

Thanks for your interest in

How to Conquer Bad Habits

It is my hope that the information in this booklet will help people break free from destructive habits that hold them captive.

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**Dedicated to those who want
to break free from bad habits**

How to Conquer Bad Habits

When you hear the phrase, "bad habits" what comes to mind? Perhaps you think of someone who constantly says "you know" when they talk. For example, the person might say, "I was walking down the street, you know, and when I got to the store, you know, I bought a candy bar, you know. You know, I don't normally buy Snickers Bars but, you know, I thought it would taste so good, you know....." This is enough to drive any listener crazy!

Other annoying habits are people burping out loud, picking their nose in public, or chewing food with their mouth open. All of these are rather disgusting. I'm sure you can think of other habits that are equally annoying.

Although such habits are irritating, they are not the ones referred to in this booklet. The habits addressed here are not just "bad habits," they are "sinful" ones. Sinful habits are those that displease God. Here are some examples?



1. Smoking
2. Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol
3. Over-eating (gluttony)
4. Swearing
5. Excessive T.V. watching
6. Looking at pornography (magazines, movies, the internet)
7. Using illegal drugs
8. Child abuse (yelling, hitting, degrading comments, molestation)
9. Laziness
10. Excessive spending habits (always wanting more...)
11. Driving over the speed limit or disregarding other laws
12. Being habitually late to meetings or appointments
13. Neglecting one's spouse

14. Constantly making excuses
15. Lusting after another person's spouse
16. Losing one's temper on a regular basis

There are many other sinful habits as well. All of them hurt the doer and/or others, and rob people of God's blessings.

We may also want to rid our lives of irritating habits like cracking our knuckles, but God is much more concerned that we rid ourselves of sinful habits.

Countless people would like to break free from their habits but don't know how. Other people say, "I can break my habit any time I want to, but I'm just not ready yet." In many cases these people have proven that they have not been able to break free. Instead, they have become slaves to their habits. In essence they are slaves to sin.

It is not easy to conquer bad habits, but it can be done, and this booklet gives helpful "how to's". The process entails focusing on two areas:

- **Developing the right attitudes toward sinful habits**
- **Doing the right actions regarding those habits**



Developing right attitudes

Let's begin by looking at developing right attitudes. There are seven attitudes that need to be developed in order to conquer bad habits. These prepare people for right actions. Right actions always flow out of right attitudes. If a person is going to change, he must do it from the inside out; change the attitude, change the person.

Look upon bad habits as sinful

The first attitude a person needs in order to conquer bad habits is to view those habits as sinful. If there is a habit that displeases God, it is not just a nuisance, it is sin. When a person does the habit, he in essence slaps God in the face and says, "I'm running my own life."

Over-eating is sin...

Smoking is sin...

Child abuse is sin...

Nagging is sin...

Arrogance is sin...

Drunkenness is sin...

Looking at pornography is sin...

Swearing is sin...

Outbursts of anger are sin...

Lusting after others is sin...

Laziness is sin...

Lying is sin...

Cheating is sin...

Whatever habits we have that offend God are sinful. That is the correct way to view them.

Some people say, "Everybody needs one or two vices. After all, none of us is perfect. So, quit bugging me and let me have a few bad habits. Just leave me alone."

Others say, "I've tried to break my bad habits but it didn't work. Now, I'm not willing to try anymore."

How do you think God feels about these statements? Personally I think He is disappointed in those who have such attitudes.

What if an airline mechanic said, "Give me a break! It's hard work keeping these planes maintained. I've almost every system on the plane in operating order except the landing gear. You don't understand how many hours I put in. Let me have at least one area of the plane I can let slide."

No airline company would accept such flawed thinking. They want every area of every plane up to speed. If even one area was neglected, planes could crash and burn. This is exactly what happens to people who don't conquer sinful habits; they often wreck their own lives.

- Drunkenness leads to countless problems like car accidents
- Child abuse brings great harm to young lives
- Swearing is a terrible witness for God
- Overeating destroys a person's body and health
- Laziness leads to slovenly living and substandard work

In order to conquer bad habits it is imperative to see those habits the way God sees them – as sin. We must agree with Him. If we say we love God, we won't want to hurt Him, others or ourselves by continuing in sinful behavior.

