

## Overcoming Addiction

Dear Friends in Christ,



A few years ago I received a letter in response to my invitation to submit questions for Page 3 of the Good News Guide. What I had said was, “If you have questions or concerns about the Bible or the Christian life or any related subject, you can send them to me, and I will try to address them ....” The first question I received was quite challenging. It was on a subject that deserves more than a few paragraphs, so I addressed it with the whole message rather than on Page 3. I won’t print the letter, I’ll just paraphrase this brother’s question: **“As a committed but struggling Christian, how can I overcome my addiction to pornography?”** My response was as follows:

I could argue about how bad pornography is—how disgusting it is to those who don’t use it, and how degrading to those who use it and those who create it, willingly or unwillingly. I could tell you pornography is far from “victimless”—ask anyone who got hooked on it as a child, or anyone who is forced to participate in sex acts for the camera.

But surely, if you have used pornography, you know all that. No amount of argument will do any good. It’s like telling a smoker, “That’s bad for you.” He replies, “Yes, I know,” and lights up another coffin nail. So let me just tell you some things I have learned about addiction, from experience and observation. I don’t guarantee they will help, but maybe they will. I hope so.

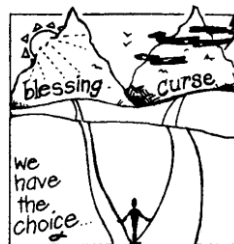
1. You will never give it up until you want to.
2. If you make it easy to fail, you will fail.
3. Even if you want to quit, you’ll need help. The more evil the addiction, and the longer it has owned you, the more help you’ll need.

I used to smoke cigarettes. I tried for several years to quit smoking, but somehow I just never did. I knew I ought to give it up, but I didn’t really

want to. So I’d look for any little excuse to have a cigarette. “Oh, it tastes so good with a cup of coffee in the morning,” or “Well, that yo-yo made me so frustrated that I just had to go outside and have a smoke.” Any excuse, or none at all, would do.

Eventually (and, not by coincidence, it was shortly after I became a Christian) I came to the place where I was fed up with smoking. I was tired of worrying about whether or not I could smoke in various places, and worrying about running out of cigarettes, and trying to find an ash tray—the whole smoking bit was getting to be a hassle. On top of that, I had a three-year-old son, and I began to feel the weight of that responsibility. At any rate, I came to the place where I really did not want to smoke any more. I wanted to quit. At last I had finally made quitting a possibility.

So, first of all, quitting is a matter of choice. It’s a decision. You must decide, do I choose to live my life as an addict, or do I choose to be free of my addiction? When you can honestly say, “This thing that I’m addicted to is wrong, it’s evil, I hate it, and I really want to be free of it,” then you’re ready to begin.



In other words, The first step in overcoming addiction is to admit that you have a problem, and it’s your problem, and you are the one who must address it. If you won’t take responsibility for your

own actions, nobody else can do much for you.

The next thing is to work toward success, not toward failure. When I was “quitting smoking,” all those years before I really did quit, I would keep some cigarettes around. I would tell myself, “Oh, these cost money (a lot less in those days!), so I’ll keep them and give them to my friend who smokes.” Or some other lame-brain excuse. The result was, whenever the craving got to be more than I was willing to put up with at the moment, I had a smoke handy. I made it easy to fail. Finally, when I came to my senses and wanted to

quit, the first thing I did was get rid of the cigarettes. After that, when I wanted a smoke, it wasn't that easy to get one. (Bumming cigarettes gets embarrassing after a while.)

It seems obvious that if you want to overcome an addiction, you can't have the addictive substance around. That goes for tobacco, booze, drugs, or dirty pictures. Get rid of it. All of it. Don't hang onto a "special" item, for instance. I had a friend who said he had every Playboy Magazine that had ever been published. They were supposedly a valuable collection, and that was his reason for keeping them. Well, a certain Bible verse comes to mind about that: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36) I don't say my friend lost his soul because of those magazines. I do say that the well-being of his soul should have been a lot more important to him than their monetary value, but I don't think he thought of it in those terms.

As a struggling Christian, you have to think of it in those terms. You can't keep any pornography around, any more than a druggie can keep some dope or an alcoholic can keep some booze or a smoker can keep some cigarettes. Get it out of your sight and out of your life! Burn it, or tear it to shreds and throw it in the trash where it belongs.

