

God is Out of My Life! How Do I Get Him Back In?

1 John 2:15: (NASB) *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*



It is hard to stay focused, especially when that focus requires attention be given to something that is different and challenging. As Christians living in this 21st century, our responsibility is, as Jesus said when he was only 12 years old, to “be about our Father’s business.” As clear as this objective is, because we are imperfect we sometimes get tripped up and lose our focus. Thank God for His grace given to us through Jesus! What about other times when it is not just a typical misstep? What about when we fall not just into a careless or impetuous wrongdoing, but into a full-blown choice that leads us toward evil? What do we do to help us come to our senses and not only retract the wrongdoing, but decisively get ourselves back onto the path of God-honoring thoughts, words and deeds?



The immediate context of our theme text helps us focus. John is writing this around AD 90-100 after the destruction of the Temple and the ransacking of Jerusalem in AD 70. He is of a sober mind, seeing the closing of the initial period of the gospel.

John is the last of the apostles and is warning all to stay the course:

1 John 2:15: (NASB) *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

Notice there is no middle ground in what John is saying. If we love the world, we do not have the love of the Father. It is one or the other. This reminds us of Joshua 24:15 - *choose you this day whom you will serve*. In other words, will you serve the idols or God Almighty?

1 John 2:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

There are three things about our sinful selves we need to stand against:

- **The Desires of Our Eyes**
- **The Desires of Our Flesh**
- **The Boastful Pride in Our Own Human Lives**



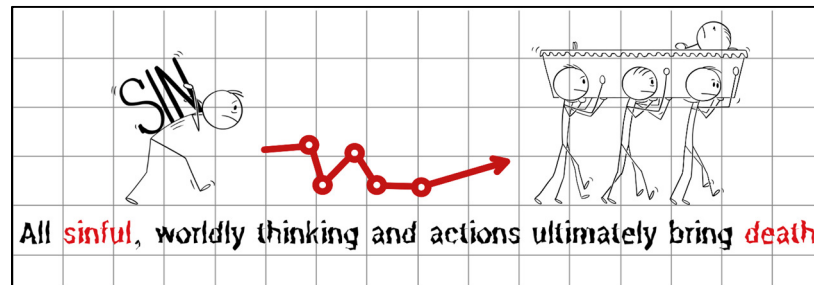
¹⁷The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.



What did John mean about the world “passing away”? It is over 1,900 years later since he wrote this. Was he wrong?

We need to remember the structure of the society of his day *did* pass away with the ransacking of Jerusalem and scattering of the people of Israel to other nations. We have two applications here. He was correct in his time frame, but this also prophetically looks at what we call the “end times” of our day.

All of this comes down to a simple equation:



To illustrate how these three things can turn us away from God, we will use some principles shown in three parables of Jesus.

The Desires of Our Eyes:

The Parable of the Talents - We drop into this account where Jesus is describing the excuses of the “one-talent” servant and how the master responds.



Context of the parable: One servant was given one talent, one was given two talents and the last given five talents. The master said to go work with these while he was gone.

Matthew 25:24-28: (NASB) ²⁴And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. ²⁵And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours. ²⁶But his master answered and said to him, You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. ²⁷Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. ²⁸Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.



PARABLE PRINCIPLE: This “one talent” servant saw (desires of our eyes) only what he wanted to see. He did not have the confidence in his own abilities that the master did. He ignored that and was overwhelmed by the moment. Narrow thinking and fear of a perceived failure provoked him to seek out a convenient, low-effort and self-centered solution. He defied his master’s command and then tried to justify his defiance. **The principle is that he looked at the situation through his own eyes and assessed it, ignoring his instructions, then drew his own conclusions based on what he saw.**



Have I allowed my own narrow sight, thinking and perceived fear to draw me away from my Father and my Lord Jesus? Am I now drawn to whatever rationalized convenience I can see and act upon? Are MY eyes taking ME away from MY target?

The Desires of Our Flesh:

The Parable of the Prodigal Son. We look at this account right from the start as Jesus describes what the younger son did and how he failed miserably:

Luke 15:11-16: (NASB) ¹¹And he said, A man had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me. So he divided his wealth between them. ¹³And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and



went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. ¹⁴Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.

He is saying: *Give me my money. I want it now!* It was premature, immature, selfish and egocentric.

We have a problem in the world today with people following their own selfish ways. Many end up depressed, with suicidal thoughts, and they live empty lives. We see this described in the parable with the younger son.