Having the proper attitude toward bad habits is the first step to breaking those habits. 1 John 1:9 says, *"If we CONFESS our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Do you know what it means to confess your sin? It means to agree with God about it; to view it as more than a problem – to see it for what it is. Notice that God will cleanse us from all unrighteousness when we agree with Him and turn away from our sin.

Realize you are in a spiritual battle

The second attitude a person needs in order to conquer bad habits is to realize he is in a spiritual battle. Ephesians 6:12 makes this

point clear, *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places."*

If a soldier in wartime walked through a mine field believing no mines were there, his ignorance would not prevent him from being blown up. Ignorance and denial do not change reality.

Many people deny or are ignorant of the spiritual realm because they can't see it with their physical eyes. Don't let this be true of you. Satan and demonic forces are real. You may not be able to see them, but if you step on one of their mines your life may be destroyed.

Toying with bad habits is dangerous business. Habits can lead to lifestyles. Lifestyles can bring destruction. Someone said,

Sow an attitude, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a lifestyle.
Sow a lifestyle, reap a destiny.

Saying that bad habits are dangerous is not a scare tactic, it is reality. There are forces out there that seek to destroy us or drag us down. Forewarned is forearmed!

Realize the possible consequences of sinful habits

The third attitude a person needs in order to conquer sinful habits is to realize the possible consequences of continuing in those habits. 1 Peter 5:8 gives a sober warning, *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert, your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."* Satan has one goal for every human; to drag that person to Hell with him. If you are not a Christian and have bad habits, Satan can use those habits to drag

you down. He can't take Christians to Hell, but he can use bad habits to limit their effectiveness in ministry or destroy their physical lives. Here are some possible consequences of bad habits in the lives of believers.

- ***Bad habits harm a person's witness***

If you are a Christian and have the habit of bragging about yourself, you are destroying your own testimony. If you claim to know God, yet use profanity, people will write you off as a hypocrite.

- ***Bad habits cause others to stumble***

If you are a Christian and smoke, you're sending the message that smoking is OK. You may not mean to send that message, but you are. Your smoking may encourage a fellow believer to head down the same destructive road.

- ***Bad habits can lead to death***

Another possible consequence of bad habits is death. James 1:15 states, "*Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*" If we fail to get a handle on our bad habits they may do us in. My wife knew a young man who said he was a Christian yet got involved with the wrong crowd. He took illegal drugs and developed a disease that caused his arteries to deteriorate. The condition was irreversible and he died a very painful, agonizing death.

In Acts chapter five, Ananias and Sapphira lied to God and He chose to take their lives. Perhaps He did this as an example to warn others not to be a bad witness.

If we have sinful habits, we may cause others to stumble, and God may choose to take us home. God is loving and has done and continues to do countless things for us, but He is also a just God

who takes a very dim view of sin. If we tread upon His grace, He may choose to discipline us.

Realizing the possible consequences of bad habits can motivate us to work hard at breaking free.

Understand that God is there to help

The fourth attitude a person needs in order to conquer bad habits is to understand that God is there to help. 2 Chronicles 7:14 states, *"And My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* Although this was a promise given to Israel, I believe that God is there today to help each of us if we sincerely call out to Him. If we turn from sin and seek His face, He will hear, forgive our sins, and heal our lives. The words of 1 John 1:9 are a powerful reminder, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Some people are convinced they can't conquer bad habits. This simply is not true. A person can conquer sinful behavior through Christ's power. One of my favorite verses is Philippians 4:13 *"I can do all things through Him (Christ) who strengthens me."* With Christ all things God wants us to do are possible!

Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God

This brings us to the fifth attitude Christians need in order to conquer bad habits. They need to realize they are new creatures in Christ and thus dead to sin, and alive to God. 2 Corinthians 5:17 states, *"Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."* As new creatures God wants to make all things new in our lives. Romans 6:11 states, *"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."*

Knowing that a person has God's power working in them, he can say to himself, "I am a new creature in Christ. I am dead to sin. I don't have to be a slave to sinful habits anymore. I have the power God working in me to break the bonds of sin. I can be an overcomer if I yield my will to Christ." This is not psychological "hype", it is fact. Sin does not have the same power it once had over us. As Christians we can be victorious! We are brand new in Christ!

One young man who had rededicated his life to Christ came to me and wanted to know how to stop smoking. Together we went over the information in this booklet. The following week he stood up in church and asked us to pray that he could cut back to one pack of cigarettes a day. We prayed, and he cut back. The next week he stood up and asked for prayer that he could cut back to a couple of cigarettes a day. We prayed, and again he cut back. The following Sunday he stood up and shared that he had stopped smoking altogether. For the next several months before I moved to a new area, the young man said he had not smoked again. God helped him break a very addictive and destructive habit.

Understand that temptation is not sin

The sixth attitude that helps people conquer bad habits is to realize that temptation does not equal sin. Some people stop trying to conquer bad habits because they think that being tempted means they have sinned and thus failed. Temptation is not sin. Temptation does not become sin until a person gives in to it.



Just because I am tempted to drink to excess does not mean I have sinned. Even though temptation gets so great I can hardly stand it, I still have not sinned. The temptation only becomes sin when I finally give in. I am a victor and overcomer until I throw in the towel. Don't give in! Keep asking God

to help you resist.

If Satan can get a person discouraged by convincing him the battle is lost, that person will almost always give up. On the other hand, if the person realizes temptation is not sin, he will resist much longer and hopefully have victory. 1 Peter 5:8-9 states, *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert, your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith."*

Get the attitude that you are going to resist when temptation comes. Temptation is not sin. With God's help you can have victory!

Realize that conquering bad habits may be a slow process

The seventh and final attitude that is helpful in conquering bad habits is to realize that conquering those habits may be a slow process.

Some people conquer bad habits overnight, but for most people it takes a while. Before I became a Christian I had a problem with swearing. Much to my dismay, the problem did not magically go away when I asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior. What did change was that I had a much greater awareness of my sin. Before Christ was in my life, swearing didn't bother me. After I received Christ, the Holy Spirit convicted me that swearing was wrong. I knew I needed to break the habit, but it did not happen overnight. It took several months of prayer and effort to get that area cleaned up. Even so, every once in a while, depending on the situation, I slip up, but it is rare, and for the most part, I have great victory.

Don't be discouraged if you can't get rid of a bad habit right away. That is another of Satan's tricks. He tries to get us to believe that we can never change. If he can convince us of this lie, we will give up trying and live in bondage. Get and keep the mindset that

"change often takes time." It is God's power working in us that will eventually rid our lives of sinful habits. Just keep trusting and yielding to the Holy Spirit's promptings rather than giving in to temptation.

2 Corinthians 3:18 states, "*But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*" This verse teaches that we are transformed from "glory to glory" which means we move from one level of maturity to the next. The goal is that three years from now we should be more mature in our faith than we are now. Three years after that we should be even more mature. Going to each subsequent level of maturity takes time.

Spiritual maturity is very similar to physical maturity. It would be silly for a seven year old to expect to bench press two hundred pounds. His body is not mature enough. On the other hand, at sixteen with some work, bench pressing two hundred pounds might be a very realistic expectation.

Work at cleaning bad habits out of your life, but don't be discouraged if you stumble and fall along the way. Just confess your sin, get back up and start again. Eventually you will have victory if you keep trusting God and yielding to Him.

Now that we've addressed **seven attitudes**, let's move to **seven actions** that will help people conquer sinful habits.

Seven actions that help conquer sinful habits

Right *attitudes* aren't enough to conquer sinful habits. They must lead to right *actions*. *Knowing* must lead to *doing*. Let's look at a number of very specific actions a person can take that will help him or her conquer bad habits. The first is:

Develop a close walk with God

Foundational in a close walk with God is to:

Develop a consistent quiet time

Those who start their day in God's Word and prayer find strength and power. It is like eating. If we fail to eat physical food we may start strong in the morning but fade by mid-afternoon. Bible study and prayer are spiritual food that gives spiritual strength. Make it a habit to spend time with God on a regular basis.

