

BIBLICAL CHANGE

Millions of sincere, well meaning people wait to "make a new start" or "turn over a new leaf." They try again and again to conquer some problem, sin or habit. Many futile attempts are made in the form of New Year's resolutions, or just rededicating themselves to Christ in order to become "different" people or "better" Christians. Whatever the desired change may be, it hardly ever lasts. The frustration is usually characterized by such statements as, "No matter how hard I try, I just can't do it!" "How can I change so that it sticks, once and for all?" "I've tried so many times and failed!" "I've gone right back to the same old habits as before!" "How will God keep me from doing those things over again?" "I really want to change but I just don't know how!" Well, if you have made one of the above statements or one similar, then I trust this study will give you new insight into your life, and most of all God's way of escape! (I Cor. 10:13) Let's first of all examine some of the reasons why it is hard to change:

WHY IS IT HARD TO CHANGE?

- 1) Not knowing how to (most assuredly this study will "change" that!)
- 2) Worry and riches of the world "choke out" the Word (Mk. 4:18-19)
- 3) Many are following the "delusion of idolatry" (Jer. 10:38) finding fulfillment in anything temporal lures one away from God. James defines it as "spiritual adultery" and explains the solution (Js. 4:1-10).
- 4) Blameshifting, blaming others and/or circumstances (parents, spouse, children, the boss, the job, environment, weather, the car, finances, society ...) hinders one from taking personal responsibility (Gen. 3:12-13).
- 5) No motivation ... essentially from not being in the Word! Because notice what the Word will do! Isa. 55:11; Ps. 119:9-10; I Thes. 2:13; Ps. 19:7-11 - (Abiding! Jn. 15).
- 6) Not living in the power of God's Spirit, prayerfully depending on Him. Phil. 4:13; Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16-25; Rom. 8.
- 7) Too lazy - it's easier to "take the path of least resistance".
- 8) Not realizing that struggle and discipline are essential to obey God (I Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:7; Col. 1:29; Phil. 2:12).
- 9) Along with that, you may not have given yourself enough time! (anything worthwhile takes time and effort.) Change takes discipline, time, commitment, sacrifice and perseverance!
- 10) "Blindspots" - not seeing where you need to change, so used to being the way you are you may not know how you've offended others or realize what they've had to put up with.
- 11) Too many excuses and rationalizations. "I'm too old to change." "I've never done it that way before." "I can't because ..." "That's just the way I am." God doesn't excuse us when we disobey (Rom. 2:1,6,11,15-16).
- 12) Attempting to justify your behavior. "I'm not as bad as ..." (2 Cor. 10:12). Any and all of such attempts to minimize sin (it's just a little sin, not that serious) defend a guilty conscience and only reinforce ones mind set to remain unchanged.
- 13) Some may be too "problem-oriented"! Wrongly focusing on all the faults and problems only exaggerates the issue and blows things out of proportion, thus causing one to feel overwhelmed.
- 14) Some just don't care (apathetic, indifferent, complacent, lukewarm) (Rom. 3:16-20).
- 15) Some people are too "feeling-oriented" - waiting to "feel" like obeying, rather than trusting God to bring the confirmation of feelings after stepping out in faith-obedience (2 Cor. 5:7; Prov. 3:5-6; Js. 1:25).

- 16) Some simply do not want to change because they:
 - accept the way they are, too comfortable, lived a certain way for a long time, (so don't rock the boat) (Jn. 5:6).
 - really enjoy the sin and don't want to give it up
 - use their sin/problems to get attention, control/manipulate others and/or get out of responsibility (Jn. 5:6).
 - fear change and or fear the unknown, such as:
 - total life restructuring may be necessary
 - other relationships, areas of life may be effected
 - the threat to our "secure" lifestyle - we've worked hard to learn how to "control" our lives and make our world "manageable", and we resent the comfort zone in which the "familiar" has lulled us into a false sense of security!
- 17) It is hard to change deeprooted habit patterns that have become lifestyles (Jer. 13:23) Life dominating problems and addictions require a deliberate comprehensive plan of act
- 18) Many may be too proud to admit their sin or that they need help (I Jn. 1:7-10). Our pride puts God in opposition to us (Js. 4:6-7) making it even harder!
- 19) Some may be deceived and hard hearted (Js. 1:22-25; Jer. 17:9; I Jn. 1:7; Heb. 3:13).
- 20) Some may not be unconditionally honest with the Word of God to the point of committing themselves to change (Jer. 6:16).
- 21) It's hard to change because of our rebellious, sinful nature which so easily enslaves us in bondage to sin (Rom. 7). Sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2; Ps. 66:18).
- 22) Even "traditional" (meaningless religious routing done over and over) can hinder change because it makes the Word of God void! (Mk. 7:13)
- 23) Satan is a real enemy who knows exactly how to immobilize us (2 Cor. 2:11). It is a spiritual warfare! (Eph. 6:10-18)
- 24) Messed up thinking - misconceptions about God, ourselves (self image), life, relationships ...
- 25) Unbelief, doubting God's goodness, provision, power, promises ... (Rom. 4:20-21).
- 26) Not understanding Biblical repentance (I Thes. 1:9; 2 Chron. 7:14).
- 27) Internal struggles that have never been understood, faced and resolved:
 - past failures causing guilt trips and cycles of regret
 - past hurts, pain, abuse, anger (about being sinned against or let down)
 - unmet needs, longings, desires that control us more than we realize
 - self protections - styles of relating/outward strategies, behaviors that we live out that protect us in some way - from risk of further relational involvement
 - from facing God, others, ourselves, our responsibilities (such as humor, niceness, talkativeness, toughness, "being cool", silliness, work, "religion", trivial surface stuff, intellectualism)
- 28) Only dealing with life superficially (Jer. 8:11). "Just cleaning the outside of the cup" (Matt. 23:26) is the hypocrisy Jesus condemned the Pharisees for.
- 29) Some may have a genuine medical reason, an organically based illness that physiologically hinders them in some way and would need special medical attention - blood tests, urine analysis, brain scans, nutritional diets, or medication. These situations would need professional medical help.
- 30) Finally, our own motives/motivations may be wrong. If we are not seeking to change to please God and glorify Him, then self seeking motives will not produce genuine change.