This typifies many attitudes today. *Give me my money. I want it now!* His father is not dead - he is not even dying! This directly relates to the desires of our flesh.



PARABLE PRINCIPLE: This wayward son was brash in his arrogant desire to pursue any and every desire of his own flesh - with his father's money. His desire for self-satisfaction overrode his own self-respect, as well as any respect he had for his father.



It's kind of funny, and yet sad, that someone in my family did this very thing. One of my sisters asked my mom for her inheritance early, and my mom laughed and said, "What inheritance?" This was years before my parents died.



Have I allowed my own desire for self-satisfaction to break my allegiance and service to my Father and to my Lord Jesus?

We are just touching on each of these parables to put the principle in place:

Parable of the Talents - the desires of our eyes - the one-talent servant only saw what he wanted to see.


Parable of the Prodigal Son - the desires of our flesh - the younger son did things for himself and himself only.

Do I ever get so caught up in my fleshly desires that I end up with God out of my life? Watch out for this.

The Boastful Pride in Our Own Human Lives

The Parable of the Sower. We drop into this account at the end when Jesus is explaining the meaning of the symbols in the parable:

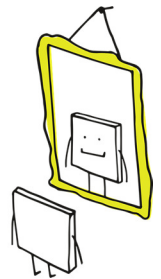
Mark 4:14,16-19: (NASB) ¹⁴The sower sows the word. ¹⁶In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; ¹⁷and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, ¹⁹but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

 **PARABLE PRINCIPLE:** Those who received and then walked away from the word of God were overwhelmed by the distractions of this world, the boastful pride of our own human lives. The cost of the word was not worth being classified as “different.” They want to go with the flow. The joy of the word was not worth giving up their perceived value of earthly connections, ambitions and accomplishments. **As wonderful as the word of God was, it was not wonderful enough to overcome the pride of those individuals - even though they had an appreciation for it.**

We have to be wary of and watch out for this deceptiveness in our own Christian lives. We can be drawn away from serving God by giving into this.

 **Have I allowed my engagements in this life to override and disconnect my loyalty to my Father and my Lord Jesus?**

These are “mirror questions.” Look into the mirror and ask, *Do I decide to be a Christian sometimes but then, in certain environments, decide to put my Christianity aside for a time?* Once we decide to put it aside for a little bit, it becomes easy to put it aside for more.



Finding My Way Back to God:



The first step in finding a path back to God is to **REALIZE THAT I AM CURRENTLY WAY OFF TRACK!** Asking, "What am I doing, why am I doing it and where has it led me," is a good start to becoming reconciled with God!

It is sobering to see how many ways we can deceive ourselves into walking away from God. Thank God for His grace!

With such a peril-filled overview in place, how do we take specific steps to change our destructive course?

Getting specific requires us to hone in on some practical scriptural examples and solutions. We will look at one scriptural example that fits each of the three challenges with our eyes, flesh and pride. Our first example will be of a follower of Jesus who had not truly left his former self behind.

As we open up the practical application of these three ways we can sinfully walk away from God, let's frame them in the context of selfishness. We all have selfishness. To what degree does that selfishness override our spiritual desires and our spiritual lives?

 **Lack of fellow feeling, Selfish Behavior: Six Examples of Good and Toxic Selfishness, Beyond Blue**

- *Lack of fellow feeling. Selfish people find it challenging to show care and concern to people around them, including their close relations and partners. This is because they are always concentrated on themselves. They see every other person as a distraction to their target, and they don't mind cutting anyone from their lives if they are trying too much to bring them to care for others. With this attitude, it makes it extremely difficult for selfish people to maintain relationships because no one would love to be in a relationship where there is no love, care and trust.*



Remember this theme - the lack of feeling for fellow human beings - as we look at this coming example.

The Desires of Our Eyes:

Simon the magician came to Christianity through Philip. We will see him as an example of one who proclaimed - but did not live - his Christianity.

Simon was a magician and a showman. The people called him “the Great Power of God” and were captivated by him:

Acts 8:13: (NASB) *Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.*

Simon created many different tricks and illusions to put people in awe of him, but his illusions were all fake. He realized the great difference between what he did to impress people and what he saw Philip do.



Philip’s real miracles and real message of real salvation were all due to the real man, Christ Jesus! There is a genuineness in what Philip was doing. Simon believed and was just as amazed by Phillip as the people had been amazed by Simon.

