will.

**1 Thessalonians 5:21**

*Test all things; hold fast what is good.*

1 Thessalonians 5:21 tells u to "Test all things." If you think something is God's will - put it to the test. Does it agree with what the Bible teaches? If we are walking in full obedience to God we will be able to "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." He will give us His peace that we are walking in step with Him.



## POSITIONAL HOLINESS

It can be difficult to understand how we can be holy without really deserving it, and for most of the time, not acting like we are. It becomes a bit of mind over matter most of the time. We are such sensual creatures, so unless there is tangible evidence then it isn't real. So here is a definition of our positional holiness that I like:



### *Qualities of character for which there need not be any proof*

No, we don't feel holy, and no, most of the time we don't act in holiness...but part of becoming a disciple of Christ involves *accepting* His holiness as our own. If we can't accept that gift from God through His Son then we can not walk in God's light as He has intended for us.

I guess the tricky bit here is that we tend to attribute the 'qualities of character' to a person based on what we see about them. So if they act in humility then we call them humble, if they show guts and determination in difficult times, we call them courageous. So it's only natural (as humans) to get stuck on the quality of holiness when no one is displaying those attributes.

But what I have discovered is that we spend too much time looking for the demonstration of *our* holiness, when really we've got it all wrong. The holiness that has been given to us is not *ours*, it's *Christ's*. This holiness is given to us so that when we stand before God, He will be pleased with us...it's almost like a camouflage; God doesn't see our sin. Yes, even though we are completely, and disgustingly dirty, God doesn't see it...all He sees is the beautiful Holiness of His Son Jesus.

The holiness that we receive from Christ is not for the pleasure of man, but for God.

### *Colossians 1:21-22*

*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight —*

### *1 Thessalonians 3:13*

*so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father*

### *Ephesians 1:4*

*just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,* Yes, we are also called to *live holy lives*, but for us to be able to live a life of holiness, we need to first grasp our *position* of holiness through Christ.

## PROGRESSIONAL HOLINESS



Progressional holiness is founded on our holy position before God. As we go through our lives striving to 'live as one' with His Spirit we need to constantly draw back on the truths of God's Word. The Devil is really good at convincing us that we are less than holy, most of the time persuading us to believe that we virtually aren't saved.

God wants us to rest in the *truth*. Nothing can take back the death of Jesus on the cross. And nothing can take away the holiness that you have in Him. Once we have the belt of truth firmly tied around our waist, we are ready to step out into the big bad world and let our light shine. We are ready to walk the walk of holiness.

## PERFECTING HOLINESS

Earlier in this study I described 'positional holiness' as a "Quality of character for which there need not be any proof". Now we are going to look at 'Progressional holiness' where proof is necessary throughout the process. We know that holiness is not simply a state of being but also something that we must work towards...

### *Hebrews 12:14<sup>a</sup>*

*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness*

**The resultant state = behaviour befitting someone who is separated to God.**

## HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS BEHAVIOUR?

Firstly we need to recognise that we are *not* righteous beings, thus unable to attain righteousness by our own merit.

### *Romans 3:10*

*"There is none righteous, no, not one;*

Once we understand and accept this fact, we are able also to understand and accept the fact that we need God and His Holy Spirit to teach us and guide us into holiness.

**Romans 8:1**

*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

The terms “according to the flesh” or “according to the spirit” refers not to natural and moral qualities, but of human and divine relationship and dependence. Our holy conduct relies on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**SPIRIT LED LIVING**

So, we have come to the conclusion that “Progressional Holiness” is Spirit Led Living... not a state of being. The big question now is, “How do we live according to the Spirit? How do I make that work for me in my day to day life?”



**CONFIDENCE**

Before we can go anywhere or do anything in Christ, we need to be confident in Him and our position with Him. Romans 8:1 tells us clearly and confidently that there is now *no condemnation...we are accepted*. Yes, I remember times of testing when I failed to obey God’s calling and times where my sin has been exposed, but although my sins are real sins and they grieve the heart of God, there is no condemnation for me if I continue to move forward in my walk with the Spirit.