Make it a habit to be in church on Sunday

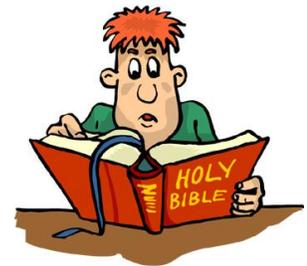
As a person seeks to weed bad habits out of his life, he must also re-enforce good habits. Being in church with other Christians worshipping God is the kind of habit a person should want to cultivate. People need to guard Saturday nights and make a plan to get to bed at a good time so they are not exhausted on Sunday morning. They must avoid programing themselves for failure. Instead they should program themselves for success.

Fellowship with other believers

It is important for Christians to have contact with other believers more than on Sunday. That's why it is helpful to get involved in a mid-week Bible study or other small group. There a person can rub shoulders with other Christians and stay strong in his faith.

Study, memorize and meditate on Scripture

A second action to take to conquer bad habits is to study, memorize and meditate on Scripture. Truth from God's Word shows people what they must do in order to be victorious. Here are some verses that apply to various sinful habits.



Drunkness or drinking to excess - Ephesians 5:18 states, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."

Over-eating - 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 states, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

Swearing - Ephesians 4:29 states, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear."

Abusing children verbally or physically - Ephesians 6:4 states, "And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Speeding - Romans 13:1 states, "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God."

Neglecting one's wife - Ephesians 5:25 states, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

Lying, gossiping, cheating, exaggerating, and lusting are other sinful habits. Every habit has Scripture that relates to it. We need to take these verses and ask ourselves, "How does God's truth apply to me? How can I integrate His word into my life."

Memorize and meditate on Romans 6:1-4

Romans 6:1-4 is a great passage to memorize and meditate on in order to conquer bad habits. It is a general passage that applies to overcoming any temptation to sin. The passage states:

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

These are great verses to begin quoting in your mind whenever you are tempted. They basically say that we are not to continue in sin so God can continue to pour out His grace in the form of forgiveness. If we are truly saved we will want to walk in newness of life. To continue to sin after becoming a Christian is to presume upon God's grace. That is not wise. Some people in New Testament times reasoned that they could go on sinning because God would forgive them. Paul warns against this presumptive philosophy. If a person loves God, he will not want to sin. Instead he will want to live in newness of life.

Many times I have used Romans chapter six to refocus on God during times of temptation. I have encouraged others to use it, too. It has been a great help.

Pray

A third action that helps conquer bad habits is prayer. This is also closely connected with the first two. Here are a number of ways to pray.

Pray regularly about your habit

During your “quiet time” ask God to give you victory through the day in your area of need. If you need to stop lusting, pray for victory. If you need to stop over-eating, pray for victory. Whatever your need, pray for victory.

Pray instantly when you feel temptation coming

Do not hesitate when temptation comes. Do not toy around with it. It is like playing with fire. You will get burned. When temptation comes start praying! Often times the Holy Spirit will prompt you and make it clear that you are under attack.

Here are some examples of when a person should pray. Your children do something that makes you furious. You feel like lashing out and doing something improper. Don't do it, instead PRAY! Wait until you are in control of your emotions before proceeding.

You are on a business trip at a place where you have movie channels in your room. A movie is about to come on that has material you know is not honoring to God. Don't rationalize what you should do. Instead PRAY and turn off the TV.

You are at someone's home for dinner and the offer is made for seconds you don't need. Don't rationalize, PRAY silently in your spirit. Ask God for strength to say NO!

When you are tempted it is important to pray immediately to get control of emotions before they well-up and override common sense. When temptations come, emotions rise quickly. If emotions can be held below a certain level, a person will act on what he knows is God's will rather than choosing to follow his own desires. If he begins to rationalize, emotions can take over and the battle may be lost.