The Apostle Peter arrives and lays his hands on some to give them the holy spirit:

Acts 8:18-24: (NASB) ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the holy spirit.

Simon saw what Peter did and thought, *This is awesome!*

The Desires of Simon’s Eyes:

Simon saw the miracles as astonishing, but he saw the bestowing of the holy spirit by which the miracles could occur as a goldmine:

²⁰But Peter said to him, *May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!* ²¹You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.



Simon’s desire to take the gift of bestowing the spirit as a source for profit was a blatant sin that removed Simon from God’s grace:

²²Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.

(Source: Biblical commentary by Albert Barnes) Gall of bitterness. ...means excessive bitterness. The phrase is used respecting idolatry, Deuteronomy 29:18 ...Sin is thus represented as a bitter or poisonous thing; a thing...ruinous in its character...



²⁴But Simon answered and said, Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.

Asking for prayers was a good response for someone who had gone down such a bad road. However, Simon saw only what he wanted to see, just like the principle from the Parable of the Talents. Remember, that servant saw only what he wanted to see. Simon’s reaction to being exposed was to ask for help through prayer. Great start, but it seemed he wanted to get his former glory back he had walked away from when he began following Christ.

He had started out pretty well until the temptation for all of the good stuff - the big things, the glory and the attention. He saw it and he jumped at it.



Would I react the same way if “what I see, what draws my attention” is exposed as a godless path?

As poor as Simon’s judgment was, we can take heart in his reaction. Would we have had the same thought to say, *Pray for me?* We do not know if that was sincere or not, but have to assume it was. If we were walking away from God, would we stop and ask, “Where am I? Pray for me.”

We tend to forget that happiness doesn’t come as a result of getting something we don’t have, but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have.

– Frederick Koenig

Simon had it all when he was following Philip, but he thought he could get something bigger (which was false), and he ended up walking away from the grace of God.



This reminds me of an experience I had in the past as a young adult. I was creating a new business with a good friend from high school. It was about computerized dating with computers in bar establishments across the country. He was an engineer and we had recruited a computer specialist to oversee the network.

My job was supposed to be researching and placing computers in the bars. Shortly after we began this endeavor, I found the LORD and dedicated myself to Him. I realized then that the business was a conflict of interest. I was sure that immoral behavior would have run rampant, so I had to walk away. My friend thought I was crazy and was not happy with me, but I had no regrets because it would not have been in line with Christian principles. It’s important to give up things that are not in harmony with God.



This is such a good example. You were where you were in the business and then you found the gospel. You took an honest look at the two parts of your life and made the solid decision to leave that business behind.

Simon was trying to combine two worlds. He saw things he liked in both places and thought he could combine them. He could not and we cannot either. This is where we start to walk away from God and become unspiritual. Jonathan had to leave something behind because the privilege of following Jesus was so much greater.

Simon asked for prayers:

James 5:14-15: (NASB) *¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.*

This is referring to someone who is spiritually sick and asking for help. What does that look like for us? We should seek counseling and advice from a trusted and humble spiritual leader.

Anointing him with oil - oil symbolically represents the holy spirit. A trusted counselor with God's spirit will study the Bible with us, discuss our troubles and pray with us for God's help to overcome our weaknesses.

If we find ourselves walking away from God and being drawn to things we see, we need to be humble enough to ask for prayers, and then help from trusted, humble spiritual leaders or mentors who follow only scriptural principles. This may be difficult because it involves vulnerability.

What we see - what we focus on - can bring us up or bring us down. We must see that the light of truth is a privilege:

Luke 11:33-36: (NASB) *³³No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.*

If you have the light of the gospel, it belongs on the lampstand!

Jesus is teaching that once enlightened we have a powerful responsibility:

³⁴The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. ³⁵Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness. ³⁶If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays.

What is OUR focus?

If our "eye is bad" what can we do to cleanse it?

Jesus tells us the eye is a window into our life. What we see can march us away from God or right towards Him. We have to make a choice. We have to be humble and get help from someone who is spiritually healthy. This is how to begin to cleanse the darkness from our own eyes.





Here is Jesus' own victory over the desires of our eyes:

Matthew 4:8-10: (NASB) ⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹and he said to him, All these things I will give you, if you fall down and worship me.



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DID JESUS EVER DO ANYTHING WRONG?

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Satan was saying: "Can you see it? This is what you came for, isn't it?" Satan displayed the kingdoms of the world for Jesus' eyes to see. It was true - this was something Jesus did come for, but what was his reaction?

¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, Go, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.

Jesus was saying: "You can't give them to me - I'm taking them from you. My Father gave them to me."

Jesus' ONLY reaction was to quote Scripture, which showed where HIS gaze was set - on his Father!

We may not be able to recall Bible texts that easily, but we can refocus on Jesus himself:

Hebrews 12:2-3: (NASB) ²Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Focus and refocus on Jesus over and over again. We watch only him and learn from him every step of the way.

If we turn our head away from the direction we are walking, we stop walking that way. Refocus on where we are going. *Fixing our eyes on Jesus* puts us back on the correct path.

Finding My Way Back to God when
the Desire of my Eyes is Evil:



Whenever we have strayed, humbly requesting prayers is a critically important step.

FURTHERMORE, RECOVERY IS NOT POSSIBLE UNLESS WE LOOK AWAY AND WALK AWAY FROM WHATEVER IT IS THAT HAS DRAWN OUR GAZE AND ATTENTION.

Focusing on Jesus and meditating on his journey and experience can supply us with needed strength.

It is scary to know that our misguided focus in life can devastate our Christianity. It is comforting to know that there is a way back!



There are challenges in the desires of our eyes. What about the desires of our flesh, our humanity?

As we begin to look at the desires of our own human mind and body, it is important to recognize that having basic human desires does not in any way give us permission or authority to act on them. This simple realization is in direct contradiction to our social structure today, which always tells us WE are the most important! *Do what is right for ME! It is all about ME!* This is how we walk away from God.

The Desires of Our Flesh:

It is important to acknowledge that the desires of our eyes often opens the door for the desires of our flesh. The two are usually connected:


Matthew 5:28-30: (WEY) ²⁸*But I tell you that whoever looks at a woman and cherishes lustful thoughts has already in his heart become guilty with regard to her.* ²⁹*If therefore your eye, even the right eye, is a snare to you, tear it out and away with it; it is better for you that one member should be destroyed rather than that your whole body should be thrown into Gehenna (a symbol of second death).* ³⁰*And if your right hand is a snare to you, cut it off and away with it; it is better for you that one member should be destroyed rather than that your whole body should go into Gehenna.*

Jesus first mentions the eye - what we see - and how this can be a trap. If we can cut the temptation off here, great. Otherwise, we end up acting on the desires of our flesh, which is much worse and more difficult to stop.

The importance of looking away from sinful things and towards Jesus cannot be overstated.

We have so much distraction in our world, and we are not saying it is easy. We must keep refocusing. If we turn our eyes away from where we are headed and instead focus on Jesus, we will stop going in that wrong direction.



 **Being manipulative, *Selfish Behavior, Six Examples of Good and Toxic Selfishness, Beyond Blue***

- *Being manipulative. Because all they care about is themselves, greedy people will do anything to make things work in their favor. They don't mind skewing circumstances to their benefit and the detriment of others. They forget that playing such malicious tricks on people is likely to make people see them as untrustworthy. When people see you as such, it will be difficult for anyone to have any business dealings with you in the future. Instead, they will avoid you at all costs.*

The sober consequences of falling deeply into the desires of our flesh are severe:

1 Corinthians 5:1-2,5-6: (NASB) ¹*It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.* ²*You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.* ⁵*I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* ⁶*Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven (a symbol of sin) leavens the whole lump of dough?*



The entire church did not call out the immoral relationship, so Paul had to straighten them out, as well as the sinner. Paul had to do this by a written letter since he was not in the area. Imagine the damage done in allowing the immorality to exist during the time it took to exchange letters.

As Christians, we have to take a stand within our fellowship and say that certain behaviors are just not allowable.

As with the principle in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, this wayward brother in Christ was brash in his arrogant desire to pursue the evil desire of his own flesh. His desire for self-satisfaction overrode his own self-respect, as well as any respect he had for God, Jesus and his fellow Christians. This involves manipulative behavior. There is a selfishness that puts ME FIRST, and it is diametrically opposed to the will and way of God.



Am I reacting the same way and pursuing human desires that are out of harmony with God? Can I even see what I am doing?

We may not sin to that degree, but we cannot let sin fool us. Smaller sins easily lead to larger ones. If we make them okay, then we open the door to the bigger ones. We are not given any details as to how this immoral situation Paul admonishes came to pass, but it caused a major uproar that needed to be dealt with within the church at Corinth.

