

Overcoming Addictions and Sinful Habits

Lesson 03 of the series "Overcomer"

A. Jesus came to give us new and abundant life.

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." John 10:10 (NKJV)

"You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)" Ephesians 2:2-5 (NLT)

"This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

B. We must not allow anything to master us and pull us into sin and away from God.

"You may say, 'I am allowed to do anything.' –But not everything is good for you. And even though 'I am allowed to do anything.' I must not become a slave to anything." 1 Corinthians 6:12 (NLT)

"For you are a slave to whatever controls you." 2 Peter 2:19 (NLT)

"Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit."
Ephesians 5:18 (NLT)

Some sinful habits and addictions that can control us: overworking, overeating, overspending, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, gambling addictions, pornography, social media, seeking approval, etc.

C. Three steps to overcoming addictions and sinful habits.

1. The first step to overcoming addictions and sinful habits is confession.

"confess" = to openly acknowledge and admit sin or wrongdoing.

"Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat... Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, 'I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.' And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone... Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment. For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory... The LORD says, 'I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.' Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the LORD." Psalm 32:1-10 (NLT)

Note: Denial ALWAYS brings painful consequences.

"The prudent understand where they are going, but fools deceive themselves." Proverbs 14:8 (NLT)

2. The second step to overcoming addictions and sinful habits is asking God for help.

"God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them."
Matthew 5:3 (NLT)

- a. I must believe God has the power to change me. "For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him." Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

"I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms." Ephesians 1:19-20 (NLT)

- b. I must believe God loves me. "The LORD is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love... He has not punished us for all our sins, nor does he deal with us as we deserve. For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our rebellious acts as far away from us as the east is from the west. The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he understands how weak we are; he knows we are only dust." Psalm 103:8-14 (NLT)
 - c. I must surrender to every change God wants to make in my life. "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?" Luke 9:23-25 (NLT)
3. The third step to overcoming addiction is asking others for help.
- a. I need companionship. "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble... A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken." Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NLT)
 - b. I need accountability. "As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend." Proverbs 27:17 (NLT)
"Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they correct me, it is soothing medicine. Don't let me refuse it." Psalm 141:5 (NLT)
"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." James 5:16 (NLT)
- Note: We must be ready to help. "Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ." Galatians 6:1-2 (NLT)*

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Looking back at your notes from this week's lesson on "Overcoming Addictions and Sinful Habits" was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?
2. Read John 10:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. What does new life in Christ look like? What does abundant life look like? Do you know someone who lives life abundantly? Describe him/her.
3. Discuss the following statements and questions comparing denial and reality:

Denial: "My problem's not that bad." **Reality:** "How bad does it have to get before I get help?"

Denial: "I can handle my own problems. I don't need others to help me." **Reality:** "If I can handle my problem on my own why is it still a problem? Why haven't I dealt with it already?"

Now read Psalm 32. What is the difference between denial and confession?

4. Read Psalm 103:8-14 & Ephesians 2:8-9. You have invited a friend to join you for worship multiple times but he refuses to attend on the grounds that God won't accept him. "I've screwed up my life so badly that even God has given up on me!" he says. How do you respond?
5. Read Ephesians 1:19-20 & Philippians 2:13. What hope can we offer people who have given up?
6. What do the following verses teach us about the importance of getting help from others to conquer sinful habits and addictions?
 - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
 - Proverbs 12:1, 27:17
 - Galatians 6:1-2

Have you ever helped restore another believer? Has another believer helped restore you?

7. Discuss the following quotations

"I realize I'm not God; I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable." Step #1 in Celebrate Recovery by Rick Warren

"Habit, if not resisted, soon becomes necessity." Augustine

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Reinhold Niebuhr

"Denial ain't just a river in Egypt." Mark Twain

"Spiritual strongholds begin with a thought. One thought becomes a consideration. A consideration develops into an attitude, which leads then to action. Action repeated becomes a habit, and a habit establishes a power base for the enemy, that is, a stronghold." Elisabeth Elliot