

QUESTION: Is alcoholism or drug addiction a disease? The reason why "to obey" is a difficult concept is because I've been taught that drug use/addiction is not a choice, it is a disease. The Bible says to obey and not present my members to unrighteousness is a choice for me to make (Romans 6:12-18), but if I could make that simple choice I wouldn't be an addict. This is what I don't seem to grasp.

ANSWER: It's all very well for us to go to AA meetings and NA meetings and talk about how our addiction is a "disease", but in God's vocabulary, that is not true. If you hear it in AA and NA meetings enough, you will start to believe it, but **it is a LIE from the devil!** It's just like the LIE that the homosexuals believe about how they were "born this way" and so that's why they say we can't call it a sin. They have believed a popular lie also, and one that is extremely destructive to their lives. If you believe you are born a certain way, or something is a disease, **then YOU are not responsible**, and you can't be blamed for not having control over it. Satan wants you to believe those lies, because then you will not apply the principles of God's word to your problems, because you will think they don't apply to you. It's that idea of "I'm special. My case is different. You just don't understand MY problems!" As if God's word were not sufficient for ANY problem! Instead, here is what God's word says about addictive behavior: a sin that we commit over and over **becomes a bad habit**, and a bad habit indulged over and over for a long period of time **becomes a stronghold**. II Corinthians 10:3-5 tells us how the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the PULLING DOWN of STRONGHOLDS! **If you believe you have a DISEASE rather than a STRONGHOLD, you won't bother to pull it down.** Chicken pox is a disease. Cancer is a disease. Even athlete's foot is a nasty fungus disease, but alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual perversions and sexual promiscuity (either homosexual or heterosexual, God calls it "fornication" and "adultery"), cigarette smoking, and over-eating (God calls it "gluttony") are NOT diseases. God's word calls them sins, and when you indulge a sin over and over, you become enslaved and in bondage to that sin, which is another way to say it is a stronghold.

- **Romans 6:16** "Do you not know that to whom **you present yourselves SLAVES to OBEY**, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of **OBEDIENCE** to righteousness?"
- **II Peter 2:19** "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are **SLAVES of corruption**; for by whom (or WHAT) a person is overcome (enslaved), by him also he is brought into BONDAGE."
- **John 8:34-36** "Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **whoever commits SIN is a SLAVE to sin**. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if **the Son (Jesus) MAKES you FREE**, you shall be free indeed."

What does it mean to "Present yourselves SLAVES to OBEY" (Romans 6:16)? How did you **get ADDICTED** to something in the first place? **You PRESENTED YOURSELF**, or **EXPOSED** your flesh (your physical body or mental/emotional make-up) to that thing, whether it was ALCOHOL, NICOTINE, DRUGS, certain SEXUAL BEHAVIORS, PORNOGRAPHY, OVER-EATING, or other "compulsive" behaviors, until a HABIT was DEVELOPED. After enough times of EXPOSURE, your flesh was TRAINED to WANT and even **DEMAND those things**. Some addictions are more EMOTIONAL than physical - you have **emotional TRIGGERS** that you have allowed to be built up over time. The OPPOSITE is also true: TRAIN YOURSELF to do the right things, the THINGS OF GOD, and eventually the fleshly things which kept you in BONDAGE will subside and no longer be able to hold you.

It's true that once a stronghold has been built up, **it is much harder to make those good choices**, and may take more time, but it can be done. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). Of course, it's much easier to "just say no" and pass up a cigarette or a drink if you've never gotten HOOKED on them! It's much harder when your body craves the nicotine or alcohol, and you have emotional "triggers" for when "I need a smoke (or drink) right now!" Also, the original choices to present yourself to the wrong behaviors were probably influenced by low self esteem, things that happened in your childhood, and other outside factors, but the choice was still yours to make. God did not make the homosexual that way, anymore than He made a person to be 100 pounds overweight. A person was not born having homosexual tendencies, you weren't born with a cigarette in your mouth, and you weren't born with a beer can or a jug of whiskey in your hand. **You LEARNED certain behaviors, good or bad, that helped you "cope with life" in some way, and they shaped your life into what may have later become a number of addiction problems.** It's like untying a huge, horrible knot of string. You have to find where it first began, or at least find an end piece, and then you can begin to unwind it. Doing the 12-Steps, especially the 4th and 5th Steps, is like finding the beginning piece of string, or finding the end piece and following it to the beginning, and then you can begin to unwind the knot.

Speaking of the 12 Steps, how does all this fit into Step One, of admitting we are powerless over our addictions? We must come to Step One first (that's why it's called Step One!) and admit that our own power is not enough to help us, and that we need God's power. Once we do that, and also come to Step Three and give everything over to God (especially accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior and being born again), then it becomes OUR CHOICE but empowered by HIS POWER. That is a principle all through the Bible. YOU must make a choice, make a decision to give it all to God, and then He will give you the power to overcome ANY addiction or problem in your life. A simple picture is that of turning a key in a car's ignition. YOU make the decision and YOU have the "power" to turn that little key, but that big car is driven and powered by a gasoline engine. You are powerless to move the car in your own strength (that's Step One), but the car won't move until YOU decide (make a CHOICE) to turn the key! God's power is like that in our lives.

