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Church of God Mission Academy

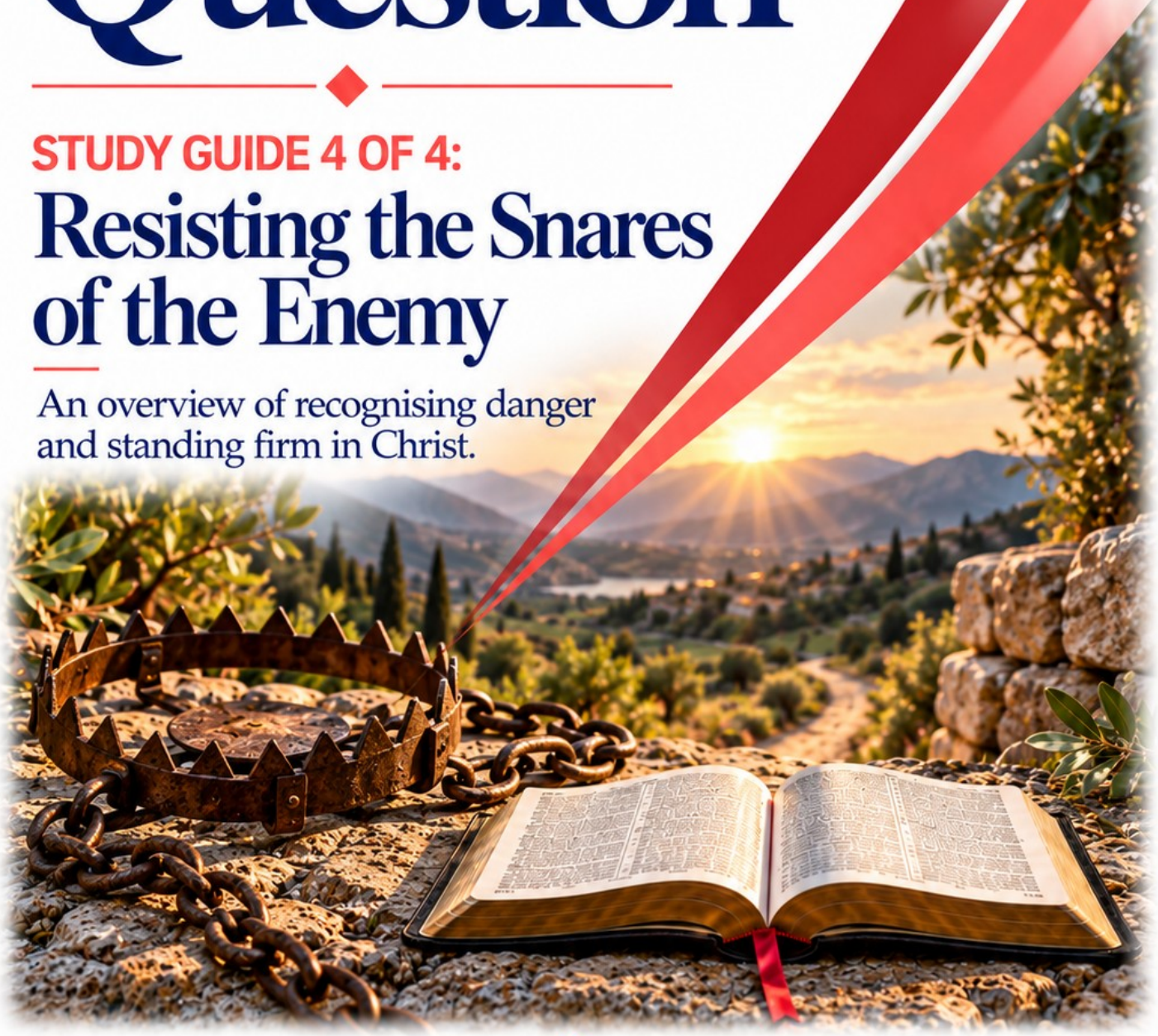
STUDY GUIDE 26 4 OF 4

The *Sin* Question

STUDY GUIDE 4 OF 4:

Resisting the Snares of the Enemy

An overview of recognising danger and standing firm in Christ.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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PREFACE

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The previous Study Guides in this module have established important truths concerning sin and the Christian life. We have considered what sin is, why sin is a matter of personal responsibility rather than something inherited from Adam, and how the believer must guard the mind, words and conduct.

We now come to the final Study Guide in The Sin Question. Its focus is upon some of the specific snares that can draw a believer away from faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

These dangers do not always appear dramatic. Some become so common in society that they are accepted without question. Profane speech, addictive behaviours, disrespect, rebellion, idolatry, false religion and worldliness can gradually gain influence if they are not recognised and resisted.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 5:8-9**:

> *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."*

Peter's instruction is not to live in fear, but to remain *"sober"* and *"vigilant."* A snare is dangerous because it is intended to entrap. What first appears harmless may gradually weaken spiritual judgment, redirect desire or draw the heart away from obedience to God.

Yet the believer is not left to face these dangers alone. At the new birth, Jesus Christ comes to dwell within as Spirit. The believer possesses the Person. His indwelling life is the source of spiritual life, truth, strength and obedience.

This Study Guide will therefore not simply identify dangers. It will continually bring us back to the greater reality: Jesus Christ within is greater than every snare of the enemy.

Our responsibility is to remain watchful, recognise what would draw us away from Him, and refuse to give it a place in our lives. We do this not through human determination alone, but by walking according to the life of Jesus Christ within.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does resisting a snare require watchfulness and the life of Christ rather than determination alone?

Personal Reflection

Where have you relied on determination while allowing an influence to gain an unhealthy place in your life?

Action Step

Examine that influence by God's Word, identify why you have tolerated it, and choose one boundary consistent with Christ's rule.

INTRODUCTION: RECOGNISING THE SNARES OF THE ENEMY

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Not every danger to the Christian life appears dangerous at first. Some things become so common in society that they are gradually accepted as normal. Language changes, habits develop, respect for authority weakens, entertainment influences desires, and religious teaching may appear convincing while moving attention away from the truth of God's Word. This is why spiritual vigilance is necessary.

The snares considered in this Study Guide include:

- Profane language;
- Addictive behaviours;
- Disrespect;
- Rebellion;
- Idolatry;
- False religion;
- Worldliness.

These subjects may appear different, but they share an important connection. Each can gain influence when something contrary to God's Word is allowed a place in the heart and life.

What Becomes Normal Must Still Be Tested

The fact that something is widely accepted does not make it right. Profane language may become common in entertainment and everyday conversation. Addictive behaviours may begin with something that appears harmless. Disrespect may be excused as independence, while rebellion may be defended as standing up for ourselves.