Though no list could ever be necessarily exhaustive, I'm sure you've been able to identify specific reasons you can relate to as to why you've struggled with change. So take time to prayerfully evaluate this list again, asking God for wisdom, depending on His Spirit to reveal what you need to deal with. Certainly at various times under different circumstances, you've experienced many combinations of "reasons" to varying degrees as to the difficulty of changing. Therefore, personalize it in the here and now, think practical and honestly before the Lord about these areas again in relation to your particular present circumstances and relationships. What can you identify with right now? What are you aware of in your present experience? What connects right now with the issues at hand? The sooner you gain some personal understanding as to why it's hard for you to change, the easier it

will be to move on! There is a point at which we all need to move toward the necessary changes and not allow "psycho-analyzing" or endlessly asking "why?" to subtly immobilize us. Scripture does exhort us to examine ourselves (Job 7:18; Ps. 26:2; Ps. 139:23; Lam. 3:42 I Cor. 11:28; Pr. 2:2; Gal. 6:4; I Thes. 5:21; 2 Cor. 13:5), but morbid self introspection can become defeating and certainly unmotivating, if we're not "looking unto Jesus" in the process to give us wisdom, grace and power to change! We should never view change as just some impersonal "feeding in of data" and robotically "going through the motions". Proverbs emphasizes "understanding" 47 times!!! That obviously implies a slowing down process, thinking and meditating in regards to who we are, what's going on? Why do we do what we do? Why do we feel _____? and most importantly, what does God's Word reveal about these things? Incidentally, the contemporary word "insight" is the idea of "understanding" which could be defined as "knowing how life works", and that's the only kind of help that communicates the attitude, "I care about what you're going through". So, it also may be helpful to have someone else help you through this "examination exercise". In any case, set a time where you can honestly and thoroughly evaluate to the point of understanding where you're at and what's hindering you (past and presently) to change. Remember, the point of this is not to find "excuses" for your problems, struggles and sin, but at the depths of where you're honest about what's going on "inside", that's the depth at which God will meet you and you'll begin to experience true change.

CHANGE: A MATTER OF THE HEART

(Inner Progressive Sanctification)

As you consider the path to lasting genuine change, you need to realize that it is not enough to deal with external behaviors or outward actions. Change that just occurs on the surface level is hypocritical and only leads to legalism or moralism which anyone could pull off, even apart from the Spirit of God. While outward behaviors need to be deliberately replaced through faith-obedience, true change is from the inside out! Simply rearranging outward strategies of living and relating, while there is no inner conviction and transformation by the Holy Spirit using God's Word, only produces "Pharasee-ism". This is a conveniently deceptive mask which one will continue to hide behind so as to avoid honestly facing and confessing the sin in the heart! That is the heart of the issue that Jesus exposed to the Pharesees when He said, "clean the inside of the cup first", (implying that it was possible) and then the outside will take care of itself! (Matt. 23:25-28)

Scripture reveals that the heart is the inner (non-material) part of man where he talks from, reasons, plans, thinks, understands, intends, purposes and is motivated ... (Job. 12:24 Jer. 17:9,10; Ezek. 11:5; Matt. 13:15; Mk. 7:19-23; Lk. 5:22; Acts 5:4; 2 Cor. 9:7; Heb. 4:12 Js. 2;26). Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart (I Sam. 16:7). The heart is where sin comes from! (Mt. 15:18-20; Mk. 7:19-23; Lk. 6:4-5). One may sin in his heart (thoughts) even though he has not sinned outwardly (Mt. 5:28). For further understanding, see the study entitled, "Controlling the Thought Life".