Why do we as Christians still have such a struggle with this? If you are a born-again Christian and still struggling with sinful habits, it may be a problem of an incomplete repentance. You may have "repented" in that you admitted you were a sinner, and asked Jesus to save you, which is right, and that is when you were born again. However, **TRUE REPENTANCE means TURNING AWAY from your sin, and turning to God and doing His will in EVERY AREA of your life.** If you do not **make up your mind** to completely turn away from your sin, you may "fall back into sin" because you have reserved for yourself the "right" to go back and do those things for "comfort" or "escape" whenever things gets really tough, or life is hard, or you've had a bad day, or just because **it seems "easier"** to go back to your old ways of coping with stress.

You may need to have a time of **mourning over your sins**. This would be **serious, introspective prayer and self-examination, confessing of sin, and realizing HOW MUCH Jesus SUFFERED to pay for you to be set free from those sins.** James 4:1-10 talks about the mourning and weeping you may need to do, as God's word there tells us to weep and mourn over the seriousness of our sin, humble ourselves before God, submit ourselves entirely to God, draw near to God, stop being double-minded, **resist the devil**, stop being "friends with the world", stop asking for selfish things to cater to our lusts, and tells us to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts of sin. Read those verses carefully, and **see how ALL the action required is YOUR responsibility, not God's.** These verses are written to Christians, so **God has already done His part** in saving you, making you righteous, delivering you from Satan's kingdom, and giving you the Holy Spirit (II Corinthians 5:21, Colossians 1:12-13, Ephesians 1:12-13). **It is now YOUR responsibility to STAND AGAINST your old habits and sins**, and the Bible calls this "putting off the old man and his deeds" and tells you to "put on the new man" in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 4:20-25, Colossians 3:5-10). In Romans 8:12-13, it is also called "putting to death" the deeds of the flesh.

- **Ephesians 4:22** "That **you put off**, concerning your former conduct, the old man, which is corrupt according to its deceitful lusts (desires)."

Another problem may be your failure to "take your thoughts captive to obedience to Christ" when the first thought of temptation comes to your mind (II Corinthians 10:3-5). There is no "state of grace" or level of Christian maturity where we are completely free from Satan's temptations, except when we die and go to heaven! Even Jesus was tempted, but He never gave in to the temptation, so He never sinned (Hebrews 4:14-15, Hebrews 2:17-18). **It is NOT a SIN to just encounter a temptation and then resist it. It is only a sin when you fail to resist it**, and then succumb to it by acting according to your old habits and ways of coping with life. **As you renew your mind with the word of God**, it will become easier and easier to resist the temptations, and Satan will eventually back off and leave you alone for a while, but even with Jesus, it says "the devil **left Him for a season**" (Luke 4:13), and came back and tempted Him from time to time.

Satan is the "Tempter" (Matt. 4:3, I Thess. 3:5), and he will try to DECEIVE you and trick you, and "push all your buttons." He knows that **what you BELIEVE about who you are determines your behavior**, so he wants you to think that you're still just a rotten old sinner, because then **you will think it is NATURAL to still sin!** But it is NOT "natural" anymore for you to sin, because you have a NEW NATURE! You are **a new creation in Christ in your SPIRIT**, and the POWER of sin has been broken over you. James 1:14 says "one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires." You might say, "How can they be 'my own' desires, if old things are passed away and I am a new person in Christ?" They are "**your own**" in the sense that **YOU EXPOSED your "FLESH"** (remember?) to those things until a HABIT was developed, and after enough times of exposure, **your FLESH was TRAINED to DESIRE or want those things**. Then, Satan, or the "old tapes running in your mind" or your uncontrolled emotions will keep bringing up "old desires" **AS IF you were still subject to them**, telling you that you are NOT free, but still in bondage to old habits, and that you **can't stop** committing that particular sin. **You have a CHOICE of WHO you will believe - GOD or SATAN!**

- **II Corinthians 5:17** "Therefore, if anyone is IN CHRIST, he is **a new creation**; old things have passed away (died); behold, all things have become new."
- **James 1:13-16** "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted **when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed (tricked)**. Then, when DESIRE has conceived, it gives birth to SIN, and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth DEATH."

We, as born again believers in Jesus Christ have been given **a new heart, and a new spirit** has been put in us (Ezekiel 36:26-27), so **we CAN make a CHOICE to turn away from the habits and behavior patterns of the old man**, and turn to, or "put on" the new man created in Christ. It is now a matter of your own choice and your responsibility as to whom you will serve. Romans chapter 6 is also all about this fact that **we are no longer SLAVES to sin**, and that we should not still serve sin, but that we can still serve sin if we choose to.

- **Romans 6:8-12** "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that **Christ, having been raised from the DEAD**, dies no more. **DEATH no longer has DOMINION over Him**. For the death that He died, He died to sin ONCE FOR ALL; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, **RECKON yourselves to be DEAD indeed unto SIN**, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore **do not let SIN reign** in your mortal body, that you should **obey IT** in its lusts."

