

Let's Fall in Love with God
Chapter 6: Breaking Old Habits
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{ Slow and easy! }

The Christian Habit

The largest percentage of Christians in the first generation of believers was abandoned to intimacy with God. If this were not so, they would not have continued to profess their faith in Jesus knowing that it would likely cost them their lives. The greatest problem the church faces now is the habitual Christian, just *doing the same things over and over and hoping for a different result*. Albert Einstein called this *insanity*. The great challenge is how do we get such Christians interested in becoming more than the average run of the mill believers we see everywhere? Most Christians have relaxed into a religious routine and are satisfied to remain in their comfort zone.

Falling in Love

The Apostle Paul said, "You did run well at first. Who hindered you?" Galatians 5:7. The absolute truth of the matter is that we have each stunted our own growth. We have extinguished the flames of our first love. That love drew us to God and overwhelmed us when we felt the love of Jesus and responded to His offer of intimate relationship with Him. Let us determine to find that first love, which came to us at rebirth. Purpose to pursue your first love, that honeymoon-like passion, that overwhelmed

you when you accepted Jesus by faith. If you have just recently been born again of the Spirit of God in Christ, purpose to remain on honeymoon with Him for the rest of your life.

Abandoned to Intimacy

There are two important aspects of the life abandoned to intimacy with God. These two things will go a long way in helping you break out of your lethargy.

First living abandoned to intimacy with God involves a *shift in our affections* away from self indulgent, self-promoting or self worshipping things. Even to put the love of your spouse before the love of God is a choice of earthly motive. The concern for your own reputation is a selfish motive. Someone once said, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Well, so is the road to heaven. It is the same road. What determines your destination is the direction in which you are raveling.

Actually, the road to hell, (your direction away from God) is the gold of your own reputation. "Jesus made Himself of no reputation..." If you care more about your reputation among men than your reputation with God, be advised that your direction is determined by such *popularity* gold. Jesus said, "He that loves his family more than me is not worthy of me" Matthew 10:37. Are you willing to do whatever God asks of you even if it means that your family will be upset with you? ?

The ***second*** aspect of the life abandoned to intimacy with God requires *abandoning yourself to Him as in a marriage* and letting Him be your groom. Now to you men I say quite bluntly, “That you are the *bride* of Christ.” You are not His groom. Unless and until you can learn how to be surrendered to Jesus as a bride, you will not find intimacy with Him. As long as you treat Him as though you are the groom, there will be constant conflict between your spirit and His Spirit. Don’t think of it in terms of gender. Think of it in terms of roles and responsibilities. Let Him take the lead. And when there is disagreement between you and Him, always let Him make the final decision!

Until you love Him with passionate desire, enough to trust Him with your very life, and the lives of your entire family, you will *not* surrender your will to His and let Him manage all the events of your life. This is the message that has come down to us since Jesus finished His work on earth. There is no formula for intimacy, just as there is no formula for *falling in love*.

No Exposure or No Interest

It is likely that your lack of exposure to, or lack of interest in, the passion of many believers through the centuries, explains why your Christian experience is far less gripping and satisfying than theirs. Their passions were expressed clearly in hymns, books, teachings and personal

expression. We keep a significant distance between ourselves and God. This may be caused by our spiritual confusion or purposeful intention to be in control. However, the truth still remains that the distance we maintain is a choice we have made. You must repent (change your mind about who is in charge of your life, yourself or God). To make no choice at all in the matter will insure that you will never find intimacy with God in this life.

Agree to Disagree Amicably

Many Christian books, devotionals and Bible commentaries are laced with misrepresentations and misperceptions of God. And the contradictions and confusions taught by religious leaders everywhere account for much of the crowd's discouragement in their personal pursuit of the love of God. These misrepresentations of God and His ways are caused by relative truth, which was either passed to us by our relatives or which we logically deduced. Faith is illogical and always will be. Faith is emotional. Faith and fact are not the same. Fact is certain. Faith is hoped. Be open to letting God change what you believe. Be in agreement with God, even if it is in disagreement with every other person you know.