A person therefore must be cleansed in their heart (Heb. 10:22). We are told, "blessed are the pure in heart" (Mt. 5:8), "purify your hearts" (Js. 4:6-10), "be renewed in the Spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23), and "be transformed by the renewing of your minds" (Rom. 12:1-2). The Lord knows our heart (Jer. 32:17-19), He searches it (Jer. 17:10), and only He can give a new heart (Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26). (The doctrine of "Regeneration" is found in Jn. 3:1-21; I Pet. 1:22-25; Tim. 3:5.) At salvation the potential to live righteously is present because we are "born from above" and given a new nature or "capacity" (Eph. 4:25) to understand Spiritual truth and apply it!

To experience real lasting change, we must have a humble honest heart that's yielded to God, willing to be molded, submissive and obedient to His Word. His Word must be taken in to our lives in order to cultivate the "soil" which when cultivated will be fruitful (Mk. 4:1-25).

God and His Word alone bring inward change because that's the only thing that can get to the core of our being (Heb. 4:12-13). The Scriptures alone are inspired by God and profitable for teaching, convicting, correcting and instructing us in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

The Word is the only thing that will build our faith (Rom. 10:17), set us free (Jn. 8:32), sanctify us (Jn. 17:17), cleanse us (Eph. 5:26), deliver us from sin (Js. 1:21), effectually work in us (I Thes. 2:13), give life (Jn. 6:63), bring about joy (I Jn. 1:4), instill peace (Jn. 16:33), provide guidance (Ps. 119:105), produce Spiritual growth (I Pet. 2:2; Acts 20:32) impart knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), defeat Satan (Mt. 4:1-11; Eph. 6:10-18), and keep us from sin (Ps. 119:9-11). Read Ps. 119 and observe the numerous benefits! Ps. 1, Josh. 1:8 and Js. 1:22-25 tell us that meditating on the word and obeying it bring success, victory, fruitfulness and blessing. There is no substitute and no inner transformation without it! The depth at which you are honest with God about your struggle, hurt, confusion, pain, anger, sin ... will determine the depths at which this transformation or change will take place!

Incidentally, this is what "progressive sanctification" is all about in the Bible - the process of our becoming conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:13,15). It is the concept of "holiness" (I Pet. 1:14-16) that God has called us to. Sanctification means to cleanse, purify, to consecrate or set apart unto God. This is stated to be the will of God for every Christian (I Thes. 4:3-8). Change is not a suggestion, but a command; we are always responsible to cooperate with God's Spirit in this daily process of transforming our thoughts, attitudes, responses, motives, words, and actions into that which reflects the very nature and character of Christ in and through us. (2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; 2 Pet. 3:18). While we will never be sinlessly perfect in this world (I Jn. 1:8), never give up the battle God's mercies are new every morning!!! (Lam. 3:22-23) So make these things an honest daily prayer and keep on keeping on; "we will reap if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). Fix your eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12:1-4) and when we meet the Lord in glory this process will be completed! (I Jn. 3:1-3)

WHAT IS BIBLICAL CHANGE?

Biblical change is not an option for the child of God. The purpose of Christ's coming into this world was stated by an angel to Joseph in Matthew 1:21, "And she (Mary) shall bring forth a Son and thou shalt call His name, JESUS: for He shall save his people from their sins." The whole purpose of Jesus Christ becoming man (God in flesh) was to destroy the power of sin and death when He died on the cross in our place. (Read Heb. 2:9-18). He was God's promised provision to be the substitutionary sacrifice for our sin (Jn. 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21), and that in believing (trusting in Him alone), we might have eternal life and victorious, abundant life (Jn. 10:10). Every child of God is commanded to be continually cooperating and yielding to God's Spirit in this process of sanctification (I Thes. 4:3). Sanctification means "to be set apart from --- (the world, values, goals, self, sin) to --- (God and His Word's instructions on how to live righteously)." In I Thes. 1:9 we see that this is the essence of repentance, "you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." (A change of mind, which leads to a change of life.) Rom. 8:29 tells us the goal that God has for you as His child - you are to be "conformed to the image of His Son", Jesus Christ. This is 100% God's work and it is 100% your work too! Look up these verses to help explain this balance.

Phil. 2:12-13
I Thes. 5:24
Col. 1:29
I Tim. 4:7
2 Tim. 4:7

2 Tim. 2:3-6
2 Cor. 7:1
Jn. 14-15
Js. 4:4-10

True Biblical change is only possible in Jesus Christ! Every change that God requires is possible. He has provided all the resources that we need - His Word (2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:3) and His indwelling Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25). Now it's our responsibility to avail ourselves of this power by abiding in Him (Jn. 15) and obeying His Word in order to overcome the evil with good (Rom. 12:21).