**God must condemn the sin, but He chose not to condemn the sinner.**

**Romans 8:3**

*He condemned sin in the flesh,*

**John 8:11**

*And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."*

Notice in the verse above (John 8:11) that Jesus instructs the woman to “go and sin no more”. This is part of the process of sanctification (being made holy). I guess this is the point that makes or breaks our confidence. We cannot claim our freedom from condemnation without also walking according to the Spirit. It is the walking with the Spirit that frees us from condemnation.

**Jeremiah 16:19**

*O LORD, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in the day of affliction,*

**Psalms 28:7**

*The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him.*

In Romans 8 Paul emphasises the certainty of God’s love by asking a series of questions:

**WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?**

**Romans 8:31-32**

*If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

Well, the truth is that there are many people who are against us every day, but although people oppose us they cannot overturn us and most certainly cannot overcome God’s love for us.

**WHO WILL BRING A CHARGE?**

**Romans 8:33**

*Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*

There are many out there that will try to degrade your right-standing before God because of the things that you do wrong or don’t do right. I don’t know about anyone else, but I find I’m the one that degrades myself the most...I hate the fact that I just keep on sinning! I’m constantly beating myself up over the fact that my sin is keeping me from God. But Paul reminds us that it is God who justifies. There is nothing I can *do* to earn that. Tim Chester, in his book titled ‘The Ordinary Hero’ summarises it beautifully:

*You are not made right with God by what you do. You didn't do it in the first place, so why suppose you could undo it! Did God love you and justify you because you were so good? Of course not. He loved you when you were his enemy. You were powerless to justify yourself and now you are powerless to un-justify yourself!*

## WHO IS HE THAT CONDEMNS?

### **Romans 8:34**

*Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*

On the account of righteousness, there is no one that can condemn us, but Christ, and He chooses to set us free from condemnation. Remember, if Romans 3:10 tells us that "There is no one righteous, no not one", then who is left that is able to judge us, other than God Himself?

## WHO SHALL SEPARATE US?

### **Romans 8:35-37**

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*

We know that *sin* can't separate us from God – we have been forgiven.

We know that *suffering* can't separate us from God – we are more than conquerors

We know that *death* can't separate us from God – it can only take us closer to God.

So Paul concludes:

### **Romans 8:38-39**

*For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

### **This is the confidence that we have through the love of Christ Jesus!**

And remember, He doesn't just tolerate us, He rejoices in us...if you don't believe me read it for yourself.

### **Zephaniah 3:17**

*The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."*

## SELF-DENIAL



Probably the next most crucial step in the pursuit of holiness is denying ourselves. What does Jesus mean when He says "deny himself"?

### **Luke 9:23**

*Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me (the pursuit of holiness), let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*

The word "deny" used in this passage is no accident. We may not like it, but let's look at what it means and further on we'll look at how we are going to achieve this.

To Deny means to:

- ✱ Disapprove and disown
- ✱ Refuse to acknowledge
- ✱ Refuse to comply
- ✱ Surrender power
- ✱ Renunciation of your own interests in favor of the interests of others

## TAMING THE ENEMY

### **Your flesh wants to ruin your life!**

Make no mistake about it; the conflict with your flesh is one of the most hostile wars you will fight as a Believer. But before we can begin this war against the flesh, we need to acknowledge that it's evil...

### **Romans 7:18**

*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*

...and is the dominating influence in our lives as humans. "But why is it so strong?" I hear you ask...because it is at war with our spirit! Yep, our flesh is hell-bent on dominating our spirit.

**Galatians 5:17**

*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*



**You must make your flesh obey you!!**

Here are some verses that tell us what to do with regard to our flesh...

Bring your body into subjection

**1 Corinthians 9:27**

*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection*

Make no provision for your flesh

**Romans 13:14**

*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

Mortify your flesh,

**Colossians 3:5**

*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

Crucify your flesh

**Galatians 5:24**

*And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

Walk in the Spirit

**Galatians 5:16**

*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

Lets now look more deeply at the process of denial that we mentioned earlier.