Another reason for failure is being in the wrong place. You can't overcome an alcohol habit by continuing to hang around in bars. (A former pen pal of mine knows all about that.) You can't stay out of trouble if you continue to hang with homeboys that are always looking for trouble. Stupid behavior generally produces undesirable results. Learn from your past mistakes. Stay away from places and situations that support your addiction.

Now, there are enemies who will attack in force to keep you addicted. What are they? The same old three: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The world may come at you in the form of your good buddy who will say, "Look at this juicy new item I found." If you look, it's like falling backward into a mud puddle. That new "robe" of freedom from addiction is going to be a mess. What you need to do, instead, is get yourself a picture of Jesus and keep it in your pocket. When temptation comes your way, you can pull it out and say, "I have something better than that to look at. This man



loved me so much that He died for me." You might lose a friend—or, maybe, you might gain your friend as a brother in Christ.

"The flesh" will probably bother you for a time. With drugs or alcohol or tobacco, your body will actually be craving the addictive chemicals. With pornography, your carnal mind will be demanding the stimulation it gets from dirty pictures. Either way, you will have to fight the craving of "the flesh" for the thing that you are now denying it.

The devil, too, will be doing his part to bring temptations across your path, or make you feel discouraged about your progress, or give you excuses to fail. He loves to see a Christian who is in bondage to sinful behavior. It makes his day.

You need help to overcome these enemies, and there is only one Person who can really help you.



Once I came to the place of wanting to quit smoking, I don't remember that it was really hard. I think it wasn't, for the simple reason that I had Jesus. I was a new Christian, and I was all excited about being saved by God's grace, and not having to earn my way into Heaven (I knew I couldn't). In other words, my dependence on Jesus took the place of my dependence on tobacco, which was a good thing.

Marilyn Hickey, the evangelist, used to tell people who wanted to quit smoking to throw their cigarettes on the floor and stamp on them, quoting Luke 10:19, "See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you." You, too, need to make Jesus central to your life, and put your addiction "under your feet." If you are in Christ, "...the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

Alcoholics Anonymous says, "Once an addict, always an addict," but Jesus said, "Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:35) You may be burdened with the weight of your addiction today, along with the guilt of your sinful behavior in the past, but you can lay all of your guilt and all of your fears on God, for He cares for you.

Let me give you two verses from the *New Living Translation* Bible, to ponder and to live by:

**And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is. (Romans 12:1-2)**

Other translations say you will be transformed by “the renewal of your mind”—your mind will be new again, as if it had never been saturated with the poison of pornography.

Please understand that I am not minimizing your problem—it is real, and it is as serious as any illness. Also, I'm not suggesting there is an easy

answer. There's not. But, if you will acknowledge your problem, recognize it as sin, choose to give it up, and really desire to do so, and then go to Jesus on your knees for help, He will help you, and you will be set free. It may take some time, along with considerable sweat and a few tears, but if you will be guided by the Holy Spirit, you and Jesus together can win the battle over this addiction. I look forward to hearing how Jesus has delivered you from it.

Thanks for the question. I hope I have helped you at least a little. God bless you.

In the Lord Jesus,

*Brother Roland*

### **A Little More Bible ...**

This passage forms the basis of Mom and Dad Maloy's Ministry of Reconciliation:

**If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

(2 Corinthians 5:17-20 NIV)

Here' another passage where God's word promises redemption and freedom from sin.

**Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.**

(Colossians 1:21-23a NIV)

And, finally, this verse from a wonderful old hymn, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling":

**Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit  
Into every troubled breast;  
Let us all in thee inherit;  
Let us find thy promised rest.  
Take away the love of sinning, Alpha and Omega be;  
End of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.**

---

### **Go ahead and ask me ...**

The first question I got was a little more than I had bargained for, but I was glad to receive it. If you have questions or concerns about the Bible or the Christian life or any related subject, you can send them to me, and I will try to address them in coming months on this third page of the “Good News Guide.” If I can't answer a question adequately, I'll ask wiser Christians for help. And I can't promise every question will get a satisfying answer, because, frankly, there are a lot of questions that we won't have answers to until we're in Heaven with Jesus, and maybe not even then. But I'll try. The answers to your questions will, I hope, be a blessing to others who may have the same questions and concerns. Send them to me at this address:

**Brother Roland  
P O Box 14  
Fayetteville, PA 17222**

## A New Direction

Becoming a Christian — being “born again” — means choosing to be guided by The Holy Spirit in a new direction, one that is free from addiction and other wrong choices. That’s the subject of this puzzle.