Material possessions, relationships or ambitions may gradually receive a place that belongs to God. False religion can be particularly deceptive because it may use biblical language while directing confidence towards outward forms, human teaching or religious experience rather than Jesus Christ and His Word.

Worldliness can also operate quietly. It does not require a person to openly reject God. It can begin when the values, desires and priorities of the world increasingly govern the heart.

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:2**:

> *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

The believer is therefore not to accept the world's standards without examination. Everything must be tested by the Word of God.

The Answer Is Not Isolation

Resisting the enemy's snares does not mean withdrawing from ordinary life or creating endless outward rules. The deeper issue is what governs the heart. A person may avoid certain outward activities while still being controlled inwardly by pride, bitterness, greed or the desire for approval.

The New Covenant answer is greater than outward restraint. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer as Spirit. His life within must govern our desires, decisions, speech and loyalties.

The purpose of this Study Guide is therefore not simply to identify what is wrong. It is to help us recognise what seeks to gain influence, compare it with the Word of God, and refuse anything that would draw the heart away from Jesus Christ.

A snare is dangerous because it can appear harmless while gradually gaining influence. We must remain watchful, test everything by the Word of God, and refuse to give a place to anything that would draw us away from Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can an apparently harmless influence gradually become a snare without calling for isolation from the world?

Personal Reflection

What seemingly ordinary activity now has more influence over your time, attention or desires than you intended?

Action Step

Consider what it is replacing, test it against the Bible, and set one specific boundary you will begin to keep.

PROFANE LANGUAGE: WHEN SPEECH LOSES REVERENCE

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Profane language has become so common in modern society that many people scarcely notice it. Words and expressions once regarded as vulgar, coarse or irreverent are now regularly heard in entertainment, music, online content, workplaces, schools and ordinary conversation.

Common explanations are, *"Everybody talks like that," "They are only words," "It is just how I express anger,"* or *"I don't mean anything by it."* But Scripture teaches that our words matter. Speech is not spiritually unimportant simply because society has become accustomed to certain expressions.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 3:8**:

> *"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."*

Paul's instruction is direct. He tells believers to *"put off"* these things, including *"filthy communication out of your mouth."* The standard for the believer is therefore not what has become socially acceptable. The standard remains the Word of God.

What Is Profane Language?

Profane language includes speech that treats what should be sacred with irreverence, as well as vulgar, indecent or filthy communication. Scripture makes an important distinction between what is holy and what is treated as common or profane. Something holy belongs to God and should be treated with reverence.

God said to Israel in **Leviticus 22:32**:

> *"Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you,"*

To profane God's name is to treat as common what God has declared holy. That principle remains important.

God's Name Must Be Treated With Reverence

God also commanded Israel concerning the use of His name. Moses wrote in **Deuteronomy 5:11**:

> *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."*

God's name was not to be used carelessly, dishonestly or without reverence. Yet God's name, and especially the name of Jesus Christ, is often used today simply as an exclamation of surprise, frustration or anger.

For the believer, Jesus is not an expression. He is Lord. His name is precious because it identifies the One who loved us, gave Himself for us, saves us and now dwells within His people. The believer should therefore never become comfortable with using His name carelessly.

Profanity Can Become Normal Without Becoming Right

One of the dangers of repeated exposure is that we become desensitised. A word may initially sound offensive, but after hearing it repeatedly in music, films, social media or everyday conversation, it may begin to sound normal. Eventually, the believer may begin using language that once would have troubled their conscience.

But repetition does not change the standard. What becomes normal in society must still be tested by the Word of God. This applies not only to obvious profanity but also to vulgar jokes, sexualised conversation, crude humour and speech that lowers what should be treated with purity.

The Christian should not ask only, Will people around me be offended? The deeper question is: Is this speech acceptable before God?

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why should reverence before God, not only the reaction of other people, govern speech?

Personal Reflection

What expression has become acceptable to you because it is common, despite showing little reverence for God?

Action Step

Examine what the expression reveals about your heart and choose truthful, reverent words in its place.

What About Substitute Words?

There is also an important question concerning softened substitutes for profanity, sometimes called minced oaths or euphemisms. The issue should be handled carefully.

Not every harmless-sounding word is automatically sinful because of some historical connection. We should not create rules that Scripture itself does not establish. But where a person deliberately chooses a softened substitute for a profane expression while preserving the same irreverent, angry or vulgar intent, changing a few letters does not necessarily change what is happening in the heart.

The important question is: What am I intending to express? If the thought behind the substitute remains profanity, anger or irreverence, then changing the sound of the word does not address the deeper issue. Jesus directs us beyond vocabulary to the heart.

Every Idle Word Matters

Jesus said in **Matthew 12:34-37**:

> *"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."*

Jesus makes several important statements. He says, *"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,"* then speaks of *"every idle word,"* and finally says, *"by thy words."* Speech matters because it reveals something about what is taking place within.

Careless words should therefore not be dismissed simply because they were spoken quickly. The words may have passed quickly, but they still reveal what was allowed to come from the heart.

The Heart and the Mouth Are Connected

Jesus gave the same principle elsewhere. He said in **Luke 6:45**:

> *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."*

The mouth reveals what has been stored within. If anger is continually fed, angry speech will eventually appear. If vulgarity fills the mind, vulgar words will become easier. If God's name is treated lightly in the heart, it may eventually be treated lightly with the mouth.

This is why the answer to profane language is deeper than memorising a list of forbidden words. The heart must be governed by Jesus Christ.

"Let the Words of My Mouth ... Be Acceptable"

David prayed in **Psalm 19:14**:

> *"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."*

Notice again the connection between *"the words of my mouth"* and *"the meditation of my heart."* David wanted both to be acceptable before God. That is an excellent standard for the believer.

Before using a word or expression, we can ask: Would I be comfortable placing this speech before God and asking Him to call it acceptable?

Do You Need to Change Your Language?

This subject requires personal examination. We should consider whether questionable expressions have gradually become part of our normal conversation, whether anger or frustration regularly changes the way we speak, and whether we have become comfortable with vulgar humour or crude conversation simply because people around us accept it.

We should also ask whether we speak differently around certain people because we know they would be disappointed by our language, and whether our speech could cause another person to question the spiritual life we profess. These questions are not intended to produce fear or self-righteousness. They help us recognise areas that may need to be brought under the government of Christ.

David prayed in **Psalm 141:3**:

> *"Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."*

Sometimes the most spiritual response is simply not to say what first comes to mind.

Speech Should Build Rather Than Defile

The Christian is not called simply to avoid bad words. There is also a positive standard. Paul wrote in **Titus 2:7-8**:

> *"In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."*

Paul calls for *"Sound speech, that cannot be condemned."* Christian speech should therefore be dependable, truthful and clean. Our words can encourage someone who is struggling, communicate truth, restore peace and strengthen another believer.

