

QUESTION: If a sin still oppresses and habits still linger, should I try fasting, and for how long? What about a veggie diet, like for detoxification for cleaner thinking, purifying the spirit? Three days? Three weeks? Not just a health thing, but with prayer and reading the Bible.

ANSWER: First of all, if you are struggling with a "sin that still oppresses and habits that still linger", it may be a problem of an incomplete repentance, and you may need further counseling with a strong, mature, spiritual Christian advisor (see Galatians 6:1). Fasting can be helpful in these situations, but **only IF accompanied by complete REPENTANCE. Repentance means TURNING AWAY from your sin, and turning to God and His will for your life.** If we do not make up our minds to completely turn away from our sin, we may "fall back into sin" because we have reserved for ourselves the "right" to go back and do those things for "comfort" or "escape" whenever things gets really tough, or life is hard, or we've had a bad day, etc.

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.

The value of fasting by not eating at all, or a limited fast, is **to focus our attention on spiritual things, prayer in particular, instead of the demands of the flesh** (our physical body). A limited fast can be by fasting one or two meals only, and spending that time in prayer for whatever is the matter of great concern. This can be for intercessory prayer (praying for others), or for a serious matter in your own life, such as for physical healing, or in dealing with a "sin that so easily entangles" (Hebrews 12:1-2). The duration of the fast is between you and God, and there is no set time limit. Another limited kind of fast is sometimes called a "Daniel Fast" (see Daniel 10:2-3), because Daniel ate no "tasty food" nor drank any wine, but ate only simple food for his basic sustenance. His time period was three weeks, and was accompanied by **mourning**, which would be **serious, introspective prayer and self-examination, confessing of sin**, and so forth. 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 OUR responsibility, not God's.** These verses are written to Christians, so **God has already done His part** in saving us, making us righteous, delivering us from Satan's kingdom, and giving us the Holy Spirit (II Corinthians 5:21, Colossians 1:12-13, Ephesians 1:12-13). It is now OUR responsibility to stand against our old habits and sins, and the Bible calls this "putting off the old man and his deeds" and tells us 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.

As for fasting producing "detoxification for cleaner thinking, and purifying the spirit", it will only help detox and purify your body. Your mind will be "clearer" in the sense of not being sleepy from eating a lot of food. Your spirit is purified by faith in Jesus Christ, and then by daily confession of sin according to I John 1:7-9, as the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, and God cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Jesus said in Matthew 15:10-20 that food just goes into the stomach and is later eliminated, and does not affect the "heart" or spirit of a man. The unsaved or unregenerate man has no choice, but out of his heart come **"evil thoughts**, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" and all other sins. 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 have 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.

- **Matthew 15:10-20** "Then He called the multitude and said to them, 'Hear and understand: not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but **what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.**'..... Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.' So Jesus said, 'Are you also without understanding? Do you not yet understand that **whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?** But those things which proceed out of the mouth **come from the HEART**, and they defile a man. **For out of the HEART proceed EVIL thoughts**, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'"
- **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!!
- **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, by him also he is brought into bondage." **Definition: "Present yourselves SLAVES to OBEY"** - How did we get ADDICTED to something in the first place? **We PRESENTED OURSELVES**, or **EXPOSED** our flesh (our physical body and mental/emotional make-up) to that thing, whether it was ALCOHOL, NICOTINE, DRUGS, certain SEXUAL BEHAVIORS, PORNOGRAPHY, OVER-EATING, etc. until a HABIT was DEVELOPED. After enough times of EXPOSURE, our flesh (our physical body) was TRAINED to WANT and even **DEMAND those things.** 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.

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.

- **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.

- **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."

For those still struggling with sin in their lives, please read the following Bible study papers available from "Love Lifted Me Recovery":

Success in Recovery

Being Filled with the Spirit, Abiding in Christ, and Bearing Spiritual Fruit

Taking Your Thoughts Captive

Using Your Spiritual Authority - Parts 1, 2, and 3

How to be Set Free

Leaving the Garbage Behind - Cleansing from Your Past

Spirit, Soul and Body - Mind, Will and Emotions

Diligence vs. Procrastination - A Bible Study for Steps 4-7

The Importance of Renewing Your Mind with the Word of God

What Happens When a Christian Sins?

What Is Commitment?

Living the Christian Life

For those interested in what the Bible has to say about all kinds of fasting, I recommend the best book I've ever read on the subject, "God's Chosen Fast" by Arthur Wallis, published by Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington, PA. You could probably order it through any Christian bookstore, or go on line.