**Puzzle:**

T Z C H R I S T I A N F E L L O W S H I P W L T G T T N N E U I  
 J R S H Q A L D H M W O Y D P N L G V D F A N O J Y Q Y Y N N G  
 F J U H C E E P S N A E L C U H F U K O I E C M T M N T G J O Z  
 A F U S R Y O U D D J T B S E T J Y S B I F R C A O I L H O I X  
 S A O P T C C F P E N T Q Q X A I J I D K F U W I L Y I D Y T O  
 O O S H S I Z W D A V O I D I N G T E M P T A T I O N B H I A R  
 P K N B L O N H T B J G A B E U N B T M S Q A B J T E A C N T P  
 S E E K I N G G O D S W I L L R O K R A U R I X P H N D U G P W  
 S J E L A L M A J E C X R H C G M Z C R E S K P A D D N M B M Y  
 W S S E C I O H C E S I W G N I K A M P N V K V E G X E G E E V  
 F G E F L H V X V J S J I I D T M P O O J K I R D D H P N I T R  
 Y N K N Y P U C L E J U E T Q Z T O P D V O X T N O N E I N G U  
 D O O M L I M U K D J B S E C V C S S Z R P K L I A R D Y G N G  
 E R U I X U O A N O I T A C U D E G N I T T E G J S W S A Y I I  
 C W O C N Z F P X A I D S O O R L E S Q A Z J Z X I O B R O D V  
 N T R W A T A P E E B Y B X G B W P M K N T G L F P Y P P U I I  
 E S M Z S M E Z L R D D F N A V O I D I N G T E M P T A T I O N  
 I A M L K D C G Z E A O I I L W E O S D K A E P P U X F R M V G  
 T P F M I G O S R E H T O R O F N O I T A R E D I S N O C D A U  
 A G A J N B F G O I P F I G X C K K H E C L E Q F D H E E U F P  
 P N I Q G U O J G E T D E N A G N I S S E L B A G N I E B A D B  
 G I T I F E W Y C N V Y O O G G T J L D G Q C J S L M V K C E A  
 N V H D O E Q C E A I H O L D I N G T E M P E R I N C H E C K D  
 I I F N R E A F W B B Y V X R S N I T T T H U P O X A K U R K H  
 V G U P W T U C L Q A N D L B V Q L T Y R R V C B T T X O R C A  
 A R L N I N T A Z F R P I U J E S E O T Q E R I R A Y W S O Q B  
 H O N S S E N L U F H T U R T D R O B V E W Y H F J D Q Z G L I  
 M F E R D M E R D R W B K O Z S L Z F O E S T Z V R D J X Q Q T  
 F O S F O J P L S A U A P C V H R R M O W R P G A Q L R Q H W S  
 X R S D M R E C E I V I N G S A L V A T I O N H H E R L A B E T

**Words:**

**Being a New Creation**

- ASKING FOR WISDOM
- BEING OBEDIENT
- CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
- GETTING EDUCATION
- OPERATING IN LOVE
- PRAYING MUCH
- RECEIVING SALVATION
- SEEKING GODS WILL
- STUDYING GODS WORD
- TRUSTING JESUS

**Building Character**

- ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY
- CLEAN SPEECH
- CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS
- DEPENDABILTY
- FAITHFULNESS
- FORGIVING PAST WRONGS
- GIVING UP BAD HABITS
- HAVING PATIENCE
- HELPLESSNESS
- HOLDING TEMPER IN CHECK
- INTEGRITY
- MAKING WISE CHOICES
- TRUTHFULNESS

**Gaining Favor**

- COOPERATION
- GOOD BEHAVIOR
- HARD WORK
- POSITIVE ATTITUDE
- SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE

**Living in New Freedom**

- AVOIDING TEMPTATION
- AVOIDING TEMPTATION
- AVOIDING TEMPTATION
- BEING A BLESSING
- ENJOYING BEING YOU