Our speech can also make the Gospel more difficult for others to respect if our language continually contradicts what we profess. The believer's words should therefore agree with the life being professed.

The Answer Begins Within

David prayed again in **Psalm 139:23-24**:

> *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

That prayer takes us to the real issue. Profane language is not corrected simply by replacing one vocabulary with another while the heart remains unchanged.

The believer possesses the Person. Jesus Christ dwells within as Spirit. His life within is holy, pure and true, and His life does not agree with filthy communication, irreverence or the careless use of His own name.

The believer therefore has a responsibility to allow outward speech to agree with the life received inwardly. When profane language has become habitual, we should not excuse it by saying, *"That is just how I talk."* Neither should we accept it because everyone around us speaks the same way.

We can recognise it, refuse it and allow God to expose what is happening within the heart. Our words should not make what is holy common. They should reveal reverence, truth and the life of Jesus Christ within.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can profane words expose what is happening within the heart?

Personal Reflection

When have your words treated the name or things of God carelessly rather than with honour?

Action Step

Notice when that habit begins, reject the careless expression, and speak in a way that reflects your reverence for Jesus Christ.

ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOURS: WHEN SOMETHING BEGINS TO MASTER US

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Modern life provides access to things that previous generations could scarcely have imagined. Computers, mobile phones, the internet and artificial intelligence have brought enormous benefits. Information can be accessed within seconds, communication can take place across the world, and technology can assist with education, work and everyday life.

But the same technology can also place temptation constantly within reach. Social-media platforms, video services, games and other digital systems are designed to hold attention and encourage continued use. At the same time, older dangers such as alcohol, drugs, tobacco, gambling and sexual temptation remain present.

The issue is not that every use of technology or every repeated activity is automatically an addiction. The important question is: Has something begun to master me?

What Is an Addictive Behaviour?

Addiction involves becoming increasingly dependent upon a substance, activity or behaviour until it begins to exercise control over a person's choices and life. Different forms may include substance abuse, alcohol dependence, tobacco or nicotine use, gambling, pornography, excessive gaming, uncontrolled internet use, excessive social-media use and compulsive use of mobile devices.

These behaviours can affect health, relationships, finances, work, study and spiritual life. People may first become involved through curiosity, peer pressure, boredom, emotional pain or the desire to escape from difficulty.

Something may begin with the thought, *"I will try this once."* Later it may become, *"I want this."* Eventually it can become, *"I feel as though I cannot do without this."* That progression should never be treated lightly.

The Bible Gives Principles for Modern Dangers

The Bible does not name every modern technology or behaviour. There is no verse that mentions smartphones, internet pornography, online gambling or social media by name. But Scripture gives principles that clearly govern these matters.

Paul wrote in **Romans 13:14**:

> *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."*

The words *"make not provision"* are extremely important. If we know that something regularly awakens wrong desire or weakens our resistance to temptation, wisdom says that we should not keep making provision for it. A person cannot continually feed a temptation and then be surprised when that temptation becomes stronger.

Peter gives a similar warning. He wrote in **1 Peter 2:11**:

> *"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;"*

Peter says that fleshly lusts *"war against the soul."* Wrong desires should therefore not be treated as harmless simply because they are common.

When Something Begins to Control Us

Paul gives another important principle in **1 Corinthians 6:12**:

> *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."*

The final statement is especially relevant: *"I will not be brought under the power of any."* Something does not have to be obviously sinful in itself before its control over us becomes a serious concern.

A device may be useful. A game may be recreational. The internet may be necessary. But if a person cannot put something down, cannot stop thinking about it, neglects responsibilities because of it, or becomes distressed when access is removed, that behaviour deserves serious examination.

The question is not simply, Is this activity allowed? The deeper question is: Has it begun to exercise power over me?

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is the question of mastery more searching than whether an activity is permitted?

Personal Reflection

Which habit is beginning to master your attention, choices or responsibilities, and what need are you trying to meet through it?

Action Step

Examine both the habit and its motive, establish one healthy limit, and seek suitable help if you cannot safely control or stop it.

Alcohol and Impaired Judgment

Scripture speaks directly about intoxication. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 5:18**:

> *"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"*

Alcohol is specifically mentioned because intoxication impairs judgment and self-control. Solomon also gives a vivid warning in **Proverbs 23:29-33**:

> *"Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things."*

These verses describe sorrow, conflict, impaired speech, injury and distorted judgment. Solomon also wrote in **Proverbs 20:1**:

> *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."*

The principle is clear. Anything that repeatedly weakens sound judgment and self-control places a person in greater danger of sinful choices.

Pornography and Lust

Pornography is another modern danger that Scripture governs by principle. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:28**:

> *"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."*

The issue is not simply the existence of an image. The issue is deliberately looking in order to feed lust. Repeated exposure can strengthen wrong desire, distort relationships and create a pattern that becomes increasingly difficult to break.

The biblical answer is therefore not to keep feeding the desire while hoping it will somehow disappear. Paul says, *"make not provision for the flesh."* Sometimes obedience requires removing access, changing habits or refusing situations that continually lead towards temptation.

Gambling and the Desire for Gain

Gambling may also become controlling. The danger is not limited to financial loss. Gambling can feed covetousness, the desire for quick gain and the belief that one more attempt will recover what has already been lost.

Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 6:9-10**:

> *"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."*

Notice Paul's language: *"temptation and a snare."* The problem is deeper than money itself. The desire to gain can become a snare to the heart.

Digital Habits Also Require Honest Examination

The internet, social media, video games and mobile devices can all be useful, but usefulness does not make us immune from unhealthy patterns. A believer should honestly examine questions such as:

- Am I giving hours to this activity while neglecting responsibilities?
- Does this interfere with prayer, Scripture, work or relationships?
- Do I become irritable when I cannot access it?
- Am I continually seeking stimulation rather than learning to be still?
- Is the content feeding lust, envy, anger or pride?
- Have I tried to reduce my use but repeatedly failed?
- Is this becoming more important to me than it should be?

The purpose of these questions is not to create an arbitrary rule concerning screen time. The purpose is to recognise whether something has begun to exercise unhealthy control.

Recognise the Problem

The first step towards freedom is honesty. A person cannot seriously address something they refuse to acknowledge. If a behaviour has gained control, saying *"I can stop whenever I want"* does not help if repeated experience shows otherwise.

There is no shame in acknowledging that help is needed. The greater danger is pretending that there is no problem while the behaviour continues to strengthen.

Confess Sin Rather Than Hide It

If an addictive behaviour has involved sin, that sin should not be excused, hidden or treated as though it does not matter. It should be confessed before God and turned from.

John wrote in **1 John 1:9**:

> *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

This does not present sin as an inevitable way of life for the born-again believer. It shows that where sin has been committed, there is forgiveness and cleansing.