Now, there is a child's joke that Jay Adams uses effectively to explain this process of Biblical change that I think is very helpful. It goes like this: "When is a door not a door?" The answer is, "when it's ajar!" The humor value is doubtful, but think about the question and answer again with a slight change. "When is a door not a door?" Answer, "When it is something else." Now, when God talks about change, He is not merely referring to a

change of outward activity or cessation of a certain sin, He's talking about the change of the inner person also! this involves the transforming of one's inner being (heart) (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:23). Anyone can change outward behavior without ever becoming "something else" inside. However, just quitting a habit is not change, just stopping sinful behavior is not Biblical change. A thief is still a thief even if he has stopped stealing - according to God's Word - he's only changed when he has become "something else" (Eph. 4:28)

Change only occurs when one has learned a new way of life replacing the old. Read Eph. 4:20-32. Back to the question, "When is a _____ not a _____? Fill in the blanks with the sin - liar, gossip, sinful thinker). When they simply stop _____? No! Only when they've become something else! Change is a 2-factored process according to Eph. 4:20-32. There must be something that is (1) "put off" and something God's Word says to (2) "put on" in order to replace it. This is what I call "The Practical-Positive Replacement Principle." For every sin we have, God has a righteousness to replace it. For every problem, there is a Biblical solution/alternative. For every weakness, there's a strength! We must diagnose what needs to "put off" from our lives and then discover what God's Word tells us to "put on" in its place; both aspects are usually in the same context of Scripture.

This is also the principle in Rom. 12:21 - "to overcome evil with good". You will never change if you just focus on the sin/whatever needs to be put off. For instance, stop thinking about pink elephants! The more you try, the more vivid they become. Therefore, it must be replaced; otherwise it (sin) will come back stronger than before. Read Matthew 12:43-45 to understand this principle.

WHERE DO I START?

Now let me suggest some practical and specific steps to start moving into this process of Biblical Change and solving problems God's way. As you do, ask God for wisdom and guidance in knowing what He wants you to know so you can be victorious. Take one step at a time.

1. You certainly need to be a Spirit-controlled Christian (Eph. 5:18; 2 Cor. 5:17). A Christian is one who has been "born from above", spiritually recreated by God's Spirit coming into one's life (I Jn. 3:5-9). It is God's Spirit who indwells us to give us understanding (I Cor. 2:10-16) and power to overcome sin (Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 8:1-16). If you need help becoming a Christian look up the following verses and talk to someone who can help you. (Rom. 3:10-12, 23; 5:8; 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:8-10; Jn. 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; Rev. 3:20). Also the study entitled, "Experiencing the Power and Control of the Holy Spirit" would be very beneficial in helping you to understand this foundational concept of the Christian life, as well as the study, "How to Become A Christian".
2. (a) Take full Personal responsibility for your behavior (actions, thoughts, attitudes, words, responses, motivations ...). Many times it is helpful to understand family history, pressures, needs, relationships, reasons ...ie past and present influencing factors involved regarding the sin struggles, problems, and difficulties in changing; in fact, further counsel may be needed at this point (Prov. 12:15; 15:22; 20:18; 27:9; 20:5). Our sinful tendency ever since the garden (Gen. 3:6-13) has been to cover up, hide and blame shift - we would rather do anything than face our sin - we can't live with guilt, so in order to "survive", we'll live in denial. Rather than admitting our fault, where we're wrong and saying, "I have sinned" (Ps. 51), we minimize the offense, ("it's not that bad"), rationalize, ("others do it"), justify it, ("I had to because ..."), compare ourselves with others, (2 Cor. 10:12), (I'm not as bad as ...), smoke screen the issue, shift the focus off self onto some other "scapegoat", confuse the issue by getting "technical" on terms or details, avoidance or withdrawal, getting defensive, getting "emotional" (crying, yelling ...), attacking others, saying, "I don't know" or "You must have misunderstood" or "I forget or forgot", or talking about anything else but the real issue, making all kinds of excuses (listen to children sometime and realize ... we haven't changed much!), finding some "loophole" and "squeaking out"; relabeling our sin and calling it something else (you can relabel a bottle of poison "orange drink" and find out the results of denying a reality), and many people just simply lie. Also in our pride and denial, in order to protect ourselves, our favorite tactic is blame shifting - "It's not my fault", "They made me do it", "I couldn't help it, these feelings, desires, pressures, thoughts were just building up and so I had to _____", "I was born

that way", * "It's genetic or hereditary", "I'm a victim of circumstance", "It runs in the family", "I'm a product of my environment", "If you had a boss like mine ...", "The devil made me do it", "My spouse isn't meeting my needs", "It's the cars fault", "They would have hurt me more so I ...", "I just can't stand it anymore, so I had to ...", "The children ..." "My parent(s) ...", the list is endless. While I don't minimize the reality of a multitude of influential factors which may need to be understood for more thorough change, God will not change His verdict of "guilty" based on some "alleged technicality" which we've deceived ourselves about! I cannot shift the blame to genetics, environment, things, circumstances, people, Satan (demons), or even God (Prov. 19:3; Js. 1:13-14). We're tempted by our own inner desires (Js. 1:14) and the fact is that God holds us responsible and accountable for all our sin (Prov. 24:29; Mt. 12:36; Rom. 14:12; Rev. 20:12; 22:12). He alone is Holy, righteous, just, fair and will deal accordingly with every fact, issue, behavior and heart motive (Heb. 4:12-13).

