

## ***The Perceived Benefits of Sin – Dan Hitz***

*All of us sin. All of us know it's bad. Therefore, somewhere deep inside, all of us think we're getting something good out of our sin. The sooner we find out what our perceived benefit is, the sooner we can seek the Lord Jesus Christ for His true answer to our need. This article was adapted from a teaching series on addictions that Dan Hitz, Director of Reconciliation Ministries, presented at Christ Community Church and a sermon which he presented at River's Edge Church.*



**Why do we serve God?** Usually when I ask this question in a group, I get the usual assortment of true, Sunday school answers like...  
“Because He’s worthy.” “Because He Loves us.” “Because He’s the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” All of these answers are true, but there are plenty more answers deep down in the core of our soul that we aren’t so quick to shout out loud. We also serve Him because we don’t want to go to hell. We serve Him because He’s the only one who can meet our needs. We serve him because we’ve looked everywhere else and haven’t found any better answer. When we are so stressed out that our head is going to pop off of our neck, He is there to hold us together.

**Why do we keep sinning?** Again, the first answers tend to be the polished, churchy answers...  
“Because all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.” “Because we’re evil.” “Because the devil tempts us.” The truth is... we sin because we want to. We like sin. Sin feels good. When we are so stressed out that our head feels like it’s going to pop off our neck, our sin helps us to escape reality. When doing the right thing seems to cost too much or doesn’t seem to be paying off, sin offers us the quick payoff. We sin because we think it is the only thing that is going to hold us together. Sin is our security blanket, our comfort. It becomes the idol that we thought would provide for our needs.

**What habitual sins do you idolize and serve?** We all have our own particular idolized sin that we thought seemed like a good idea at the time. To those who are lonely, a quick anonymous sexual encounter seemed like it would fill the void without any long lasting requirements. For those who aren’t seeing God provide as quickly as they seem to need the money, the casinos offer a quick fix. Alcohol can numb our brains to the stresses and failures of life. This is the perceived benefit of our sin – our idol – which we thought would provide for all of our needs. Luke 16:13 reads, “No man can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other.” You cannot serve both God and sin. They are mutually exclusive. Your sin will require that you get rid of God. God requires that you get rid of sin. I’m not talking about a religious, legalistic work of the flesh. I’m talking about a lifestyle of repentance and loving the Lord Jesus Christ and handing our sins to Him while He touches our hearts and does a holy work in us to fulfill our deepest needs.

*Take the time to pray through this sentence meditatively, and make a note of what the Lord speaks.*  
***“My habitual sin of \_\_\_\_\_ pretends to provide \_\_\_\_\_.”***

The thought of having a “besetting sin”, or one sin that we struggle with more than any other particular sins, comes from Hebrews 12:1. “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, **and the sin which doth so easily beset us**, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” We are working on the premise that we as Christians will abstain from things that the Bible calls sinful and from all things which are physically and/or psychologically damaging whether they have reached an addictive level or not. All sin is harmful. 1 Thessalonians 5:22 tells us to “keep away from every kind of evil.”

**What are some of the main roots of our besetting sins?** *Sometimes we sin to avoid pain.*  
Sexuality is very pleasurable. Our body parts are amoral. An orgasm feels good. Pain feels bad. Our brokenness simply wants to avoid emotional pain and jump into what feels good – an orgasm.

*Sometimes we're afraid of intimacy.* We may be afraid to get too close to someone or become vulnerable because we risk getting hurt again, so we escape to fantasy land. Our fantasies will do whatever we ask of them and will never reject us. *Others want to escape the anxieties of life.* Sin can serve as our little escape pod. When the anxiety gets too high, we just climb inside of our own little world of sin and get away from it all. *If we want to avoid loneliness,* responding to peer pressure will help us fit in. *There are other reasons we engage in habitual sin... rebellion, believing the advertising and marketing lies, responding to our culture.* Sometimes we've simply *entrenched ourselves in a decades old habit* and don't know how to escape. Whatever the roots of our sin, it often serves to help us avoid something we don't really want to face head on.

*Take the time to pray through this sentence meditatively, and make a note of what the Lord speaks.*

***"My habitual sin of \_\_\_\_\_ pretends to provide \_\_\_\_\_ and helps me avoid \_\_\_\_\_."***

**Sin is very costly.** Romans 6:23 reads, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." When I meet with people who are struggling with addictive sin, one of the most somber sessions we will have is when we consider the cost of their sin. Although many will confess that they have spent multiple thousands in their idolatrous worship of sin, they are well aware that there are other costs far more expensive. Sin has cost many their spouse and their kids. Sin has cost others their six figure jobs, and/or their homes and cars. Sin keeps us from boldly standing in our rightful place in the Kingdom of God. Although we are truly victimized by our idols, our sin has also hurt others. Secondary victims are those who are wounded by the victimization of others. They are the family of the sexually exploited person who witnesses the effects of abuse and lives with those who are hurting. It is the child of the alcoholic who loses his father to drink and goes through life without a godly role model to teach him to lead his own family. He walks through his adult life not knowing how to trust others. Sin cost the one who sins greatly. It usually costs the innocent much more.

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***"My habitual sin of \_\_\_\_\_ pretends to provide \_\_\_\_\_ and helps me avoid \_\_\_\_\_.  
It also costs me \_\_\_\_\_ and keeps me from being able to \_\_\_\_\_."***

**What does it take to change?** When Jesus walked up to the paralyzed man in Luke, Chapter Five and asked if he wanted to be made whole, He knew there was a cost to change. Not everyone is willing to pay the price. If I change and walk away from my besetting sin, I'll have to face my giants. The things that I have been self-medicating to avoid will come roaring up in me. The battle may be way too overwhelming. These are just a few of the honest answers that may be in our hearts as we face the reality of walking away from our besetting sin. When Naaman the Leper went to Elisha for healing in 2 Kings, Chapter Five, he wanted the healing to come his way. He wanted his healing to reflect the honor of his high military position. Elisha didn't work with his agenda. Instead, he told Naaman to humble himself and embrace some unpleasantness. What are the unpleasantnesses that you will face if you decide to walk away from your sin? Are you afraid that you won't have anything if you don't have your struggles, and you would rather have struggles than nothing at all? Are you afraid that you won't know how to do normal? Are you afraid of the increased responsibilities you'll have if you aren't broken anymore? Those fears are very real in the hearts of one who is considering walking away from a life long security of sin. Just as Naaman resisted his own heart's demands to find healing his way and obeyed the prophet Elisha to find healing God's way; you will find hope and healing as you walk in the truth, grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ and seek healing His way.

*Take the time to pray through these sentences meditatively, and make a note of what the Lord speaks.*

***"My habitual sin of \_\_\_\_\_ pretends to provide \_\_\_\_\_ and helps me avoid \_\_\_\_\_.  
If I give it up, the thing that scares me the most is \_\_\_\_\_.  
God has a better gift of \_\_\_\_\_ for me to walk into, and I will trust  
Him to empower me to obtain it."***