The person should therefore deal honestly with what has happened, receive God's forgiveness and refuse to continue making provision for the same sin. Confession should lead towards a changed direction.

We do not confess sinful behaviour in order to continue excusing it. We bring it into the light, turn from it and continue forward with our confidence in Jesus Christ.

Remove the Provision

Paul's command in **Romans 13:14** is practical: *"make not provision for the flesh."* That may require action.

If a particular application continually leads towards temptation, remove it. If a certain environment continually leads towards gambling, avoid it. If access to pornography occurs through a particular device or account, establish safeguards. If certain friendships continually pressure you towards substance use or destructive behaviour, distance may be necessary.

This is not fear. It is wisdom. We should take temptation seriously rather than deliberately placing ourselves in its path.

Seek Help From Others

Addiction often grows in secrecy. Bringing the struggle into the light can remove some of that power.

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 27:17**:

> *"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."*

A trusted believer, mentor, family member or appropriate professional may be able to provide accountability, encouragement and practical help. Seeking help does not mean that Jesus Christ is insufficient. God frequently works through other people to support, counsel and strengthen us.

For some substance addictions, suddenly stopping can also carry physical risks. In such cases, appropriate medical assistance may be necessary as part of dealing responsibly with the problem.

Guard the Heart

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 4:23**:

> *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."*

Addictive behaviour is not dealt with only by removing an object. We must also ask what desire or pain the behaviour has been feeding. Is it escape, loneliness, boredom, lust, covetousness, the need for approval, or the desire to avoid painful circumstances?

Removing the behaviour without dealing honestly with the underlying desire can leave the heart looking for another substitute. The believer must continually bring the inner life before Jesus Christ.

There Is Hope in Jesus Christ

A person who has become trapped by addiction may begin to believe that change is impossible. Repeated failure can produce hopelessness, but the believer must not place final confidence in previous failure.

Paul wrote in **Philippians 4:13**:

> *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*

This verse must not be treated as though it means every difficulty disappears instantly. But it does direct our confidence away from self and towards Jesus Christ.

The believer possesses the Person. Jesus Christ dwells within as Spirit. Freedom does not come from repeating, *"I must be stronger."* The Christian life is not self-improvement through greater willpower.

Christ within is the source of spiritual life. The believer still has responsibility to remove provision, seek help, guard the heart and refuse temptation, but those actions flow from the life already received in Him.

Nothing Should Take Christ's Place

Addiction becomes especially dangerous when something begins to receive the attention, desire and control that should belong to Jesus Christ. Paul's warning against idolatry therefore becomes relevant.

He wrote in **1 Corinthians 10:14**:

> *"Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."*

Anything that begins to dominate the life must be examined. What controls our time? What controls our thoughts? What controls our money? What do we turn to first when we are distressed? What feels impossible to surrender?

These questions may reveal that something has gained a place it should never have been given.

Freedom Is Found in Christ

The answer to addictive behaviour is not simply to replace one outward habit with another. The deeper answer is Jesus Christ. He must remain first, His Word must govern our choices, and His life within must govern our desires.

Practical safeguards matter. Accountability matters. Removing triggers matters. Professional help may sometimes matter. But none of these should replace the central truth: Jesus Christ is the source of the believer's spiritual life.

No substance, image, game, device, relationship or pleasure should be allowed to become master. Paul's words remain a powerful standard: *"I will not be brought under the power of any."*

The believer belongs to Jesus Christ. Nothing else should be allowed to take His place or exercise mastery over the life He has made new.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must nothing else take the place of Jesus Christ as master of the believer's life?

Personal Reflection

What desire or repeated behaviour is competing with the authority of Jesus Christ in your daily life?

Action Step

Acknowledge what is happening, remove one opportunity that feeds it, and choose a response grounded in Christ's life within.

DISRESPECT: THE LOSS OF HONOUR

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Disrespect is not a new problem. Every generation has faced attitudes in which people refuse to value properly those around them, reject correction, treat authority with contempt or handle sacred things carelessly.

Isaiah described a troubling condition in his own day. He wrote in **Isaiah 3:5**:

> *"And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable."*

Notice the expression: *"the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient."* The problem was deeper than poor manners. It revealed an attitude of pride in which proper honour had been lost.

Disrespect can appear in children, teenagers or adults. It can arise in the home, workplace, community or congregation. It can be expressed loudly, or it can appear through quieter actions such as refusing to listen, continually interrupting, mocking, ignoring reasonable instruction or deliberately treating another person as though they have no value.

What Is Disrespect?

To disrespect someone is to fail to give proper value, honour or consideration. That does not mean that every person is always right, and neither does respect require us to agree with everything another person says.

A parent can be mistaken. A leader can make a poor decision. Someone older than us may misunderstand a situation. There are also occasions when a human command conflicts with the Word of God and therefore cannot be obeyed.

But disagreement does not require contempt. We can disagree without becoming disrespectful. The issue is often revealed not simply by what we say, but by the attitude from which we say it.

Disrespect Towards God

The most serious form of disrespect is disrespect towards God Himself. Pharaoh provides a clear example.

Moses wrote in **Exodus 5:2**:

> *"And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go."*

Pharaoh's words reveal open contempt. He asked, *"Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?"* That attitude led directly to disobedience.

Respect for God is therefore inseparable from respect for His Word. If we claim to honour God while deliberately dismissing what He has clearly commanded, our profession and conduct do not agree.

Moses wrote in **Deuteronomy 12:32**:

> *"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."*

Honouring God means treating His Word seriously.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does honouring God require treating His Word as sacred rather than commonplace?

Personal Reflection

When have you treated a clear direction from God's Word as less important than your own preference?

Action Step

Read that teaching again, examine the reason for resisting it, and make one choice that expresses obedience to Jesus Christ.

Disrespect Can Lead to Disobedience

Scripture contains many examples where contempt, pride or irreverence developed into disobedience. Cain's response after Abel's death shows a hardened attitude.

Moses wrote in **Genesis 4:9**:

> *"And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?"*

Cain did not simply answer incorrectly. His words show an attitude towards God and towards the life of his brother.

Another example appears in the life of Jonah. God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh, but Jonah attempted to flee in the opposite direction. His conduct demonstrated that he was resisting the instruction God had given him.

Likewise, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses and challenged the authority God had given him. Absalom later acted against his father David and attempted to take the kingdom for himself. These examples differ in circumstance, but they demonstrate a common principle: when proper honour is lost, disobedience often follows.

Sacred Things Should Not Be Treated as Common

Belshazzar gives another striking example. He took vessels that had belonged to the Temple in Jerusalem and used them during a feast while praising false gods.

The problem was not simply that he touched an object. He deliberately treated as common what had been set apart for sacred use and did so in open defiance of God.

That same principle should cause us to examine how we treat the things of God. God's Word should not be mocked. The name of Jesus Christ should not be used carelessly. Prayer should not become entertainment, and the gathering of God's people should not be treated casually as though nothing spiritual is taking place.