* NOTE - In some cases scientific research shows there may be a greater genetic propensity toward some behaviors such as alcoholism, due to ones parent(s) heavy drinking, but it's also proven that they don't have to drink either. The same is true regarding homosexuality. One may have a greater tendency toward certain desires but it is also a choice. It is proven that it is a learned behavior. If one "could not help it" God would not judge it so severely (Gen. 19; Rom. 1:18-32; I Cor. 6:9-11). Furthermore, it must be recognized that medical factors may be involved such as organically based problems, endogenous depressions, chemically imbalances, nutritional deficiencies, drug/medicinal side effects, menstrual or menopausal conditions, sleep loss, etc., all which can effect one's behavior. In such cases, whenever this is suspected, help should be sought immediately by medical professionals.

(b) The problem we face by not taking full responsibility for our behaviors, is that we will deceptively put ourselves into a helpless and hopeless condition. If what I've done is someone else's fault or because of circumstances ... then I'll never change. If I'm the way I am because of other factors out of my control - then until those things people, circumstances change, I won't be able to! No one or nothing makes us do anything - we are volitional beings; we exercise our will to make choices and decisions. We are in control of how we respond or what we choose to do in any given situation, and God will judge us accordingly (Eccl. 12:13-14). Therefore, when we see ourselves in this light and choose to take personal responsibility for what we do, "hope" begins to emerge - we don't have to "feel" victimized, but rather free to take the necessary steps to change (Rom. 6:1-23). By God's grace you can change you (not others or the externals). You can do whatever God says (Phil. 4:13) in His power and overcome sin (Rom. 8:37).

3. Confession of sin (I Jn. 1:9) is the result indicating one is beginning to take personal responsibility. You must face your sin squarely, don't deny it or pass the buck (I Jn. 1:8). This involves humbling yourself before the Lord (2 Chron. 7:14; Js. 4:4-10) honestly admitting our sin and "agreeing with God's" Word regarding what He says about it (I Jn. 1:7-10; Ps. 51:1-19), and repentance (I Thes. 1:9), turning from sin to replacing it with righteousness. These three concepts are covered in more detail in another study entitled, "Help I've Fallen ... But I Can Get Up" (Steps to Biblical Restoration). "He that covers his sin will not prosper, but he who forsakes it shall find mercy" (Prov. 28:13). Also, when confessing sin, it may be necessary to be reconciled to others and ask them for forgiveness as well (Matt. 5:23-24; Js. 5:16).
4. Next, you must desire to change. "Will your will to God", be honest with Him about the struggle, go against your feelings (they will fall into place), and start handling your problems Gods way (2 Tim. 3:14-17; Prov. 3:5-6). You can change if you really want to. Ask God for His help daily to overcome sin. (Mr 9:24)
5. Diagnose the sin/problem area that needs to be "put off". Identify the unscriptural thinking and living at this time in your life. Examine other levels that the problem may involve (emotional, action, conceptual, habitual, or historical patterns.) Also, what other areas of life have been affected (family, marriage, job, school, friends, money, time, abilities, gifts, talents, schedule, diet, exercise, attitudes, feelings, responses ...)?

6. Discover the Biblical solution/alternative; what Scripture says you're to "put on" to replace it. The list on the following pages will be helpful. You should memorize and meditate on the verses so as to transform your thinking and then do specific things to begin the new behavior pattern. Write out how you are going to specifically apply the principles.
7. Decisively commit yourself to the Biblical plan of action, depending on the power of the Holy Spirit to produce the change in your life (Ps. 57:7; Job 31:1; Rom. 12:1-2; Zech. 4:6; Phil. 4:13).
8. Restructure your life:
 - (a) Eliminate "provision for the flesh" (Rom. 13:14), anything that would hinder change (books, places, wrong friends, music ...) (I Cor. 15:33).
 - (b) Add to your life those things helpful to godly living (church, Bible studies, Christian friends, and activities)... (Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25; Col. 3:16).
 - (c) Maintain daily abiding in Christ - devotions (Jn. 15:1-15). You must stay connected to the source! (Ps. 1:1-6; 119:9-11; 2 Tim. 3:14-17).
 - (d) Prepare a planned response to exercise immediate resistance at the point of temptation. For example: "The next time I'm about to get angry, I will meditate on these verses on this 3 x 5 card and ..." You must go into your daily battle prepared (Eph. 6:10-18). (See "Preparing A Planned Response" study.)
9. Discipline yourself daily to practice the new habit pattern of action to "put on" that will produce the character qualities and righteous behavior. Change doesn't happen automatically, or overnight. It takes practice/discipline - doing something over and over again until it becomes part of your life. The new behavior must be worked out on a constant and continuous basis (Lk. 9:23; Heb. 5:14; I Tim. 4:7). Go against your feelings! The power comes in the doing (Phil. 4:13). Read Jay Adams' book, "Godliness Through Discipline". Remember ... there are no "short cuts"!
10. PERSERVERE! Stick with it, don't give up. Satan doesn't - he will try to convince you that you're okay now, after several weeks, months or even years - in order to get you to relax for awhile. So when you feel the tendency to "think you stand, take heed lest you fall", (I Cor. 10:12)! Have others pray for you (Js. 5:16), encourage you (I Thes. 5:11), and hold you accountable (Heb. 3:13). As members of the same body of Christ, we need one another (Rom. 12:3-16). Look for ways of allowing God to use you in others lives. Channelling your energies toward serving God and others will definitely help you to experience new purpose, fruitfulness and fulfillment, thus motivating you to persevere for God's Glory. It's a daily battle to "trust" and "obey". Struggle is a natural part of any growth process.