Satisfaction is not always the fulfillment of what you want; it is the realization of how blessed you are for what you have. — Ritu Ghatourey

This is similar to the account of Simon the magician. He was blessed by following Philip and the gospel but threw it away by lusting after power. This individual at the church of Corinth was in the process of throwing away the goodness and grace of God because of his immoral behavior. We cannot tolerate such behavior in ourselves. We cannot excuse it. It is not okay.

There are lines over which we as Christians are not to cross. Here is one scriptural list of such lines:

Galatians 5:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

What a horrible list!

Just as I have forewarned you - this is not the first time the Apostle Paul has warned them against these deeds of the flesh.

Again, refocusing is essential. Paul does this throughout his writings. He is saying that by doing such things, we are locking ourselves out of *the kingdom of God*. But what if we DO go down this road?

Some of us may be looking around realizing God is nowhere to be seen in our lives. What do we do to get Him back?

- Approach Him through prayer
- Talk to someone who is spiritually and scripturally sound
- Have the necessary humility
- Soberly realize that our Christianity is the most serious commitment of our lives

Galatians 6:7-8: (NASB) ⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life.

Do not give in to the desires of the flesh. Keep battling.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked - we do not think about this enough. If we choose to follow after God through Christ but then walk away, we are mocking God. We are mocking His grace for us, which will result in judgment.

We need to be in a state of repentance, seeking forgiveness for where we come short.

All sins, especially those which are deeply immoral, require deep, sincere and complete repentance:

2 Corinthians 12:21: (NLT) *Yes, I am afraid that when I come again, God will humble me in your presence. And I will be grieved because many of you have not given up your old sins. You have not **repented** <3340> of your impurity, sexual immorality, and eagerness for lustful pleasure.*

Repent: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3340 *metanoēō*; to think differently or afterwards, i.e. reconsider (morally to feel compunction)



Learning what repentance is and is not and how it changes lives

 A graphic with a background of a sunset over the ocean. The text is centered and reads:

REPENTANCE
is a powerful part of
getting God back in our lives.

What do we have to do to get Him back?
LOOK FOR HIM
How do we look for Him?
REPENT
How do we repent?
SAY IT... THEN DO IT!

Repentance is words AND actions.



We also need to be humble enough to have the brotherhood walking with us as we recover.

We do not do this solo because we need the accountability, vulnerability and the strength of those around us:

James 5:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, ²⁰let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

What a powerful example of how important it is to be there for others, to help pull them out of that fire. They have to want to come out, but we have to be available to help them, work and walk with them and support them.

Here is Jesus' own victory over the desires of our flesh:

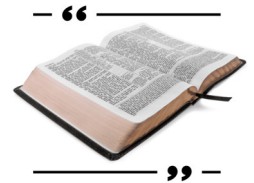
Matthew 4:2-4: (NASB) ²And after he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he then became hungry. ³And the tempter came and said to him, If you are the son of God, command that these stones become bread.

How hungry Jesus must have been after 40 days! At his baptism, the holy spirit descended upon him. He now had the power of miracles through God's strength. He could have done what Satan suggested.

What was Jesus' response?

⁴But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

The ONLY reaction of Jesus was to quote Scripture, showing where his fleshly desire was set. There was clarity, conformity to his Father's will: *I am about my Father's business! I do not need to eat right now; that is not why I am here.* We see his strength by using scriptural principles to support his firm stance. We may not be able to do this like Jesus, but we can apply these same principles with the help of those spiritually-minded ones in our fellowship.



Finally, those in our Christian fellowship must recognize and acknowledge sincere and genuine repentance. Just because we go off the deep end does not mean we have to stay there.

There was a happy ending to the person committing immoral sin:

2 Corinthians 2:5-8: (NLT) ⁵I am not overstating it when I say that the man who caused all the trouble, hurt all of you more than he hurt me. ⁶Most of you opposed him, and that was punishment enough. ⁷Now, however, it is time to forgive and comfort him. Otherwise he may be overcome by discouragement. ⁸So I urge you now to reaffirm your love for him.

There was evidence of repentance. They should have seen this! He humbly received the rebuke and was moving in the right direction. His change was observed and felt. We should be overjoyed when someone has fallen, repents, and is clawing their way back in a repentant attitude. Just because they repent does not mean they are now perfect.

We want to carry and encourage them because we do not want anybody falling away from the grace of God. Those around the one who falls have great responsibility.

Finding My Way Back to God when
the Desire of my Flesh is Evil:



Humble repentance and asking forgiveness are always the first steps. In such hard experiences, our actions will always speak louder than our words.