Live Loved and Live Loving

Essentially we must do an "about face" with respect to our deepest affections. These two things are necessary for a Christian who wants to abandon himself to an intimate love affair with God. In other words, one must *forsake the love of self* and *embrace the love of God*. This love exchange will parlay into loving others as much as one loves self! It is entirely possible to be religious, go to weekly worship gatherings and yet not to have forsaken the world (self) at all. Many who are very religious will *not* spend eternity with God. The proof is that you will find professed Christians wherever you will find non-Christians.

On the other hand, because of the enormous grace of God, even some violent criminals, who have cried out in desperation, "God be merciful to me, a violent sinner," may be far more intimate with God than most Christians! It is not about the state in which we were at the time of our new birth. It is only about a choice to love God more than any other object in the universe day after day. It is being aware of His presence and letting Him be in control of your life. The irrefutable evidence of intimacy is the motive to do everything to please one's lover.

Motives

There seems to be very little distinction between Christians and non-Christians in general. Nearly all religions focus on morality. Some do not bend to the changes in culture, such as Islam. But many change the definition of morality to coincide with the cultural norms. Christians should be the most loving of all people and also the most merciful and forgiving. But the moral standards of the church should remain true to the scriptures.

Sin Is Not

Unfortunately, many Christians today will do almost anything that anybody else will do. Now I am not saying that we can rely on what the church has held as a moral standard historically. Many things formerly labeled as sin were not sin according to the Bible. The best way to determine what expression (word or deed) is sin and what is not, is to assess its affect on relationship. Historically there was often too much focus on behavior and too little on relationship. God's Ten Commandments are all about relationship. The first 4 are about breaking relationship with God. The last six are about breaking relationship with man. I think it is save to say that sin **is anything that** denigrates or destroys relationship. Sin is not expression. Sin is motive. One can sin in motive, while appearing to be righteous in their expression.

Forgive Without Apology

As Christians, we must forgive like Jesus did. This is *not* to forgive someone because you are guilty of the same things, and therefore you have no right to judge. Forgiveness never requires an apology. Christ spoke forgiveness of His murderers from the cross. But to forgive never means to condone the evil done.

Condone or Condemn

"Silence gives consent" is a phrase from hell. It is absolutely not true. Further, God has not given any of us, Christians or otherwise, the authority to condone anything. Nor has He given any man the authority to condemn. Tread lightly if you think you can judge anyone. *Bear in mind that discernment and judgment may appear to be the same thing. But they absolutely are not.*

Wrong never becomes right based on culture. But demonstrating love toward the unlovable, even criminals, *is* the way of the Cross. The only cure for criminality is the saving faith in the one who offered salvation to all mankind. Unconditional love is the only thing that compels a man to surrender his life to Christ. Remember this as well. Forgiveness does *not* mean that there will be no consequences for the crimes. Forgiveness in God's hall of justice, is that someone will suffer the consequences of every crime. It will be either yourself or Jesus Christ. It is your choice. An *"I can do it myself"* attitude here is an *irretrievable, poor choice.*

Strange but Wonderful

Christians who are abandoned to intimacy with God will be looked on as being *strange* and out of touch with reality. To be sure, we are *out of touch* with their reality. Ours has changed to that of another kingdom. We are in this world with a very specific commission and a very specific command. Neither of these are *normal* but both of them are absolute. The objective of the church, or at least *Christ-Ins* is to *be the Presence of the love of Jesus* in His stead. He deposited the Holy Spirit within each of us to connect us to God at all times. That is a really terrific kind of *strange*!