A RESOURCE FOR FOLLOWING THROUGH

Below is a list that I have made up from Scripture of "put-offs" and "put-ons". I trust that it will be practical and helpful to you as you meditate on the Biblical insights and apply these principles to your life. God is glorified when His children become like His own Son (Rom. 8:29). Refresh your thinking regarding the positive replacement principle by studying Eph. 4:17-32; Col. 3:5-17 and Rom. 12:21.

WHAT DO I SPECIFICALLY REPLACE _____ WITH?

PUT OFF	BIBLICAL INSIGHT	PUT ON
former life	Eph.4:21-32	life after God
old man	Eph.4:22-24	new man
corrupt	Eph.4:22-24	righteous
deceitful lust	Eph.4:22-24	true holiness
lying	Eph.4:25	speaking truth
anger	Eph.4:26-27	dealing daily with problems
		focus energy constructively
stealing	Eph.4:28	working/giving
corrupt communication	Eph.4:29	edifying speech,
		ministering grace
bitterness	Col.3:8-14	forgiveness
wrath/anger/clamour	Eph.4:31-32	tender-hearted
evil speaking/malice	Eph.4:31-32	being kind
works of flesh	Gal.5:19-25	fruits of the Spirit
ways of ungodly	Psalm 1	path of godly
idols/other gods	Deut.11:16; 1 Thes.1:9	serve living God

any "evil"	1 Pet.3:9; Lk.6:27-35 Rom.12:17-21	give blessing/do good good - what is beneficial practical, helpful
worry	1 Pet.5:7; Phil.4:6-9; Mt.6:25-32; 2 Cor.10:4-5	channel thoughts into obedience, prayer, right thinking, right living
fear	1 Jn.4:18; Prov.3:5-6	trust God; develop "perfect love"
controlled by sin	Eph.5:18	controlled by Holy Spirit
lust, sinful desires	2 Tim.2:22; 1 Pet.1:14-15; 1 Jn.2:15-17; Rom.13:14	pursue righteousness, good friendships, "Be Holy"
forsaking church	Heb.10:25	encourage one another
imitating evil	III John 11	imitate good
lack of love	Mt.5:44; Rom.12:10	do good to others, give them preference
judging	Mt.7:1-5; Rom.14:13	search out own sin then restore the other
boasting	1 Cor.4:7; Prov.27:1	give credit to God (humility)
lack of submission	Col.3:17-25	do all as unto the Lord
ungratefulness	Eph.5:20	give thanks for <u>all</u> things
discontent	Phil.4:11-13; Heb.13:5	be satisfied with little or much
resentment	Eph.4:26-27	deal with problem daily
back biting	Eph.4:29	build them up; say only edifying things
revenge	1 Pet.3:9; Rom.12:14,19	give blessing; seek to meet his need
ventilating anger	Prov.29:11; 15:1; 14:17	restraint, self control, soft answer
proud	Prov.16:18; 1 Pet.5:5	Put yourself under subjection, humility
doubt	James 4:6	exercise faith - obedience
lack of diligence	Heb.11:1,6; 1 Thes.5:24; Rom.10:17	fervent spirit, discipline
haughty	Rom.12:11	associate with lowly
unforgiving spirit	Rom.12:16	forgive and do good
selfishness	Mk.11:26; Mt.5:24; Rom.12:21	serving, meeting others' needs
stubbornness/rebellion	Phil.2:2-5,21	humble submission
disobedience	1 Sam.15:23; Rom.6:13	obedience to God
impatience	1 Sam.12:15; Heb.5:8-9	waiting on the Lord
covetousness	Js.1:2-4; Is.40:29-30	contentment
hatred	Ex.20:17	love, kindness, doing good
lack of rejoicing	Mt.5:21-22; 1 Cor.13; Lk.6:28-30	positive rejoicing outlook
immodest dress	1 Cor.13:6; Phil.4:4; 1 Thes.5:16,18	modesty
wrong music, ungodly lyrics, T.V./movies	1 Pet.3:1-7; Prov.11:22; 1 Tim.2:9-10; 2 Cor.5:14; Rom.13:14	edifying music, what produces spiritual fruit
prejudice	Ps.145-150; Eph.5:19; Prov.23:7; Phil.4:8; Gal.5:22-23	fairness/love
presumption on the future	Js.2:1-6; Lk.6:31	submission to God's will
love of riches/ materialism	Js.4:13-14; Prov.27:1	godly giving
	1 Tim.6:6-10,17; Lk. 11:17	