Use God's Word as you pray

Using God's Word as you pray is a powerful asset. Perhaps use Romans 6:1-4. Here are a few examples. You are at a strange city and the magazine rack with all the sleazy magazines is suddenly before you. You are tempted to stop and check some out. The

Spirit prompts you to pray. You have memorized Romans 6:1-4 and begin quoting it to yourself, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be..." The battle rages, but you feel the inner strength of God's Spirit working to give you victory. PRAISE GOD!

As well as using Romans 6:1-4, a person can use the verses he learned that specifically address his need. Here's an example. You are about to watch that third TV program and the Spirit prompts you to turn it off. You know you should stop watching, and you know you have a problem in this area. You memorized Ephesians 5:15-16 and the Holy Spirit brings it to mind, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil." You begin to pray, "Lord, I realize watching another show is a waste of my time and Yours. Help me make the most of my time for the days really are evil." As you pray you feel your emotions bow to what you know is right. Praise God!

Jesus did not have bad habits, but He still used Scripture during times of temptation. When Satan tempted Christ to turn stones into bread and wrongfully use His power, Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone."

The Word of God is the tool the Holy Spirit uses to renew our minds and keep our emotions under control. Don't underestimate the power of the God's Word in helping you conquer bad habits.

Praise God as you pray

A fourth way to pray is to praise God as you pray. I have found great strength in PRAISING GOD during times of temptation. I do not praise Him for the temptation, I praise Him that He can bring victory if I trust and obey. There's an old song by a group called the Imperials. The song is called "Praise the Lord." It goes:

When you're up against the struggle that shatters all your dreams
When your hopes have been cruelly crushed by Satan's
manifested schemes.

When you feel the urge within you to submit to earthly fears
When the faith that you've been standing in just
seems to disappear

Praise the Lord. He can work through those who praise Him.
Praise the Lord, for our God inhabits praise. Praise the Lord.
And the chains that seem to bind you
will fall harmlessly behind you
when you praise Him.

Now Satan is a liar and he wants to make us think that
we are paupers when he knows himself we're children of the King.
So lift up your mighty shield of faith for the battle must be won.
We know that Jesus Christ is risen so the work's already done.

Praise the Lord. He can work through those who praise Him.
Praise the Lord, for our God inhabits praise. Praise the Lord.
And the chains that seem to bind you
will fall harmlessly behind you
when you Praise Him.

There is power in praising God!

Seek wise counsel

The fourth action that can help conquer bad habits is to seek wise counsel. Proverbs 24:5,6 states, "*A wise man is strong, and a man of knowledge increases power. For by wise guidance (counsel) you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.*"

Wise counsel can be of great value in overcoming bad habits. Those who give us wise counsel may share new ideas and strategies that are helpful in conquering our habit.

Who should a person go to for wise counsel? Someone who is wise! Who is that? Someone who knows what the Lord says about a particular area of need. This might include a Christian counselor, pastor, fellow Christian, friend or even one's spouse. Ask God to show you who you should go to.

If the habit is something you want to keep confidential only go to those who you are sure will keep the matter private.

Some people feel they need to be able to solve all their own problems without outside help. This is a noble but foolish attitude. No one is an expert in everything. If a person has a problem with his car, he may be able to fix it himself but depending on the problem, he may need to take the car to someone with greater expertise and the right tools. So, too, with bad habits. There are Christians who know Scripture well, give sound advice, and can help devise a plan to help others conquer sinful habits.

Normally I don't recommend seeking counsel from non-Christians. For one, they may not feel your habit is a problem. Also, without God's Word, their advice may be like the blind leading the lame.

Another source of wise counsel is good Christian books. Not every book is good, but there are many excellent books that address numerous needs. Visit a Christian bookstore and look to see what is available. You might be pleasantly surprised. You also might want to go to www.Christianbook.com. Even with a book, however, it is still better if you see a person you can share with and receive feedback from.

If your habit is a physical addiction like alcohol or drugs, you may need to get into a residence program. You may be thinking, "Are there really Christians addicted to things like drugs?"

Unfortunately, yes! But a professionally run program may help break the habit.