Changed Desires

When we talk about being “in the world but not of it,” we are talking about desires of the heart. When we fall in love, our desires change radically. Our desires now include and envelope the one we love. God’s desires become our desires when He becomes the object of our affection. When our spirit becomes joined to God’s Holy Spirit, our desires follow. The natural man cannot help himself. He is selfish, myopic, somewhat narcissistic, and consumed by pride. It is when one's pride is wounded that all sorts of bad things happen. It spawns crimes. It causes relationships to break. It causes people to do almost insane things.

Let Go of Your Pride

The way of Jesus was, and still is, humility which is quite repulsive to the natural spirit. And you will never become truly intimate with God so long as you have not surrendered your reputation (pride) to God. So, yes, that is a very strange thing, likely even repulsive, to the natural man. It was for us as well. Repentance is a humbling through which we surrender our sovereignty (free will) to God. But the humbling cannot stop there. The deeper the humility the greater God's grace. The Bible says, "God resists the proud and but gives grace to the humble."

Present but Not Present

God means what He said, "Love not the world," specifically the things that are in the natural world ("self indulgence" "seeking applause" and "desiring to be worshipped or to be in control of others"). 1 John 2:15-16 puts it this way "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh ("give me!"), the lust of the eyes ("see me!") and the pride of life ("worship me") is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Clearly the natural man and the spiritual man are radically different. You need to work and live and drink and sleep and bathe and grow and procreate and bring your children up in the world God made. That is not the

world to which I am referring. The world we are to forsake is the one that organizes and fills itself with unbelief. The world that is possessed with pleasure, prosperity, popularity and power builds itself upon doubts, worry, anxiety and fear.

A father may be in the room with his children while his mind is wandered far from them. He may be thinking about appointments, emails, phone calls and other business things. So even though he may be physically in his children's presence, his presence is a long way off. In like manner, when we fall in love with God, our minds are constantly wandering to His Presence, as opposed to concentrating on our physical situations. When our thoughts and affections are with God, we are in the right state of mind.

Forsake Self-righteousness

Jesus was in the world, but not of the world. He was here, but His Heart was somewhere else. There is no contradiction here in what I'm saying. There's a distinction between the part of the world that is divinely given where Christians plant, reap, sew, work and live in the world by following God's commandments. God meant it to be so. And that is not worldliness.

Worldliness is the pride of life and the desire for what the eye sees and the longing of the ambitious soul for position. So get over your bad self! When you cease every effort to stop doing evil things and devote all of your

attentions and affections toward God, you will find that the evil subsides. God's Holy Spirit can then express Himself prolifically, because you stop interrupting His activities with your *self-righteous* efforts. So, stop trying and start trusting! You can certainly trust the Spirit of God within you.

Selfish to Selfless

These two acts can be done simultaneously. Turn *from* the world of selfish desire. Turn *to* desire for Christ. All the natural things like eating, drinking, buying, selling, marrying, all the things that God created to be done that are not of the spiritual world but of the natural world, will become spiritual. When intimacy with God is achieved, everything takes on spiritual meaning.

Everything and every experience in your life becomes a part of your spiritual pursuit of God. All things are holy that create or nurture right relationships. So the common things, things that we call secular will no longer be secular to us. The mundane things will be mundane no more. The most common thing can be done for the glory of God, when we have turned from the world and the world's ways. Simply gaze with adoration at the face of the Son of God.

The Cares of This World

When you make plans to work, play, worship or pray, do you consider God in each plan or decision. Most people, even the very religious barge through making their own plans without conferring with God. This is quite natural for the natural man, but it should not be the norm for a Christian. Yet we are often anxious or worried about the relatively small or mundane issues over which we have little or no control.

Common sense tells us we don't need to bother God with these trivial things. Yet it is in the flurry of our activities that God wants to be with us. So are you inclined to operate in the **worldly ways of self sufficiency** or to walk in the Spirit which obviously means that you do **include Christ in** all of your **decisions**?

The Apostle Peter advises us with these words, "Casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you." And Jesus cares deeply about you.

Will you turn from the worldly ways

and abandon fully to Christ?

Will you abandon yourself to intimacy with God?