**THE PROCESS OF DENIAL**

**Disapprove & Disown**

**To Disapprove** is to consider something bad, wrong or inappropriate. So how do we develop a conviction that something is bad, wrong or inappropriate for us as Christians? The Psalmists in Psalm 1 & 119, knew exactly how to determine this...

**Psalms 119:104**

*Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.*

**Psalms 1:2**

*But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.*

I guess the other side to the coin is that we need to not only hate evil but develop a love and desire for what is good. This is achieved in exactly the same way...

**Psalms 40:8**

*I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart."*

**To Disown** is to refuse to own, cast off ,or deliberately prevent. Disowning something sounds like it should be a one-off thing, but realistically it is a constant daily battle. We all know that disowning our sin isn't something that we do once and never need to worry about again...if only it was so simple! I like the process that is implied here...



- 1st. we refuse to own our sin by claiming the righteousness of Christ
- 2nd. we then, by active choice, cast off our sin by cleansing our heart and turning from our sinful ways
- 3rd. to avoid having to go through the whole 'casting off' again, we actively work at deliberately preventing our sin from reforming in our lives



So realistically, if we are going to disown sin in our lives then we need to get *active*. So what are some ways in which the bible tell us to do that and what would it look like?

### Sever all Bad Influences

**1 Corinthians 15:33**

*Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."*

### Set no Wicked things before your Eyes

**Psalms 101:3**

*I will set nothing wicked before my eyes;*

### Take Heed to what you Hear

**Mark 4:24**

*Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given."*

### Surround yourself with Believers who Sharpen you Spiritually

**Proverbs 27:17**

*As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*

The whole application of disowning our sin and our 'self', is encompassed in the proceeding processes of "self-denial".

### Refuse to Acknowledge

Sigmund Freud gives a very functional definition of denial:

*Denial is a defense mechanism, in which a person is faced with a fact that is too uncomfortable to accept and rejects it instead, insisting that it is not true despite what may be overwhelming evidence.*



I like this definition because it addresses the fact that our battle is one of truth. I know for a fact that the flesh can be (and always is) very good at convincing me that what I feel is true. I would insist that it's impossible to invalidate the sensual (speaking of the senses) experiences of the flesh, when they are in full flight!

It is easy to deny something that we don't believe is true, but the word *impossible* is never used so frequently than when we need to deny something that we *do* believe is true! I know you're all with me on this. So how do we avoid getting to that point?

Everything that we do begins with a thought. We didn't *feel* like we needed that moist piece of chocolate cake on the table until we thought about it, right?! So, all of our desires, feelings, and actions originate from our mind. Refusal to acknowledge the flesh involves the mental decision to 'ignore' it when it talks to us...we need to bring every thought captive before it becomes a full-blown desire or action.

**2 Corinthians 10:5**

*...bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

### Refuse to Comply

If we are at the point where we have to refuse to comply, then we didn't catch the thought soon enough to prevent it from becoming a desire. But, here we are anyway!

So how do we tackle the screaming, tantrum-throwing flesh as it thrashes around inside? Yep, that is not somewhere I like to be...I definitely need God on this one!



### Speak to your Flesh with the Voice of Authority

**Galatians 5:24**

*And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

**Romans 6:14**

*For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

**1 Corinthians 10:13**

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

I dunno if it'll help, but here is an analogy of how I see the working of the flesh...

*For those of you that don't know already, it is common for someone who has had a limb amputated to experience 'phantom pain'. What this means is that the body is so used to having that limb attached to the body, that when it is removed, the body has trouble convincing itself that it's no longer there (or more specifically, is tricked into thinking that it's still there). So the person will feel pain (or perceive pain) in a area of their body that doesn't exist anymore. Yep, you got it...our sinful nature (evil fleshly desire) is that limb that has been cut off!*

The thing I like about this analogy is that it so clearly mimics our struggle with the flesh!