BEING VULNERABLE ENOUGH TO INVITE THE SPIRITUALLY-WISE AMONG US FOR HELP AND ACCOUNTABILITY IS A KEY TO OUR RECONCILIATION PATH.

We must be willing to ask and follow. There is a lot of humility involved. The circumstances might be embarrassing, but better to be embarrassed while walking with God than not to be and lose Him.

Sins that fulfill the desires of the flesh have NO place in our lives. Repentance, prayer and accountability can reconcile us!

**Sinful desires of the eyes and flesh are dangerous!
What about having some pride in what you have accomplished?**

When we seek to interpret and understand the Bible, it is important to do so with care. Looking back over a job well done with satisfaction and thanksgiving is an appropriate and healthy response. It is NOT at all the same as engaging in the boastful pride of life. Keeping these two things separate is key to our understanding.

 **Self-centeredness, Six Examples of Good and Toxic Selfishness, Beyond Blue**

- *Self-centeredness. Life to a selfish person is all about himself. They do not recognize when other people need them. Or when to put the needs of others above theirs. And this always has a fatal result. The funny thing is, the selfish man does not recognize this impending disaster - until it is too late.*

The Boastful Pride in Our Own Human Lives

The rich young ruler approached Jesus with enthusiasm and asked what he needed to do to be part of the kingdom. Jesus gave him an answer that any Jewish man would understand: Obey God's Law as it was represented in the Ten Commandments.

We drop into the account where this young man responds to this instruction from Jesus:

Mark 10:20-25: (NASB) ²⁰And he said to him, Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up. ²¹Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. ²²But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. ²³And Jesus, looking around, said to his disciples, How hard it will be for



those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁴The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.



The *eye of a needle* is said to have been a small security gate for entering the city after the main gates were closed at night. In order for a camel to enter through this small gate, it would have had to be unloaded, stooped down on its knees and then reloaded. A rich man would have several camels!

While there is no archeological evidence that such a gate existed in Jerusalem, this explanation has been around since at least the 15th century. Some translators say the Greek word for camel, *kamêlos* was a scribal error and written in place of *kamilos* meaning "rope" or "cable," showing metaphorically how difficult it would be to pass a cable through a needle's eye. Either way, the hyperbole brings to mind an impossible task.

Jesus is saying we cannot be overly attached to our earthly treasures. It comes down to the principle of the boastful pride in our human lives. As with the principle from the Parable of the Sower, the cost of the kingdom was not worth the rich young ruler giving up his earthly riches, connections, ambitions and accomplishments, even though he appreciated Jesus' teachings. The kingdom was not worth following Jesus, who was obviously a man of God but was also a man with nothing material! The young man came from a background of such wealth and knew that Jesus was essentially living in poverty. He just could not do it.



Am I over-cherishing my wealth, accomplishments, and connections at the expense of my Christianity? Do I quietly or overtly cling to owning my stuff?

When we give our lives to God, we turn everything we have over to Him. God gives these treasures back to us to be used in His service - this is stewardship.

Did Jesus really mean for him to sell absolutely everything? Comparing to another account, did God really expect Abraham to actually kill his son, Isaac, or was He planning on stopping the act right from the beginning? He was planning on stopping it, of course.

The Apostle Paul suggests Abraham's reasoning:

Hebrews 11:17-19: (NLT) ¹⁷It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, ¹⁸even though God had told him, Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. ¹⁹Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again...

Paul confirms Abraham's thinking - that he believed God could raise Isaac in order for God's promise to be fulfilled. This also helps us understand why Abraham said in **Genesis 22:5** that he and Isaac would come back together.

This event reminds us of the sacrifice God made of Jesus on our behalf (**John 3:16**). Looking at what Abraham went through helps us to better understand the significance of what God went through in allowing Jesus to suffer and die for humankind's sins so that eventually they could have a relationship with God.

Why did God tell Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? It was a test of Abraham's faith and obedience. It was also a picture to help us understand how much God loves us and what His sacrifice of Jesus cost Him.



Check out our CQ Kids videos:

WHY DID GOD TELL ABRAHAM TO SACRIFICE ISAAC?

christianquestions.com/youtube

Jesus was making the point that our hearts have to be detached from our riches. Jesus did not necessarily mean for him to follow through in divesting himself of all his possessions, but he needed him to be detached enough from them that he could consider doing just that.