gambling	Jn.19:23-24; 1 Tim.6:6-10, 17	financial stewardship
inhospitable	1 Pet.4:9; Heb.13:1-2 Rom.12:13	hospitality
irritation to others	Rom.12:10; Phil.2:3-4	prefer them in love
jealousy	1 Cor.13:4; Js.3:16	love, acceptance, contentment
strife	Js.3:16; Lk.6:31	esteem others
losing temper	Prov.16:32; Rom.5:3-4	self control
bodily harm	Prov.16:27; 1 Thes.2:7	gentleness
murder	Ex.20:13; Rom.12:17-21	love/ "enemies"
evil thoughts	Prov.23:7; Phil.4:8	righteous thoughts
bad motives	Mt.6:1-18; Col.3:17-25 Ps.19:14; 1 Sam.16:7	seeking to please God
complacency/indifference	Js.4:17; Col.3:23; Rev. 3:15-19	diligent service
hypocrisy	Job 8:13; Mt.6:1-18; Eph.4:25; Rom.2:17	honesty
idols	1 Thes.1:9; Eph.4:6 Deut.11:16	serving God
"left first love"	Rev.2:4-5; 1 Jn.4:10,19	focus/meditate on Him, spend time with Him
adultery/ unfaithfulness	Mt.5:27,28; Ex.20:14 Prov.5:15-22	fidelity to spouse
cheating	Prov.11:1; 16:11; 20:10	honesty
temporal worldly values	Rom.12:1-2; Matt.6:19-33 2 Tim.2:4; Col.3:1-2	eternal spiritual values
breaking the law	Rom.13:1-6; 1 Pet.2:13,14	submitting as to God
conduct in church	Ecc1.5:1; Heb.10:25 1 Cor.14:40	reverence/orderly
wrong crowd	1 Cor.15:33; 2 Tim.2:22 2 Cor.6:14-18	righteous friendships
fornication	1 Cor.10:8; 1 Thes.4:3-8	control and sanctification
lack of moderation	Phil.4:5; 2 Pet.1:5-10	balanced life
overeating	1 Cor.9:25-27	self control
dating unsaved	1 Cor.15:33; Phil.1:20 1 Cor.6:15-20; 2 Cor.6:14-18	dating saved
homosexuality	1 Tim.5:22; Rom.1:26-27	God's purpose
bodily harmful	Rev.21:8, Prov.23:20-33 1 Cor.6:19-20; Lk.10:27 1 Cor.3:16-17	body: temple of God
witchcraft/astrology	Deut.18:10-11; Ps.119 Micah 5:12-15	God's truth
careless lifestyle	2 Cor.3:2	godly witness of life
stumbling block	1 Cor.8:9-12; Rom.14-15; Heb.12:1-2	positive example
<u>SPEECH</u>		
sassing	Eph.5:21	respect for authority
gossip	1 Tim.5:13; Rom.14:19	speech that edifies
lying	Eph.4:25; Zech.8:16	speak truth
bad language	Eph.4:29; 1 Tim.4:12	edifying speech
profanity/cursing	Ps.109:17; 1 Tim.4:12	edifying/blessing

idle words	Matt.12:36; Prov.21:23	controlled speech
murmuring	1 Tim.6:6-10	give thanks
complaining	1 Thes.5:18; Phil.2:14-16	contentment
<u>IRRESPONSIBILITY</u>		
procrastination	Prov.27:1; Js.4:14; Ps.90:12 39:4; 1 Tim.4:7	discipline
laziness	2 Thes.3:8-10; Phil.2:12; Prov.6:6-11; Eccl.10:18	diligence/work
no desire	Phil.4:13; Col.1:29; Eph.5:15-16	going against feelings
not doing your best	Col.3:17-25	working as unto the Lord
copping out	Lk.14:27-30; 18:1; Mt.24:26	discipline following Christ
giving up/quitting	Phil.3:13-14; Heb.12:1-4	pressing on
neglect of Bible study and prayer	Ps.119:1-11; Ps.1; 2 Tim.2:15; 3:14-17	devotions/study, daily schedule
neglect of witnessing	Acts 1:8; Mt.28:19-20	witness by word and life
neglect of talents/gifts	1 Tim.4:14; Lk.12:48; 1 Cor.4:2; Rom.12:4-8	develop abilities
lack of giving/ neglect of tithe	2 Cor.8:1-9; 9:6-8 Mal.3:10	giving to needs of others

As you have observed, Scripture certainly reveals ample information on what we are to put off and put on. Most of the time, in the very context of the passage of Scripture, which exposes what is sin, the righteousness to replace it (the solution) is also revealed! For a more detailed list, see "A Biblical Counselor's Topical Reference Guide."