- ✳ Firstly, the flesh has be cut off (just like the limb)
- ✳ Secondly, we still feel pain where the flesh used to be (phantom pain)
- ✳ Thirdly, although the flesh is no longer there, the pain is still tangible, and *real!*

Now as far as I am aware (since my knowledge on phantom pain is limited), the feeling (sensation) of having a limb, when no limb is present, usually goes away after a period of time. But, for those who experience daily *pain*, there needs to be a pain management plan in place. The process is the same after cutting off the flesh as Christians. It is common to have a *sensation* of detachment from our old self, which for some is a pleasant experience while for others it's painful. The sensation is tolerable, but the pain, when it arrives (and it does), is almost unbearable! So what's our pain management plan?

Lets compare it to some of the amputation pain management tips...

**1. Do mild exercises to increase circulation**

For us, that means to exercise our faith in a time where are feeling the pain of the old flesh. Resist!

**2. Mentally exercise the limb that is not there in the area that is painful**

Ok hang on...this is something that we definitely do not want to do!!!

DO NOT, I repeat, DO NOT entertain your old fleshly desires. Yes, that would make the pain go away (at least temporarily) but that is the NOT the road to holiness. Stay focused!

**3. Mentally relax**

Meditate on God's Word and His presence with you.

**4. Exercise the stump**

Your stump is the place where your flesh was cut off. For you, that is you faith in Jesus. When you took that step toward Jesus and committed your life to Him, you volunteered you flesh to be amputated. What you need to realise at this point, is that once your flesh is gone. Its gone and you can't get it back!

**5. Change positions**

I like this one...if you are in a position that is increasing or contributing to the pain, then move! Yes, that may mean to physically move away from a source of temptation, or it may simply mean to refocus your thoughts and doubts towards God.

**6. Massage your stump**

Feed the spirit!

**7. Keep a diary of when pain is most severe. This can help you and your doctor identify recurring causes.**

This is actually a good idea, especially if you are struggling to resist specific areas of temptation. It will help you, and others identify and avoid the contributing factors to your pain.

**8. Mirror therapy**

Mirror therapy is used with amputees to help reduce pain (although they aren't completely sure why it works yet, but of course they have theories). But for us, our mirror is Christ. We need to look into the Word of God and be reminded of who we are in Him. But this involves doing something!

***James 1:22-25***

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

## Flee From Temptations of the Flesh

We are not simply told to dwell amongst the temptations of the flesh while *trying* to ignore them. We are told to *flee* from temptation! Joseph gives us a beautiful example of how to do this in Genesis 39:7-13. Paul's exhortation to Timothy is not only to flee youthful lusts, but to pursue the things of holiness. Remember, holiness is a life led by the Spirit. If we are simply trying to run from temptation in our own strength, we will soon run out of steam. We need to run toward our comforter and renewer of our strength...Jesus.



### 2 Timothy 2:22

*Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

## Surrender Power & Establish Position

The power is the Lord's! We tend to feel like we need to do something to take control, and although we have a part to play in resisting the flesh, we also have to remember that we can do nothing good without the help of the Holy Spirit. Renounce the power of the Devil and establish the power of the Most High God



### Zechariah 4:6

*'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.*

### Philippians 2:13

*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

I often forget who and Who's I am. But what a beautiful Psalm to remind us that we are a child of God. This is our position.

### Psalms 82:6

*And all of you are children of the Most High*

We are not just some piece of scum existing on the earth, we are princes and princesses of the most Holy God. If that doesn't establish your position, then I don't know what will!

### Acts 17:28-29

*for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.*

If we live, move and have our being in Him, then how could we possibly be overcome by evil? The hard reality is that we are *not* overcome...we just choose not to obey! Ouch...did that hurt you as much as it hurt me? Go back to 1 Corinthians 10:13...God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle. So if we *are* being conquered, then either God is lying (we dare not to think) or we aren't sourcing our help from the right place. I think the most likely answer here is that we *think* we are searching for God's help, but all we do is offer lip service to Him. We don't like to think that we have to actually do anything outside our comfort zone in obedience. We are given a stern warning about this attitude...

### Mark 7:6

*'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.*

**Obedience is an attitude of the heart.**

## Renunciation of Own Interests

### James 1:14

*But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.*

Renunciation of the self-life should be the attitude of complete detachment from the self-centered experience, seeing that there is no true pleasure or satisfaction to be found within it.