Definition: "RECKON" - To accept something as certain; place reliance on, even when you don't **SEE the evidence**. YOU MUST BELIEVE the TRUTHS of the word of

God. **YOU MUST BELIEVE** what the word of God tells you about **WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST**. For instance, Romans 6:7 tells us that "he who has died has been freed from sin," but Satan will keep telling you that you are NOT free, but still in bondage to old habits and that you CAN'T help yourself, you **can't stop** committing that particular sin, etc. **You have a CHOICE of WHO YOU WILL BELIEVE - GOD or SATAN!!** Romans 6:18 & 22 both state that we **HAVE BEEN SET FREE (past tense!)** - it's already a **DONE DEAL!!**

IN SUMMARY: There is no short cut to a life of freedom in Christ. The following are some scriptural steps or principles that you will need to follow for the rest of your life here on earth:

1.) You MUST learn to CONTROL your THOUGHTS and NOT accept or believe Satan's lies. You are in a battle, a war with Satan, and a war with your own flesh, which has been "programmed" to enjoy sin. If your mind is not renewed with the word of God, it will align itself with the body, and these two together are referred to as "the flesh." The flesh still wants to do some of the old sinful behaviors, and then **Satan comes along and tries to DECEIVE you**, saying that you can't help yourself, or you have no control over a particular situation. Satan will make it seem like his suggestions are your own thoughts, but you must not believe his lies! **The battle begins in the MIND, in your thought life.** With your **FREE WILL**, make a **DECISION** and **CHOOSE to believe God's word** and obey His commands. **Decide ahead of time**, BEFORE you get in the middle of some crisis, **to BELIEVE GOD instead of believing your emotions** and going with your feelings.

- **II Corinthians 10:3-5** "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare (against Satan) are not carnal (merely human), but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; **casting down imaginations**, and **every high thing (thoughts, lies from Satan)** that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and **bringing into captivity EVERY THOUGHT** to the OBEDIENCE of CHRIST."

2.) BE on the ALERT and DO NOT DELIBERATELY SIN and ALLOW the devil to set up **STRONGHOLDS** in your life. We all sin occasionally, but **our lifestyle should NOT be one of continual, habitual sin**. If you **SLIP**, confess it to God (I John 1:9) and truly repent.

- **I Peter 5:8-9** "**Be sober, be VIGILANT**, because your adversary (enemy) the **DEVIL** walks about as a roaring lion, **SEEKING WHOM** he MAY devour: whom **RESIST** steadfast in the faith....."
- **Ephesians 6:10-18** "**Put on the whole armor of God**, that YOU MAY BE ABLE to **STAND AGAINST** the **SCHEMES** of the **DEVIL**."
- **Ephesians 4:27** "Neither **GIVE PLACE to the devil**." (Amplified Bible says "Leave no room or **FOOTHOLD** for the **DEVIL [give NO OPPORTUNITY TO HIM]**.")
- **I John 5:4 & 18** "For whoever is **BORN OF GOD** overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world - **OUR FAITH**. We know that whoever is **BORN OF GOD does not continually sin**; but **HE GUARDS HIMSELF**, and that wicked one (Satan) does not touch him."

3.) RENEW YOUR MIND with GOD'S WORD - Don't leave your mind EMPTY. This is like re-programming a computer - we must **REPLACE all the old THOUGHT PATTERNS** with God's thoughts (from His word).

- **Matthew 12: 43-45** Jesus said, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he (the spirit) walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I **WILL RETURN** into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, **he finds it EMPTY**, swept, and put in order. Then he goes, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

- **Romans 12:1-2** "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present **your bodies** as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is **your reasonable service**. And **be not 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."

4.) LEARN to DEAL with the "flesh" and RESIST TEMPTATION God's way - There is a three-fold way given in God's word for dealing with the "flesh" and for resisting temptation:

(1) BODY - Discipline your body, keep it in submission to your will - tell IT what to do (Colossians 3:5, I Cor. 9:27),

(2) MIND - Renew your mind with the word of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (Romans 12:2, II Cor. 10:3-5), and

(3) EMOTIONS - Refuse to live by your feelings - your feelings and emotions are highly unreliable (Jeremiah 17:9, I Cor. 3:1-3).

Then, you must do what Romans 6:12-13 says, and "**Do not LET sin REIGN** in your mortal body, that you should **OBEY IT** in its lusts. And do not **PRESENT your MEMBERS** as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but **PRESENT yourselves to God** as being **ALIVE from the dead**, and your MEMBERS as INSTRUMENTS of righteousness to God." "Reign" means **to have authority or CONTROL** over. You have a CHOICE of whom to obey, and the flesh or "mortal body" is referred to as an "IT" - **it is not the "REAL YOU."** The REAL YOU is your SPIRIT within you which was born again and is a new creature in Christ Jesus.

- **I Corinthians 9:27** "But **I DISCIPLINE my BODY** and **bring it into submission**, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (lose my testimony)."
- **Galatians 5:24** "And those who are Christ's **have CRUCIFIED the FLESH** (body) with its PASSIONS and DESIRES."
- **I Corinthians 6:19-20** "..... **your BODY is the TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore **glorify God in your BODY** and in your spirit, which are God's."