Incidentally, these are more than just "opposites". Therefore, be careful to study Scripture thoroughly before reaching conclusions regarding what to put on. For example: FEAR - most would agree the "opposite" is confidence, BUT Scripture reveals that "perfect LOVE" casts out (replaces) fear - right? So then, it means meditative thinking must occur. What is it about "mature" love that overcomes fear? How does that happen? What specific acts of love can I carry out in order to replace fear and have it just fall out of my life? Get the idea? Incidentally, confidence will be a result, not the focus of what you're striving to cultivate.

So be sure to take the time to think through as much of the Scriptural information as possible relating to your particular problem area (see study on "Meditation and Thought Life"). To be renewed in the spirit of your mind (Eph.4:23), and transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom.12:2) is the vital factor that convinces you of God's truth, and God's truth sets us free. We then experience a new motivation to follow through with our responsibility and to please the Lord!

Finally, what about the areas not clearly defined in Scripture? It is true that at different times in your Christian life you will come up against questionable activities, things in which you will personally question whether or not it is sin to engage in. These questionable activities lie in the areas of places to go, friends, movies, dances, TV shows, music, clothes, conversation, entertainment, determining the will of God for future plans, or any other area in which you may ask, "Is this expressly forbidden in the Word of God?"

If you are uncertain about it, there is a test on the next page in the form of questions to use to evaluate questionable activities. Write out the verse so you can understand the Biblical insight.

1. Will doing it make me a better (or worse) Christian? (1 Cor.6:9-20; Heb.12:1)
2. How will my engaging in this influence others? (to be better or worse Christians). (1 Cor.8:13)
3. Will doing it bring desirable or unfavorable results? (1 Pet.4:14-16)
4. Is it offensive to someone, or a stumbling block? (1 Cor.8:13; Rom.14:21)
5. Can you do it as unto the Lord? (Col.3:17)
6. Does it have the appearance of evil? (1 Thes.5:22)
7. Can you pray God's blessing upon it? (Prov.10:22)
8. Does it produce the fruit of the Spirit? (Gal.5:22)
9. Would Jesus do it? (1 John 2:6)
10. Will God be glorified from/by it? (1 Cor.10:31)
11. Does it violate Rom.12:2? (1 Jn.2:15-17; Rom.13:14; Phil.4:8)
12. If by now you still have a question about it, get counsel from a Christian pastor, teacher, counselor, leader authority or parent.

The following helpful reference materials are available to you for further study.

"What to Do When Hooked" (pamphlet) by Dr. Jay Adams

"A Biblical Approach to Solving Problems" (2 types) by Dr. Wayne Mack

"More Than Redemption" (p.233-270, sanctification chapters) by Dr. Jay Adams

"How to Apply Scripture"

Simple Steps to a Solution-Oriented Direction

(Lasting Biblical Change)

1. Humble yourself (pray) (2 Chron. 7:14; Js. 4:6-10)
 - Come to Him (Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:12-16)
 - Be honest with God about what's going on
 - Acknowledge who you are in light of who HE is
 - Confess your sin (Ps. 51, 32; 1 Jn. 1:7-10)
 - Ask for wisdom (Js. 1:5)
2. Identify the Problem\Sin Area (relational\circumstantial issues) (Gen. 4:1-7)
 - Evaluate- ask the questions: who, what, when, where, how, why... (Prov. 18:13, 17)
 - Understand (Prov. 4:7) patterns, connections, reasons...
 - Define them (thoughts, attitudes, responses, words, actions [behaviors] emotions...)
3. Discover the Biblical Solutions (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Ps. 119) (God's will on the matter)
 - What's the relevant scripture that relates to these areas?
 - What do I need to repent of? (Prov. 28:13; 1 Thess. 1:9)
 - What must I replace 'put off' - 'put on'? (Eph. 4:20-32)
4. Write out a Practical Specific Plan of Action (Deut. 6:6-9; Prov. 3:3; Acts 15:23)
 - What principles do I need to apply to these - 'issues'?
 - How will I implement these into my life? (Who, what, when, where, how, why???)
 - What "life restructuring needs to take place for change to occur? (people, places, things...)
5. Pray it Into Your Life Daily (1 Jn. 5:14-15; Matt. 26:41)
 - Depending upon the Holy Spirit to produce the change in your life (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16-25)
6. Do it! (Js. 1:22-25) Commit yourself to action\ obedience to God (Lk. 22:42)
 - Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. (1 Tim. 4.:7)
 - The power comes in the doing. (Phil. 4:13)
7. Perseverance - continue consistently - don't give up! (Gal. 6:7-9; 2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Thess 3:13)
 - Stay connected to the Source (Jn. 15:1-11)
8. Accountability (Heb. 3:13) Have someone 'check up' - help, encourage and pray with you.