Be accountable to someone

A fifth action to help conquer bad habits is to find someone to be accountable to. There is great power in accountability. James 5:16 reads, *"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."* The Bible says to confess our sins to one another, and pray for one another that we may be healed. This is basic accountability.

I'll never forget the Christian who came to me and told me about the moral problem he was having. He really loved his wife, but found himself attracted to another woman at the office. He had even gone so far as to have physical contact with her short of intercourse. He was ashamed of himself and knew he was jeopardizing his career and marriage. He asked for help. We talked a lot about the problem, looked at Scripture, prayed and decided on some very specific things he could do. Every week I held him accountable and asked him point blank about his progress. He began to have great victory. I believe a large part of the success was our accountability.

The person you are accountable to may be the person you sought counsel from, or it may be someone else like your spouse or a Christian friend. Again, ask God to guide you to the right person.

Avoid situations and places that feed sinful habits

Another action to help conquer bad habits is to avoid situations and places that feed those habits. It is not always possible to avoid difficult situations, but it is very helpful to avoid places that encourage bad habits. For example, one person said, "I had a bad habit of eating donuts every morning on the way to work. I would stop by my favorite bakery and get a couple of donuts and a coffee.

I finally decided to break free by starting a new diet, but I failed to change my driving route to work, and drove right passed the bakery. And wouldn't you know it. In the window that morning were some of my favorite donuts. I thought maybe it was a sign from God, so I prayed, "Lord, I thought You wanted me to stop eating so many donuts, but maybe you allowed those donuts to be in the window because You want me to have them one more time. I'll tell you what, Lord. If you want me to have a couple of donuts, just create a parking place for me directly in front of the bakery. Sure enough, on the eighth time around the block, there it was!"

2 Timothy 2:22 states, "Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

We are to flee youthful lusts and pursue things like righteousness, faith, love and peace. Fleeing means staying far away from anything having to do with those lusts. Here are some applications. If you tend to drink too much when you go out with the boys, don't go out. If you tend to overspend at certain stores using plastic money, don't go to those stores until you have cash, and be sure not to take your credit card.

Part of avoiding difficult situations is to have a plan. Plan ahead of time what you will do to keep from falling prey to bad habits. Here are a few examples. Your bad habit is being late to appointments. Here's a solution. Plan to leave early so you arrive ten minutes before you need to be there. Set your alarm as a reminder. Say to yourself, "No matter what I am doing, when it comes time to leave, I will drop what I'm doing and leave! Lord, help me!"

If your bad habit is yelling at your children. Plan to pray instantly when you feel your anger rising. Plan to speak in a normal tone of voice no matter what. Practice over and over behind closed doors. Come up with a question that you will ask before you do anything

else, like, "What is going on here? I want you to tell me one at a time why the two of you are fighting."

If your bad habit is eating to excess. Plan to avoid seconds no matter what. Plan to take smaller bites, chew longer and have intermingled conversation. Get this mindset before sitting down so when temptation comes you will be able to stay in control.

If your bad habit is drinking to excess, plan to have a soda or water when you go to a party. Decide ahead of time what you will say to the host or bartender. Get the proper mindset so you can say, "Tonight I'll have a seven-up."

Another part of a good plan might be to confess your sin if you slip and give in to the habit. For example, let's say you are at a party and you slip up and allow wrong words to come out of your mouth. The Holy Spirit convicts you of your sin. What should you do? You should silently confess your sin and ask for God's help. Learn from your mistakes. Don't let Satan convince you that your habit is hopeless.

Fill the void of the conquered habit with something else

A seventh action to help conquer bad habits and to keep them from returning is to fill the void of a conquered habit with something else. As a habit is conquered it leaves a void. Unless that void is filled with something positive, the habit will likely return.

For example, a person with a drinking problem might find that he drinks the most when he is bored and sitting around home in the evening. To help conquer his habit, he needs to fill his evenings with activities that keep him from being bored. Perhaps he can take up a sport like bowling that gets him out of the house a few evenings a week.

A person who used to watch hours of TV may need to develop the habit of reading, taking walks or developing a hobby. If he or she simply sits around the house and does nothing, the TV monster will eventually win the temptation battle.