At the same time, we must remember that under the New Covenant the Church is not a building. The Church is the body of born-again believers. Respect for the Church therefore means respect for the people in whom Jesus Christ dwells and for the spiritual purpose of their gathering together.

Disrespect in Everyday Life

Disrespect is often revealed in ordinary behaviour. At home it may appear through speaking contemptuously to parents, refusing reasonable instruction, mocking family members or responding to correction with hostility.

At work it may appear through continual lateness, laziness, gossip, deliberate refusal to cooperate, or speaking contemptuously about those carrying responsibility. In a classroom or learning environment, it may appear through talking while someone is teaching, distracting others, bullying, refusing to listen or deliberately disrupting instruction.

During a gathering of God's people, disrespect may appear when someone continually talks, distracts others or gives their attention to unrelated activity rather than recognising the purpose for which the congregation has assembled. Again, the issue is not simply outward manners. Respect begins with the attitude of the heart.

Honour Your Father and Mother

God specifically commands honour towards parents. Moses wrote in **Exodus 20:12**:

> *"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."*

Honour does not mean that parents are perfect. It means their place should not be treated with contempt. As a person matures into adulthood, the relationship changes, but the principle of honour does not disappear.

The believer should be careful about speaking disrespectfully of parents simply because there has been disagreement or disappointment.

Respect for Authority

Paul also wrote concerning civil authority. Paul wrote in **Romans 13:1**:

> *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."*

This does not mean that human government is infallible or that believers must obey a command that requires disobedience to God. The apostles themselves demonstrated that God's authority remains highest.

But Scripture does reject an attitude that despises authority simply because we do not want anyone to tell us what to do. There is an important difference between biblical conviction and rebellious contempt. One may require us to stand firmly for truth. The other comes from pride and self-will.

Honour All People

Peter gives an extraordinarily broad instruction. Peter wrote in **1 Peter 2:17**:

> *"Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."*

Notice the first command: *"Honour all men."* Respect should not be reserved only for people who have wealth, education, position or influence.

James warns against treating people differently because of outward status. James wrote in **James 2:1**:

> *"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons."*

The believer should not speak respectfully to someone considered important while treating another person as insignificant. Every person should be treated with dignity.

Respect Does Not Mean Silence When Something Is Wrong

We must also keep an important balance. Biblical respect does not mean remaining silent when truth must be spoken.

Jesus corrected people. The apostles confronted error. Paul rebuked Peter when Peter's conduct was wrong. Respect therefore cannot mean blind agreement.

We may need to question a decision, explain a concern, challenge false teaching or refuse something that contradicts Scripture. But even then, our attitude matters. Truth does not require arrogance. Correction does not require humiliation. Conviction does not require contempt.

The believer can stand firmly while still recognising the value of the person before them.

Respect Flows From the Life Within

Ultimately, respect is not simply a set of social manners. A person may learn to behave politely outwardly while inwardly being filled with pride and contempt. The New Covenant reaches deeper.

The believer possesses the Person. Jesus Christ dwells within as Spirit. His life within does not encourage arrogance, mockery, contempt or self-exaltation. His life produces humility, love and a proper regard for others.

The believer therefore does not show respect simply because good manners demand it. We honour others because the life of Jesus Christ within changes the way we see and treat people.

Peter's command remains simple: *"Honour all men."* Respect God. Respect His Word. Honour parents. Recognise lawful authority. Value those who are older and those who carry responsibility. Treat every person with dignity, including those with whom we disagree.

Disrespect says, *"You do not matter."* The life of Jesus Christ within teaches us to value others without surrendering truth.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can respect value another person without surrendering truth?

Personal Reflection

Whose dignity have you overlooked because you disagreed with them or thought little of their position?

Action Step

Examine your attitude and speak or act towards that person with truth and honour, without excusing wrongdoing.

REBELLION: RESISTING LAWFUL AUTHORITY

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Rebellion can be described as open resistance to lawful authority, but it often begins long before that resistance becomes visible. A person may first feel misunderstood, restricted, corrected or disappointed. Those feelings may then be rehearsed until frustration becomes anger, anger becomes bitterness, and bitterness develops into open resistance.

This is why rebellion must be recognised at the heart level before it becomes outward conduct. Jesus said in **Matthew 15:18**:

> *"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man."*

What eventually appears through words and actions often begins within. The important question is therefore not simply, Am I openly rebelling? The deeper question is: Am I allowing hurt, resentment or self-will to develop into resistance against what is right?

Rebellion Is Not Only a Youth Problem

Rebellion is sometimes associated particularly with teenagers or young adults because those years often involve a growing desire for independence. A young person may think, *"You don't trust me," "You don't understand me," "You aren't listening to me,"* or *"Don't tell me what to do."*

Those feelings may be real, and sometimes communication genuinely has broken down. But rebellion is not confined to youth. Adults can rebel against lawful authority. Employees can resent reasonable instruction. Congregations can resist biblical correction. Leaders can resist accountability.

People of every age can reach the point where the real attitude becomes: I will do what I want, regardless of what God or rightful authority says. That is where self-will becomes dangerous.

Saul Chose His Own Way

King Saul provides one of the clearest biblical examples. God gave Saul specific instruction concerning Amalek, but Saul chose to alter what God had said.

Samuel confronted him in **1 Samuel 15:22-23**:

> *"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."*

Samuel identified the real issue: *"thou hast rejected the word of the LORD."* Saul attempted to justify what he had done, but outward religious activity could not replace obedience. Samuel said, *"to obey is better than sacrifice."*

This is an important warning. A person may continue religious activity while inwardly refusing what God has clearly said. That is not obedience.

Korah Rebelled Against Appointed Leadership

Korah and those with him challenged Moses and Aaron. Moses records the account in Numbers 16. Their rebellion was not simply a disagreement over a minor decision. They rose against the authority God had established for that time and attempted to take a position for themselves.

The consequences were severe. The account teaches that rebellion can be fuelled by ambition, comparison and dissatisfaction with the place or responsibility a person has been given. The desire may sound spiritual: Why should they have authority? Why shouldn't I have the same position? But the real motive may be pride.

We must therefore be careful that personal ambition does not disguise itself as righteous concern.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How did Korah's rebellion show that ambition can disguise itself as righteous concern?

Personal Reflection

Is your disagreement with an authority figure based upon truth, or has resentment or a wish for control begun to influence you?

Action Step

Examine your motive against the Bible and address any genuine concern respectfully, while refusing bitterness or manipulation.

Absalom's Rebellion Grew Through Resentment and Ambition

Absalom provides another example. He did not simply disagree with his father David. He deliberately won the hearts of the people and attempted to take the kingdom, and his rebellion eventually led to his death.