Do I quietly or overtly cling to owning my stuff? The rich young ruler did cling to it, so Jesus said he was not fit for the kingdom.

Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony. — Mahatma Gandhi

What the rich young ruler thought and did were out of harmony with discipleship, regardless of his keeping the commandments of the Law to the best of his ability. Jesus loved him for his righteousness! But his righteousness was too peppered with pride. That boastful pride of life was too much of a lure for him to walk away.

This boastful pride of life may be the hardest area of sin for us to identify, as it can be disguised as a mere exaggeration of a good thing. *Well, it's not THAT bad...!* The Bible tells us to specifically be aware of this trap. The rich young ruler wanted to follow Jesus, but his pride and need for the security of his riches was bigger at that point.

Let's look at an Old Testament principle to help us recognize such things:

Psalms 19:12-13: (NIV2011) ¹²*But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.* ¹³*Keep your servant also from **willful <2086> sins**; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.*

Willful: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2086 *zēg*; arrogant: - presumptuous, proud.

There are two kinds of sin dwelling within us:



Hidden sin is part of our very nature. It is hard for us to see clearly, as they are so "natural" to us. It is often not seen by others.



Presumptuous, arrogant sin is all about outward display and is far more discernible by the actions of our lives.

Sometimes this boastful pride of life is something we cannot recognize, like a hidden fault. Other times it is obvious, and we still cannot recognize it! Either way, it keeps us from the heavenly kingdom. If we are fixed in our own boastful pride, we cannot be following God. We need to look up, turn our head from that direction and go toward God.



Either way, whether a hidden or presumptuous sin, we are assured that God knows both our hidden and external selves. He knows all of us:

1 Corinthians 10:12-13: (NASB) *¹²Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*

Again, coming back to God is all about humility and vulnerability.

God is faithful - if He has called us, He knows we can succeed in making the kingdom of heaven. Inevitably, we are the only thing that can get in our way.

If I am walking away from God after having been called to follow Jesus, it is on me. I cannot blame anybody else. If I was called, God knows I have the capacity to be faithful.

Let's put this in a better, stronger perspective:

James 5:16: (NASB) *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*



This is why our congregation has weekly testimony meetings to share our struggles and blessings. We need to be vulnerable one with another so we can ask for prayers, help and encouragement. The body of Christ should be our support system.

It is wonderful to study the word, but when we share our experiences and mutually lift each other up by showing our support and willingness to pray for each other, it changes things, especially in matters of pride. If we can be vulnerable to others in the body we fellowship with, it can change. They want us to grow out of that pride. They do not want us walking away from God; they want us to walk towards Him. This is how we can apply these various scriptures.

To overcome the boastful pride of life we need a “no compromise” decision to leave it behind:

Romans 6:12-13: (NASB) *¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

In our relationship with our spouses, we should also be vulnerable to share our temptations and weaknesses so we can have each other's support, guidance and prayers. We should protect our covenant of being as one and have each other's backs. It is so easy to not reveal something and gain the suspicion of our spouse. If we do share, we can gain the support of our spouse. *Do not let sin reign in your mortal body... (Romans 6:12).*

Here is Jesus' own victory over the pride of human life:

Matthew 4:5-7: (NASB) ⁵Then the devil took him into the holy city and had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶and said to him, If you are the son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, He will command His angels concerning you; and on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Satan is saying: "It is all about you, Jesus. Show them so they can see you."

If you are the son of God - "If" - there is a little dare here.

For it is written - Satan is actually quoting Scripture.

Jesus had another opportunity to show his loyalty to his Father:

⁷Jesus said to him, On the other hand, it is written, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.

The ONLY reaction of Jesus was to quote Scripture, which showed he had no boastful pride and only sought to do God's will. He was able to do that because he followed scriptural principles in all matters of life.

Jesus was the only human who had cause to be proud! He is perfect and follows the will of God perfectly. He was the only man who had it all. And yet, his humility was startling because he would not veer off even one degree from following the complete, total will of God.

We want our lives to be developing spiritual fruit and not fleshly sin:

Galatians 5:22-24: (NASB) ²²But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we have crucified something, we have put it to death. If we are walking away from God, we need to turn our heads and our bodies, so that we can turn our will to walk back towards God. We will put to death our unrighteous passions and desires.

Finding My Way Back to God when I have fallen to the Boastful Pride of my own Humanity:



Once we begin to recognize this major fault, we need to clarify whether we want glory for ourselves or if we want it all to go to God.

