

Christian Growth Course - Lesson 4

Overcoming Bondage (1)

Introduction: When a sin or undesirable practice grows until you cannot stop it; when you cannot control the activity but it becomes a controlling factor in your life, you are under bondage. Paul describes bondage in Romans 7:14, 15.

There are different degrees of bondage; a sin may have gained a lesser or greater amount of control over you. Some types of bondage are more destructive than others. Tobacco addiction is not as deadly as heroin addiction. And some forms of bondage are more "polite" and socially acceptable than others. We do not condemn a resentful person as readily as we do a sexual addict (though resentment can be just as destructive).

Yet all forms of bondage are dangerous and need to be broken, because:

1. Bondage is an on-going process that can lead to complete hardening and spiritual death - 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.
2. We have no peace, joy or self-respect while under the power of sin.
3. We are not free to really serve God.

Examples of bondage include addiction to alcohol, drugs, sexual immorality, pornography, television, spending, pleasure, work, resentment and anger, over eating, laziness, music, worry, perfectionism, etc.

In another lesson we will study practical suggestions for escaping some specific types of bondage. But in this first lesson we will look at scriptural truths about bondage and deliverance.

1. Sin is deceptive, promising freedom but enslaving people - 2 Peter 2:19; Genesis 3:1-6; Hebrews 3:13; John 8:44. Examples:

Drugs and alcohol promise wonderful experience or escape, but produce cruel addiction and destroy mind and body. Problems are multiplied, not solved.

Sexual immorality promises love and excitement, but produces shame, degrades personhood and cannot give a lasting relationship.

The excitement of buying new "things" wears off quickly, leaving one deeper in debt and needing another purchase as a "fix."

- A. Sin traps us through our wrong desires - James 1:14; 1 John 2:15, 16.
 - B. If we give ourselves over to sin, we become its slaves, whatever we may say - John 8:34; Romans 6:16; 7:14-24.
2. God does not want us in bondage to anything - 1 Corinthians 6:12.
 3. Jesus sympathizes with us and promises release - Matthew 9:36; Psalm 103:13, 14; Luke 4:18, 19; John 8:32; 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 8:15; Galatians 5:22, 23.

4. People can escape bondage to any sin - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

5. Some general steps to freedom from bondage (There is no simple, easy way to overcome bondage, but there is a way to overcome):
 - A. Recognize and confess your need - Luke 15:17-19; 2 Timothy 2:26.
 - B. Truly repent - Luke 13:3; James 4:7-9.
 - 1) Accept responsibility; don't blame others or circumstances. The final choice is yours. (Bondage may be sickness in one sense, but it is based on wrong moral choices).
 - 2) Burn bridges; clean house - Acts 19:18, 19.
 - 3) Make no more provision for gratifying sinful desires - Romans 13:14.
 - C. Avoid people, places and activities that pull you back into sin and indulgence - 1 Corinthians 15:33; 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:22. Choose those which help you to be free - Hebrews 10:24, 25.
 - D. Change thought-life - 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5; Proverbs 4:23.
 - 1) Learn to hate sin - Proverbs 8:13.
 - 2) Learn to love righteousness - Matthew 5:6.
 - 3) Learn to deal with wrong thoughts when they first appear, before they take strong hold.
 - E. Have regular, disciplined, systematic Bible study and prayer - 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 4:1-11. "Starve the old nature and feed the new." Seek the help of the Holy Spirit - Romans 8:13; Luke 11:13; Ephesians 5:18.
 - F. Grow in knowing and loving Jesus so that the motivation to please him becomes greater than the motivation to indulge yourself. This is basic - John 12:32; 2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 John 4:19.
 - G. Bring new goals and reasons for living into your life; discover new joys and pleasures that are not destructive. (Counseling may help on this.)
 - H. Pray and study to understand the root cause(s) of your addiction so that you can deal with them and be less vulnerable. No real lasting cure is possible until root causes are dealt with.

Appetite for sin? Need for relationship? Escape? Emptiness, boredom?
 Rebellion? Abnormal emotional needs? Low self-esteem? Physical causes? Etc.
 - I. Fill your life with good thoughts and activities so that you will be in less danger of falling back - 2 Peter 2:20-22; Matthew 12:43-45.
 - J. Make yourself accountable to someone; get into a "support group" - James 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

- K. Generally improve your lifestyle and health habits to give you an extra "edge" in your struggle. (Discipline in one area carries over into others.)
- L. Improve your general spiritual health in every way possible so as to have the maximum grace and help from God during your struggle: Regular devotional life, clearing any wrongs of the past, righting any broken relationships, and dealing with any areas of rebellion and disobedience in your life.
- M. Don't try to tackle every imperfection in your life at once; start with the major problems.

Conclusion: Deliverance from bondage is usually not an event but a process that takes time, struggle and perseverance. But the struggle is worthwhile, and the alternative is destruction. It takes time to get into bondage and time to get out. Repeated choices produce habits and habits produce character. Bondage developed through repeated wrong choices and freedom comes through repeated right choices. And the further you progress, the easier it becomes, until you are really free again.

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