The pattern is important because rebellion often grows gradually. A grievance is repeated, a person's authority is undermined, others are drawn into the dissatisfaction, and eventually the resistance becomes open. This is why the heart must be dealt with early.

Warning Signs of Rebellion

There are several attitudes that can signal danger. A person may begin to resent correction and reject every challenge simply because they do not want anyone questioning their decisions. There may also be continual frustration with leadership. There can be legitimate reasons to question leadership, but if every authority is viewed as the problem, the deeper issue may need examination.

Peer pressure can also contribute. When everyone around us resists what is right, it becomes easier to join them rather than stand apart. A breakdown of communication can also create danger. When parents, leaders or others carrying responsibility are no longer spoken to honestly, assumptions and resentment can grow.

Spiritual neglect is another warning sign. When prayer and Scripture are neglected, the believer becomes less sensitive to correction from the Word of God. Hurt and difficult circumstances can also affect the heart. Pain, neglect, disappointment or mistreatment may produce anger, and those experiences should not be dismissed.

But the question is not whether the hurt was real. The question is what we allow that hurt to produce.

Bring the Thought Into Captivity

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 10:5**:

> *"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"*

This is where rebellion can often be stopped. Before anger becomes open resistance, the thought can be examined. Before resentment becomes a campaign against another person, it can be dealt with before God. Before hurt becomes bitterness, forgiveness can be chosen.

The believer should ask: Is this thought leading me towards obedience to Christ or away from Him?

Submit First to God

James gives the most important instruction concerning authority. He wrote in **James 4:7**:

> *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

Notice the order. First, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God."* Then, *"Resist the devil."* Submission to God is the foundation.

Human authority is never above God's authority. If a person in authority commands what Scripture forbids, or forbids what God clearly commands, the believer must obey God. The apostles demonstrated this principle.

Peter and the other apostles said in **Acts 5:29**:

> *"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."*

That is not rebellion. That is obedience to the highest authority.

Lawful Authority Does Not Mean Blind Obedience

This distinction is essential. Respecting authority does not mean surrendering conscience to another human being. It does not mean obeying abuse, following false doctrine, remaining silent when serious wrongdoing must be addressed, or treating leaders as though they are beyond correction.

The biblical principle is submission to lawful authority under God. Authority must never become a shield for manipulation or control. The believer belongs first to Jesus Christ.

Leadership Also Carries Responsibility

The writer of Hebrews said in **Hebrews 13:17**:

> *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."*

The verse speaks about submission, but it also places responsibility upon those who lead: *"they must give account."* Biblical leadership is therefore not domination. Those who carry responsibility are accountable before God for how they exercise it.

This protects the teaching from being turned into, Do whatever a leader tells you without question. That is not what Scripture teaches.

Questions and Doubts Should Be Handled Honestly

Questions are not rebellion. Wanting to understand is not rebellion. Disagreeing respectfully is not rebellion. The problem begins when a person refuses truth simply because it challenges self-will.

There is a great difference between saying, *"Help me understand why this is right,"* and saying, *"I do not care what is right. I am doing what I want."* One seeks understanding. The other has already decided to resist.

Submission Is Part of Spiritual Maturity

Jeremiah wrote in **Lamentations 3:27**:

> *"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."*

Learning discipline, responsibility and submission while young can help prepare a person for the responsibilities of adult life. But the principle continues beyond youth. Every believer must remain teachable.

Age does not remove the need for humility. Position does not remove the need for accountability. Knowledge does not remove the need to receive correction.

Christ Within Opposes Rebellious Self-Will

The final answer to rebellion is not simply greater outward submission. A person may comply externally while inwardly remaining full of resentment. The New Covenant goes deeper.

The believer possesses the Person. Jesus Christ dwells within as Spirit. His life within produces humility, obedience and teachability. His life does not support proud resistance to God's Word.

The believer must therefore ask not only, Am I obeying outwardly? but also, Is my heart submitted to Jesus Christ?

When the heart is surrendered to Him, lawful authority can be respected without surrendering truth. Correction can be received without bitterness. Disagreement can be expressed without contempt. And where human authority conflicts with God, the believer can stand firmly without becoming rebellious in spirit.

Rebellion says, *"My will must rule."* Submission to Jesus Christ says, *"Your will must govern me."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

What changes when self-will yields to Jesus Christ's rule?

Personal Reflection

Where have you insisted upon your own way even when a lawful instruction was reasonable?

Action Step

Identify one such instruction, surrender the resentment behind your resistance, and respond respectfully without violating God's Word.

IDOLATRY: WHEN SOMETHING TAKES GOD'S PLACE

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When people hear the word idolatry, they often think of statues made from stone, wood, silver or gold. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel repeatedly turned away from God and worshipped physical idols. But idolatry is not limited to bowing before an image. The deeper issue is what receives the place in our heart and life that belongs to God.

Isaiah wrote in **Isaiah 43:21**:

> *"This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise."*

Humanity was created for God. Our lives were not given so that something else could take His place.

We Were Created to Worship God

John describes worship in Revelation. He wrote in **Revelation 4:10-11**:

> *"The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*

Notice the words, *"for thy pleasure they are and were created."* God is worthy of worship because He is the Creator. He is worthy of *"glory and honour and power."*

Idolatry begins when the worship, trust, affection, loyalty or devotion that belongs to God is transferred somewhere else.

Idolatry Is Often Self-Centred

In the Old Testament, Israel often turned to idols because they wanted something. They wanted prosperity, fertility, protection or military victory. Their worship became centred upon what they hoped the idol would give them.

That reveals an important feature of idolatry. It is often self-centred. True worship of God is not simply asking, What can God give me? True worship recognises who God is and gives Him the honour that belongs to Him.

Idolatry reverses this. It looks for something that can satisfy desire, provide security or serve personal ambition.

Modern Idols Do Not Need to Be Statues

A person may never bow before a carved image and still allow something else to take first place. Modern idols may include material possessions, money, career, personal ambition, relationships, success, public approval, entertainment, status or recognition.

None of these things is automatically an idol simply because it exists in our life. A career is not automatically idolatry. A relationship is not automatically idolatry. Money itself is not automatically idolatry.

The question is: What place has it been given? Something becomes spiritually dangerous when it begins to control our decisions, occupy our devotion or receive priority over obedience to God.

The Desire for Approval Can Become an Idol

The approval of other people can quietly become one of the most powerful forms of idolatry. If our decisions are governed primarily by what people will think of us, their approval has begun to exercise too much authority.

A person may know what Scripture teaches but remain silent because they fear rejection. Another may compromise because they want to fit in. Someone else may change their behaviour depending upon who is watching.

The question becomes: Whose approval matters most? If pleasing people becomes more important than pleasing God, something has moved into a place it should not occupy.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can the desire for other people's approval become an idol?