I have found, particularly recently, that anything to do with me is painful. Whether it is past experiences, current experiences, feelings or thoughts, it all creates some sort of pain. It only registered to me today why that is...I don't really care much for myself. That doesn't mean I don't look after myself, because I do, but my isolated existence doesn't mean much to me. When I'm able to focus my attention on someone else I find that the pain associated with my own life tends to diminish. That doesn't mean that I spend a couple of hours on Sunday with friends and then I feel good for the rest of the week (if only that was the case). It means that *while* I focus my attention on others, my own pain diminishes. That means that I have to do it all the time!

## BECOMING ASSERTIVE

Here is where we pull out the big guns...



### LEARNING TO SAY NO.

I think the single biggest problem that most people have in life is saying no; whether that be to other people's requests or to our own desires. Why is that? I think it comes down to a few things:

1. We want to please others (or ourselves)
2. We want to be accepted
3. We don't like conflict
4. We're not very good at saying no...

Our concern here isn't the simple act of saying no to general everyday things, but rather in learning how to say no to the flesh who is at war with our spirit.



**1 Corinthians 15:34**

*Awake to righteousness, and do not sin*

Temptation isn't just something to avoid. When sin bids us "come" we have to say NO, and unless we are equipped to do that, we will find ourselves swimming up-stream getting nowhere.

Temptations can come at us from outward influences, such as people, or from inward sources such as our own minds and fleshly desires. So as we look at some tips on how to say no *effectively*, keep these 2 sources in mind and think about how they might apply to you in your war against the flesh.

### Know your priorities and stick to your values

The priority that you place on something determines its importance or urgency, and its value is how desirable or prized it is to you. As a disciple of Christ who is pursuing holiness, what are some foundational values that we need to have hidden in our hearts?

**Psalms 119:11**

*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*

"Your Word" is a little broad really isn't it? Sure we have the Ten Commandments to keep us on the right track, but don't forget that our walk of Holiness is about walking in the Spirit. Most of the time (during a moment of temptation) we don't recall specific commandments yet our conscience bears witness to the fact that something isn't right, and usually we know what the 'right' thing is.

**Romans 2:15**

*who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them*

Take the time to read Psalm 119 and let it challenge your heart about your priorities before God.

### Establish and maintain your position

Once you know who and Who's you are, and you are convicted of the righteous way to live, all you need to do now is establish yourself in that position and stay there. Sounds easy? Not likely!

Here are a couple of tips to help you stay there...

- ✳ Decide on your position before you speak/act – take your time
- ✳ Be clear and concise – the more you fumble around with your words and thoughts the more tangled up your stance will be. Anything that you're not sure about is a compromise!
- ✳ Broken record technique – don't change your stance on the matter. Don't try to make the answer more palatable.
- ✳ Strengthen your position – hide God's word in your heart and use it against the flesh



## Pre-empting

Expect challenges and temptations. Wishing that temptations didn't exist, or that people wouldn't ask you challenging questions is an unrealistic ideal. The reason we hate the confrontation so much is because we aren't ready for it. They catch us off guard and we cave in!

**Psalms 27:2**

*When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh,*

The wicked one *will* be waiting for you. It is your job to be ready.

## Be truthful

Why aren't we truthful when we have to say no to someone? Well maybe you are, but I've spent most of my life making up 'excuses' to say no. Why? Because I was insecure in who I was and when it came to making a stand for God, I was embarrassed. Sounds awful hey, but I know I'm not the only one...but see I'm already learning to be honest about it!

I am slowly learning to be strong in my faith and not hide my face in shame, and the outcome is that saying 'no' has become far less stressful. The problem we face when we make an excuse is, what's our excuse going to be next time? Besides, people are very good at sourting out your 'so called' issues that are preventing you from saying 'yes'.

Practice full disclosure of you faith...

**2 Timothy 1:8**

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,*

## Don't apologise

What's there to apologise about? Let go of the guilt and fear. You have the right to say no. Apologies only put you in debt of the person asking; it suggests that the other person is entitled to something and you have denied them their entitlement.