DECIDE. BE PRAYERFUL. VULNERABLE AND ACTION-ORIENTED TO REAFFIRM OUR CHRISTIANITY BEFORE GOD AND MEN!

Our boastful pride of life can take and twist scripture to whatever we want to do.
BE CAREFUL!





It is really simple. We can all start on a road that brings us away from God and Jesus. What if we find ourselves in this circumstance?



DECIDE

Do you want to be on this road?
Ask yourself, Why am I doing this? What is happening?



GET HELP

Look for those who are scripturally sound and humble to help draw you back, and on whom you can spiritually rely for fellowship.



CHANGE

Change your mind, heart and thoughts. Then change your actions.



REPENT

Ask for forgiveness and then live that forgiveness.

I can recover if I have walked away, but I am the only one who can make the choice to recover.

Do I choose to stand and fight or do I choose to let Satan take me away? It is our choice!

*So, God is out of my life! How do I get Him back in?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on June 20, 2022
Ep. 1234: Why Does God Let the Innocent Suffer?



Bonus Material and Study Questions

The Bible provides us with powerful ways to stay focused on that which is godly and walk away from sinful behaviors.

Help one another and be helped:

Galatians 6:1-5: (NASB) *¹Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. ⁵For each one will bear his own load.*

Clearly assess your own heart and mind when judging others - see them for where they are leading you:

Matthew 7:1-5: (NRSV) *¹Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. ²For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. ³Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your neighbor, Let me take the speck out of your eye, while the log is in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.*

This example gives us some important tools to work with in dealing with sins of arrogance. When seeing sin in others:

Let's NOT react because "I'm just sick of it!"

Let's FIRST examine our character.

Let's FIRST examine our attitude.

Let's FIRST examine our motivation.

Let's FIRST build our own character, correct our own attitude and our own motivation.

Do NOT advertise our humility and repentance:

Matthew 6:16-21: (NRSV) *¹⁶And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ¹⁹Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

DO work from the "inside out" to be in harmony with God through Jesus:

1 Peter 5:6-11: (NRSV) *⁶Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. ⁸Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. ¹⁰And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.*

Study QUESTIONS

Ep.1233: God is Out of My Life! How Do I Get Him Back In?

See:



<https://christianquestions.com/character/grace/>

1. What is John's warning to all followers of Jesus? We need to stand against what three things within ourselves? (See Joshua 24:15, 1 John 2:15-17)
2. What principle was drawn from the Parable of the Talents? How does this fit into the desires (or lust) of our eyes? What is the mirror question we should ask ourselves about this? (See Matthew 25:24-28)
3. What principle was drawn from the Parable of the Prodigal Son? How does this fit into the desires (or lust) of our flesh? What is the mirror question we should ask ourselves about this? How do we see this in the world today? (See Luke 15:11-16)
4. What principle was drawn from the Parable of the Sower? How does this fit into the boastful pride of life? What mirror question should we ask ourselves about this point? (See Mark 4:14-19)
5. What was the desire of Simon the magician's eyes? How did selfishness play a part? What was his reaction when Peter confronted him? How should we apply this example in our lives when we find ourselves drawing away from God? From where should we seek spiritual help? (See Acts 8:13-24, James 5:14-15)
6. What is our responsibility for being given the light of truth? How did Jesus respond in rejecting the desire of the eyes Satan offered him? Upon what should our eyes focus? (See Matthew 4:8-10, Luke 11:33-36, Hebrews 12:2-3)
7. In what way are the desires of our eye and of our flesh connected? How does our focus influence the direction we take? Once we change focus, will it stay where we want it? If we struggle and fail in our selfish desire, are we ever able to recoup our standing with God? How? (See Matthew 5:28-30, 1 Corinthians 5:1-8)
8. The rich young ruler worked hard at keeping the Law, and Jesus loved him for his righteousness. Where did he fail? Do you ever fail in this way? Explain. (See Mark 10:20-25)
9. What are two types of sin or faults within us? What reassurance is found in 1 Corinthians 10:12-13? How can we strengthen one another in this battle with our eyes, flesh and pride? How did Jesus find victory over pride of life? What should we develop within ourselves rather than sin? (See Psalms 19:12-13, James 5:16, Romans 6:12-13, Matthew 4:5-7, Galatians 5:22-24)
10. What are four actions needed to bring us back in harmony with God? Whose decision must it be to recover from walking away from God? Have you ever drifted away or turned away from God deliberately? How did you recover your relationship with Him?