Personal Reflection

Whose approval has influenced a decision more than your desire to honour Jesus Christ?

Action Step

Name the fear of rejection beneath that choice, then act truthfully even if the person does not approve.

Entertainment Can Take Too Much

Entertainment can also become an idol when it dominates attention and crowds out spiritual life. Again, the issue is not that all entertainment is wrong. The issue is priority.

If hours are easily given to entertainment while prayer, Scripture and spiritual responsibility are continually neglected, the imbalance should be examined honestly. What consumes our time often reveals what has captured our interest.

The believer should be willing to ask: What receives the best of my attention?

Money and Success Can Replace Trust in God

Money can provide many practical benefits. It can meet needs, support others and support the work of God. But money becomes dangerous when it becomes the foundation of security.

Success can also become an idol when identity and worth are built upon achievement. A person may begin to think, I am secure because I have enough. I am important because I have succeeded. I am valuable because others recognise me.

But those things are unstable. They can change and they can disappear. The believer's confidence must remain in Jesus Christ rather than in possessions, achievement or recognition.

Idols Cannot Give What They Promise

The Psalmist describes the emptiness of physical idols. He wrote in **Psalm 115:4-8**:

> *"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them."*

The idols looked impressive, but they had no life. They could not see, hear, speak or help. The warning reaches beyond ancient statues.

Anything that replaces God will eventually fail to give what only God can give. Money cannot give spiritual life. Success cannot cleanse sin. Human approval cannot give eternal security. Entertainment cannot satisfy the soul. A relationship cannot take the place of Jesus Christ.

Idolatry Produces Vanity

The history of Israel gives another warning. The writer of Kings wrote in **2 Kings 17:15**:

> *"And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them."*

Notice the progression: *"they followed vanity"* and *"became vain."* What they followed affected what they became. This is a serious principle.

What we give ourselves to begins to influence the direction of our lives. If we continually pursue what is empty, we should not be surprised when emptiness follows.

True Fulfilment Is Found in God

David wrote in **Psalm 37:4**:

> *"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."*

The answer to idolatry is not simply removing things from our lives. The deeper answer is putting God in His rightful place. When the heart delights in Him, other things are put into proper perspective.

Possessions become tools rather than masters. Relationships are valued without becoming idols. Career becomes responsibility rather than identity. Success is received without becoming the source of worth.

The believer's life remains centred in Jesus Christ.

Examine Your Priorities

Because modern idolatry can be subtle, it requires honest examination. We should ask what receives most of our attention, what we are most afraid of losing, what occupies our thoughts, what determines our major decisions, what we are unwilling to surrender and where we find our sense of security.

We should also ask what we would choose if obedience to God conflicted with something we deeply wanted. These questions can reveal whether something has quietly taken too much importance.

Guarding Against Idolatry

Guarding against idolatry requires deliberate spiritual attention. We must examine our priorities, keep God's Word before us and bring personal ambition into submission to Him. We must refuse to allow relationships, possessions, success or approval to govern us more than Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 10:14**:

> *"Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."*

Paul does not say to manage idolatry carefully. He says, *"flee."* Anything that begins taking God's place must be dealt with seriously.

Jesus Christ Must Remain First

The believer is not left spiritually empty and told simply to remove idols. The believer possesses the Person. Jesus Christ dwells within as Spirit.

The answer to idolatry is not fewer possessions, fewer ambitions or fewer relationships. The answer is that Jesus Christ remains first. His life within governs our priorities, His Word governs our choices, and His value becomes greater than the things competing for our affection.

Idolatry asks something created to occupy the place of the Creator. The Gospel brings us back to the One for whom we were made.

Nothing created can take the place of Jesus Christ. Nothing should receive the worship, loyalty, trust or devotion that belongs to Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must no created thing receive the loyalty and trust that belong to Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

What possession, relationship, ambition or achievement has begun to determine your decisions more than Christ's Word?

Action Step

Examine what you fear losing, return that concern to its proper place, and choose one action that puts obedience to Jesus Christ first.

FALSE RELIGION: A FORM OF GODLINESS WITHOUT THE POWER

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There is great joy when a sinner repents and comes to God. Jesus said in **Luke 15:7**:

> *"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."*

But coming to the truth does not mean that deception can never approach us again. The believer must remain grounded in the Word of God because false religion often looks religious. It may speak about God, quote Scripture, use Christian language and include sincere people. Yet sincerity alone does not make teaching true.

Paul's concern for the Galatians demonstrates how seriously he regarded religious deception. Paul wrote in **Galatians 3:1**:

> *"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"*

These people had heard the Gospel, yet something was drawing them away from the truth they had received. The same danger remains. Everything that claims to be Christian must still be tested by the Word of God.

Something Can Appear Right and Still Be Wrong

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 14:12**:

> *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."*

Notice that the way *"seemeth right."* False religion does not always announce itself as false. It may appear reasonable, traditional or emotionally powerful. It may be accepted by millions of people and may have existed for centuries. But none of those things determines whether it is true.

Scripture is the plumb line. Tradition must be tested by Scripture. Experience must be tested by Scripture. Religious teaching must be tested by Scripture, and our own opinions must be tested by Scripture.

The question is not simply, Does this seem right to me? The question is: What does the Word of God actually teach?

A Form of Godliness

Paul warned Timothy concerning people who would possess an outward appearance of religion while lacking its spiritual reality. Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 3:5**:

> *"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."*

A form of godliness can look convincing. There may be religious language, ceremonies, outward standards, impressive buildings, respected leaders or long-established traditions. But outward form is not the same as spiritual life.

The New Covenant reality is not simply a better religious system. It is Jesus Christ dwelling within the born-again believer as Spirit. Religion without that spiritual life may preserve the appearance while missing the reality.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What is missing from an outward form of godliness that does not have the life of Christ within?

Personal Reflection

Where have you depended on religious form, reputation or activity rather than the spiritual life received in Jesus Christ?

Action Step

Compare that reliance with the Bible, correct your confidence, and respond to the Person of Jesus Christ rather than the outward form.

Good Works Cannot Become Our Righteousness

Good works have an important place in the Christian life, but they must never become the basis of our confidence before God. The scribes and Pharisees were known for outward religious activity, yet Jesus warned His disciples that something greater was required.

Jesus said in **Matthew 5:20**:

> *"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."*

The answer is not simply to perform more religious works than the Pharisees performed. Our righteousness is found in Jesus Christ. Good works should flow from the spiritual life received from Him. They do not purchase salvation or make us complete.

James wrote in **James 2:26**:

> *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."*

James does not teach salvation by religious performance. He teaches that living faith produces evidence. Works are the fruit. Jesus Christ is the source.