In Matthew 12:43-45 the subject of unclean spirits is addressed. When those spirits are cast out of a person, if the person does not fill his life with something else, the spirits will return in greater numbers. So, too, with bad habits. Part of getting bad habits out of our lives is to replace them with meaningful activities. If we do, we will remain victorious.

Conclusion

God desires that Christians rid their lives of sinful habits. As bad habits are conquered, we must remember where the power came from; it came from God working in us. We must never become proud thinking we were the ones who did it. Also, we must realize that bad habits, once conquered, can rise again. One of Satan's tricks is to get us to think that a particular area of life is no longer a problem. We must not fall into that trap. Remember the words of Proverbs 29:23 which states, "*A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.*" Let's humbly conquer bad habits with God's help!

May God richly bless each one of us as we yield every area of our lives to Him.

Seven Attitudes and Actions that Help Conquer Sinful Habits

SEVEN ATTITUDES

1. Look upon certain bad habits as sin
2. Realize a spiritual battle rages around us
3. Realize the possible consequences of sinful habits
4. Understand that God is there to help
5. Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God
6. Understand that temptation is not sin
7. Realize that conquering bad habits may be a slow process

SEVEN ACTIONS

1. Develop a close walk with God
2. Study, memorize and meditate on Scripture
3. Pray
4. Seek wise counsel
5. Be accountable to someone
6. Avoid situations and places that encourage bad habits
7. Fill the void of the conquered habit with something else

PROPER ATTITUDES TO CONQUER BAD HABITS

1. Look upon bad habits as sin

1 John 1:9 – “If we CONFESS our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

2. Realize that you are in a spiritual battle

Ephesians 6:12 – “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places.”

3. Realize the possible consequences of sinful habits

1 Peter 5:8 – “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert, your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

James 1:15 – “Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”

4. Understand that God is there to help

2 Chronicles 7:14 – “And My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

5. Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God

2 Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

Romans 6:11 – “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

6. Understand that temptation is not sin

1 Peter 5:9a – “But RESIST him (Satan), firm in your faith...”

7. Realize that conquering bad habits may be a slow process

2 Corinthians 3:18 – “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

PROPER ACTIONS TO CONQUER BAD HABITS

1. Develop a close walk with God

Hebrews 10:25 – “Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”

2. Pray

James 5:16b – “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

3. Study, memorize and meditate on Scripture

Romans 6:1-4 – “¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

4. Seek wise counsel

Proverbs 24:5,6 – “A wise man is strong, and a man of knowledge increases power. For by wise guidance (counsel) you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.”

5. Be accountable to someone

James 5:16a – “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.”

6. Avoid situations and places that encourage bad habits

2 Timothy 2:22 – “Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

7. Fill the void of the conquered bad habit with something else

Matthew 12:43-45 – “Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came;' and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.”

HABIT WORKSHEET

1. One habit I need to conquer is _____.

2. Do I have the following ATTITUDES? If not, what do I need to do to get them?

ATTITUDE	(Do I have them?)	YES	NO
a. Do I look upon bad habits as sin?		_____	_____
b. Do I realize that I'm in a spiritual battle?		_____	_____
c. Do I realize the possible consequences of my habits?		_____	_____
d. Do I really believe that God is there to help?		_____	_____
e. Do I consider myself dead to sin and alive to God?		_____	_____
f. Do I understand that temptation is not sin?		_____	_____
g. Do I know that conquering bad habits takes time?		_____	_____

3. Have I taken the appropriate ACTIONS to help break this/these habits?

ACTION (Have I taken this action?) YES NO

a. Am I working hard on my spiritual life? _____

b. Have I meditated on Scripture regarding my habit? _____

c. Do I pray regularly about my habit? _____

d. Have I sought wise counsel regarding my habit? _____

e. Am I accountable to someone? _____

f. Do I avoid difficult situations? _____

g. Have I found something to help fill the void? _____

4. If the answer to any of the above is, "No," use the space on the next few pages to write out a plan to make the answer, "Yes."

My Plan to Conquer Bad Habits

My Plan to Conquer Bad Habits