

How Can I Walk in the Spirit?

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Vintage newsletter series – a series of newsletter articles that were published in the early days of Reconciliation Ministries which are still relevant for today. It was written by the founder, Jack Hickey, who continues to celebrate over 30 years of walking in sexual and relational wholeness. This article is relevant for those overcoming heterosexual or homosexual sin.

But I say, walk and live [habitually] in the [Holy] Spirit [responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit]; then you will certainly not gratify the craving and desires of the flesh (of human nature without God). For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the [Holy] Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh (godless human nature); for these are antagonistic to each other [continually withstanding and in conflict with each other], so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do.

Galatians 5:16-17, Amplified Bible



"I want to follow God. Really I do," Todd said. "I will be doing real well, not even thinking about sex, then I see an attractive guy on the street and before I know it, I'm back in the same old routine. Each time I swear it's the last. Each time I get mad at myself for giving in. Yet, I always do. The scary part is I am not feeling guilty about it any more. To be honest, part of me wants to fall."

How often have you heard this? Even more directly, how often have you said it? Sometimes I feel a day doesn't go by without my hearing this at least once. The battle with sin is not the problem of a select few. We all fight in this war. But must we all loose? Must we be battered by this enemy we call desire?

Before we see how to combat this enemy, we must get a basic understanding of what the enemy is and is not. It is so easy for Christians to go charging in an attitude of self-righteousness to fight an enemy they don't know on a battlefield they can't find. We are to be good soldiers who know who the enemy is, where to fight, how to fight, and most importantly, how to listen to the Commander *first*.

The enemies we face are many, but here we will look at one – desire of passion. Our sexual appetite is one of the most powerful forces we must face. People who otherwise are rational and godly people, forsake all to satisfy their passions. We have seen world-wide ministries fall to the ground because of these passions. These men were not careless and unknowing of Satan's devices. Yet, they were not in control – their passions were.

We have heard of those who kill, steal, lie, cheat, give up family, friends, and business for the chance to fulfill their passions. We are all capable of this type of sin. Don't be a fool and think it can't happen to you.

Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16-17 that the desire of the flesh wars against the spirit. This is not just a passing temptation to sin. It is a desire, a craving, to turn from God and follow our flesh. The flesh *opposes* the Spirit. The two cannot coexist. We cannot walk in the Spirit and allow the flesh to run wild. One will win over the other: The flesh over the Spirit or the Spirit over the flesh. Only one can win.

One thing this enemy is not is Satan. This statement may upset some people. The enemy here is oneself. In the words of Pogo, "We have seen the enemy and it is us." I agree that all sin originated with Satan and that he is the tempter. But is it *our own* lust that draws us away (James 1:14), not Satan's. Satan knows all he has to do is give us a little rope and we will hang ourselves.



It is important to learn this because, too often, we fight Satan when we should be controlling ourselves. Christians hate to take responsibility for their sins. We blame Satan, our parents, the church, people who don't understand us, circumstances, jobs, the weather, anyone but ourselves – where the blame really lies.

The last thing we must face about our enemy is that we like him. Let's face facts. Sin, and especially sexual sin, is pleasurable. If it were not, we would have no trouble resisting it. It feels good, tastes good, and looks good. For most of us, we enjoy it so much that it scares us. It is all too appealing.

So how do we resist it? What can we do to get free from our passion and live in the freedom Christ has promised? By putting a few principles into practice we can walk in the freedom that Christ bought for us at Calvary.

First, we must take responsibility for our actions. We can blame everything and every one. We can call out to God for hours, and it will not impress Him one bit. He knows our heart and is not fooled by our fancy excuses. We should be honest with God and tell Him what we have done.

Let your confession be as David's in Psalm 51, "Blot out *my* transgression... Cleanse *me* from my sin... I know *my* transgression, *my* sin is ever before me." Not until you face your own weakness and take responsibility for your sin can God set you free.

Next, there must be a place of taking control. I realize that healing of inner hurts and the changing of identity may take time. But, that is not the case with behavior. If you continue to fall into sinful behavior and say "my healing is not completed yet," you lie to yourself and to God. Galatians 5:16-17 says you must walk and live in the Spirit. God does not zap you to that place. You must enter into a new behavior.



Proverbs 25:28 says, "*Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.*" As long as you continue to act out your sin, you are open to all the attacks of the enemy. Don't wait for yourself to stop wanting to sin. I see people who think because they still want to sin they don't have victory. Wanting to sin is not the issue here. You may very much "want" to give in. It is whether or not you will.

Scripture teaches us that our flesh wants to rebel against the things of God (Galatians 5:16-17; Romans 7:15-25). God does not force us into obedience by taking away the desire to sin. He instead gives us the strength to say no to sin and follow Him.

Be determined in your heart to follow God. Strive for Him as much as you have strived to sin. Search for God as you would a treasure. Give all your time and energy to knowing Him. Sounds drastic? It should be. It's your life you're fighting for.

It doesn't matter how many times you fell before. You must stand before God and say, "If it takes all my life and energy, I will follow you. I will never give up." Our God heals the sick, frees the captive, and mends the broken. He will see you through.

Lastly, remember that we are not alone in this fight. God has not left you to fight against sin all by yourself. "*Now to Him who is able to keep you without stumbling, or slipping, or falling and to present (you) unblemished (blameless and faultless) before the presence of His glory – with unspeakable, ecstatic delight – in triumphant joy and exultation*" (Jude 24, Amplified).

Trust God. He understands that the battle gets hard. He understands that you get tired in the fight. He is able to keep you. Satan cannot pull you away. Hold tight to Jesus and you will walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Your passions may be a powerful enemy, but Jesus is a more powerful victor.

