

Do We Have to Give Up Sin?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | March 6, 2009



Having read the following in your [Statement of Faith...](#)

- *sin at its core is selfishness the very opposite of God's character of love.*
- *sin originated with satan and mankind believed satan's lies about God and rebelled against God and His law of love. Thus mankind became sinful/selfish and destined to die save God's saving grace... and then later on...*
- *Fear and selfishness results in destructive behaviors of self-preservation.*
- *Self-preservation results in guilt, shame, and damage to character, mind, and body, a terminal condition.*

I must say that it makes perfect sense, and I appreciate the clarity wherewith the thought is presented.

However, I am struggling to understand someone could be healed in a practical, real-world situation, when it comes to an "invisible sin".

My opinion is that we "do sin" because it feels good, it's attractive, entertaining, fun and stimulating - it appeals very well to the senses. I read the statements of Paul in Romans about doing what he hates doing, etc. yet in many cases - my opinion again - we only hate the sin once

we are done, and walking away from the casino, or logging off the porn site on the Internet. Some acts of sin bring no immediate regret, like gossip.

But what if a compulsive gambler never gets caught out and keeps “breaking even” or even winning? What if one addicted to pornography, or who sleeps around, has extramarital affairs or indulges in other forms of sexual gratification never picks up sexually a transmitted disease or never gets caught out?

I know that the conscience is being seared and the mind is being damaged, but fear should not be a motivator to change one’s behaviour anyhow. Sins feel good, and temptation – especially for one who indulges in sin – is often not far away.

Now here’s where I am struggling to formulate my question. Let me put it bluntly... The Bible is a thick book (usually with no pictures) and Jesus left almost 2000 years ago and He doesn’t speak all that loud. Can we really tell people that they must leave something they enjoy, and that apparently doesn’t hurt them, to choose a way of life that, let’s face it, initially seems like a total drag!?

L, South Africa

Your question is a vital one in this post modern society in which almost anything is deemed to be okay. But directly to your question, *“Can we really tell people that they must leave something they enjoy, and that apparently doesn’t hurt them, to choose a way of life that, let’s face it, initially seems like a total drag!?”*

The answer: Only if we love them! If we don’t love them we can’t tell them anything, but if we love them we can’t avoid telling them.

If your child is involved in using cocaine, methamphetamine, or marijuana, such illicit substances will certainly cause them to have transient “good” feelings. Initially, there may be no evidence of injury or damage, but if you love them you certainly don’t sit by quietly and ignore what you know is going to destroy them.

Life is designed to operate on certain principles. Violating those principles always results in damage and eventually death. While it is true that sometimes the violation of those principles can cause a transient euphoria, that euphoria should not be evidence that the activity is healthy. Jumping out of airplanes can be exciting and thrilling, but jump without a functioning parachute and the thrill lasts all the way until you hit the ground.

The same is true of all addictions. God created our brains to activate pleasure centers when healthy activities are experienced. For instance, after exercise a person will experience a sense of well being and euphoria; the proverbial runners high. When Jesus explained the Scriptures to the men on the road to Emmaus their hearts “burned within them” as truth was comprehended. When we struggle with a problem and then the “light” goes on there is a sense of euphoria. When we do good for another, experience healthy loving relationships, and walk more closely with God, good feelings are experienced. All of these activities are healthy ways the pleasure centers of the brain are activated.

However, Satan wants to degrade humans from other-centered beings who live Godly lives to beings who misrepresent God. Thus he tempts us to short circuit God's design and directly stimulate the pleasure centers. This turns us more and more into self-focused, self-seeking, and self-centered people. Addicts spend their time seeking ways to get their next high and will exploit others, steal, lie, and cheat all to get their next fix. Persons involved in pornography can only "enjoy" it as long as they remain self-centered. If a person involved in porn comes to actually care about the people they are viewing, the enjoyment is over. If they were to care about the objects of their lust, like a sister or brother, they wouldn't enjoy viewing the porn anymore. Love changes the heart!

The bottom line is this: there are two principles at war on planet earth 1) loving others and 2) promoting self. We are born infected with me-first. God's plan is radical "heart surgery." God says, "I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). God wants to remove the selfish desires and replace them with genuine other-centered love. This only happens when we have been won back to trust in God, open our heart in trust, and then allow the Holy Spirit in. The Holy Spirit then takes all Jesus achieved and reproduces it in us; a genuine transforming experience. Then it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me! But we only trust God when we have been convinced He is trustworthy and the evidence of His trustworthiness was presented in the life of Jesus Christ.

So, I say those who live for the pleasures of this world and self will never experience genuine happiness, peace, contentment, and joy. Their lives are empty. They frantically search for something to give them their next "fix," their next "high". Only those who have surrendered self in a trust relationship with God and have experienced the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit regenerating and renewing their motives, desires, and thoughts ever experience peace, contentment, and true joy. Therefore, if we love others we absolutely tell them there is a better way to live than what the world offers. In fact we tell them that what the world offers isn't living at all. What the world offers is nothing but slow suicide. Only in Jesus is there life, health, and happiness and when we love others we cannot avoid reaching out, in love, with a message of hope to heal their lives!