I don't think I can recall even one verse where Jesus apologised to anyone...even when He healed people on the Sabbath! *He was obeying God*, for which no apologies are necessary.

The whole point is...

**It's not that you *can't*, but you *choose* not to**

## Accept the consequences

I think the biggest part of saying no is knowing what the consequences will be...there is a bit of pre-empting here too. Don't be afraid of the consequences...

**2 Timothy 1:7**

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

Be encouraged...

**2 Timothy 2:11-13**

*This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*

And be confident...

**2 Timothy 1:12**

*For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*

## IMITATING OUR LORD

**Ephesians 5:1**

*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.*

To imitate means

- Appear like
- To follow as a model
- Copied or derived from an original



Now, we could get down to the nitty gritty about what Christ did here on earth and how we should copy everything He did, but I get the feeling that that's not what it's about. Jesus made it quite clear, about what it mean to imitate Him...

**Luke 9:23**

*Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*

Then He goes on to say...

**Luke 14:27**

*And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*

What then does it mean to 'take up' and 'bear' your cross? It is a call do die. For some it may mean martyrdom, while for the most of us it means the death of our self-centred lives. In the following passage in Matthew 16 Jesus rebukes Satan (in Peter)... why? Peter was just acting in Jesus' defence, wasn't he? As a man, maybe so; but his rebuke was not in keeping with the will of God.

**Matthew 16:21-23**

*From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*

That is what we are to imitate from the life of Jesus. Our mind needs to be set on the will of God, and we need to follow His lead in our life, even unto death. This is not an optional extra of our discipleship, Jesus makes it very clear to us all...

**Matthew 16:25-26**

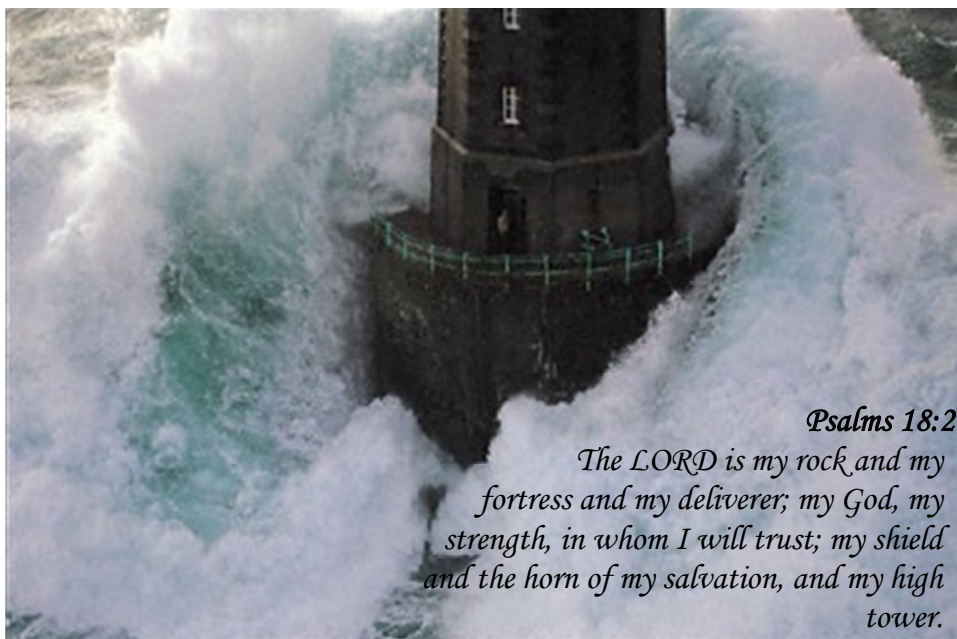
*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*

And remember we are *children* of God. Why is it that our human children only have to see their parents do something *once* and they are already copying it, while we, as spiritual children of God, struggle to even pay attention to what our Heavenly Father does, let alone copy it? Think about it.

**NOW, STAND STRONG IN THE LORD**

Be encouraged because *if God is for us, who can be against us?* And be confident *that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*, because *it is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.*

Remember that *to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*, and we are able to do this because *our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.*



**Psalms 18:2**

*The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*