Rituals Cannot Produce Spiritual Life

Religious ceremonies can easily become a substitute for spiritual reality. A person may begin to place confidence in what has been performed outwardly: I was baptised. I participated in a ceremony. I followed a particular religious rule. I completed a required ritual.

But no outward act can create the new birth. Under the Old Covenant, Israel possessed God-given ceremonies and sacrifices, yet outward performance was unacceptable when their lives remained contrary to God.

Isaiah wrote in **Isaiah 1:16**:

> *"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;"*

The outward ceremony could never substitute for obedience. Under the New Covenant, the believer's completeness is found in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:13-14**:

> *"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;"*

Outward religious practices cannot produce salvation, holiness or completeness in Christ. Water baptism and ceremonial feet washing belonged to outward forms that find their fulfilment in Jesus Christ and are not continuing Gospel ordinances. No ceremony can add to the Person the believer has already received.

Signs and Wonders Are Not the Test of Truth

Another danger is allowing miraculous claims or unusual manifestations to become the measure of what is true. Jesus warned against a preoccupation with signs.

Jesus said in **Matthew 12:39**:

> *"But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:"*

The Bible records genuine miracles, so the lesson is not that every supernatural work is automatically false. The danger comes when people begin to seek manifestations instead of truth or assume that an unusual experience proves that a doctrine is correct.

An experience cannot establish doctrine. Doctrine must be established by the Word of God. A dramatic meeting, apparent healing, unusual manifestation or powerful emotion cannot make unscriptural teaching true.

Emotion Cannot Replace Sound Doctrine

Music, emotion and presentation can deeply affect people. There is nothing automatically wrong with emotion. Truth can produce joy, conviction, sorrow or thanksgiving. The problem begins when emotion becomes the object and sound doctrine becomes secondary.

Paul warned Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:3-4**:

> *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."*

Paul's concern was not simply the style of a gathering. It was whether people would *"endure sound doctrine."* A congregation may have excellent music, impressive presentation and strong emotional response, but those things cannot replace biblical truth.

Neither does a quiet or traditional gathering automatically possess the truth. The standard is not style. The standard is the Word of God.

Beware of False Teachers

Jesus warned clearly that false teachers may not appear dangerous. Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15**:

> *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."*

The expression *"sheep's clothing"* shows why discernment is necessary. False teaching may come through someone who appears religious, sincere, confident and convincing.

Personality is not the test of truth. Education is not the test. Popularity is not the test. Large numbers are not the test. Charisma is not the test. The Word of God is the test.

This also means that believers should never accept teaching simply because it comes from someone they respect. Every teacher remains accountable to Scripture.

Test What You Hear

The believer should develop the habit of asking:

- Is this teaching actually found in Scripture?
- Is the Scripture being used in its proper context?
- Does another clear Scripture contradict the interpretation being presented?
- Is confidence being placed in Jesus Christ or in a ceremony, personality or experience?
- Does this teaching make people dependent upon a religious system rather than upon Jesus Christ?

- Is Scripture governing the experience, or is experience being used to reinterpret Scripture?

Asking such questions is not unbelief. It is biblical discernment. The purpose is not to become suspicious of everyone, but to remain anchored in truth.

Follow Jesus Christ

Revelation describes a people whose loyalty is centred upon the Lamb. John wrote in **Revelation 14:4**:

> *"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."*

The central expression for our purpose here is: *"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."*

Our loyalty must ultimately belong to Jesus Christ. Not to a religious tradition. Not to a denomination. Not to a preacher. Not to an emotional experience. Not to something simply because our family has always believed it. We follow Jesus Christ according to His Word.

The Believer Possesses the Reality

False religion is especially dangerous when it offers outward substitutes for what the believer already possesses in Jesus Christ. But the born-again believer has received something far greater than religious form.

The believer possesses the Person. Jesus Christ dwells within as Spirit. The Christian life is therefore not an attempt to manufacture godliness through ceremonies, good works or emotional experiences.

His life within is the spiritual reality. Good works flow from Him. True worship centres upon Him. Sound doctrine leads us to Him. The Word reveals Him. Our confidence rests in Him.

Religious activity can look impressive while still directing attention away from Jesus Christ. For this reason, we must continually return to the question: Does this teaching agree with the Word of God and keep Jesus Christ at the centre?

False religion may possess a form. Jesus Christ is the reality. No outward form should ever be allowed to replace the living Person dwelling within His people.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the Bible and Christ's indwelling life govern religious experience rather than outward form?

Personal Reflection

Have you accepted a religious claim because it felt powerful or came from someone you admired?

Action Step

Test that claim in its Bible context, acknowledge what the evidence shows, and refuse anything that replaces Christ with a system.

WORLDLINESS: WHEN THE WORLD CAPTURES THE HEART

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Worldliness is often misunderstood as simply participating in certain activities, wearing certain clothes or possessing certain things. Because of this, some people have tried to overcome worldliness by physically separating themselves from society or by creating strict outward rules.

But physical separation does not necessarily remove worldliness from the heart. A person may withdraw from society and still struggle with pride, selfish ambition, envy, lust or the desire for recognition. A person may live under strict outward rules and still love the values of the world inwardly.

Worldliness is first an issue of the heart. It is a way of thinking and living in which the desires, values and priorities of this world begin to have greater influence than the will of God.

Physical Separation Is Not the Answer

History contains examples of people attempting to escape worldly influence through extreme physical separation. Some withdrew into isolated communities, while others practised severe forms of separation from ordinary society. Simeon Stylites, for example, became known for spending many years living on a platform upon a pillar as a form of religious separation.

But physical distance from society cannot by itself remove wrong desires from the heart. Other isolated religious communities have also demonstrated a more serious danger: separation from society can sometimes place people under unhealthy human control rather than bringing them closer to truth.

The answer to worldliness is therefore not simply, Go somewhere the world cannot reach you. The world can influence a person without that person leaving their own home. Pride can live in isolation. Covetousness can live in isolation. Self-righteousness can live in isolation. The problem must be dealt with inwardly.

"Love Not the World"

John wrote in **1 John 2:15-17**:

> *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."*

John is not commanding believers to hate the earth or the people living upon it. God Himself loved the world and gave His Son. John is speaking about a system of values and desires that opposes God.

He identifies three major areas: *"the lust of the flesh," "the lust of the eyes,"* and *"the pride of life."* The flesh desires gratification, the eyes see something and begin to covet it, and pride seeks recognition, importance and superiority.

John then reminds us, *"the world passeth away."* What the world offers is temporary. The believer must not build life around something that is already passing away.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is it unwise to build life around what the world offers when it is passing away?

Personal Reflection

What temporary pleasure or influence has gradually displaced a more important responsibility or spiritual priority?

Action Step

Examine why it appeals to you, limit its influence and give that time or attention to a responsibility that honours Christ.

The Course of This World

Paul described the condition from which believers have been delivered. He wrote in **Ephesians 2:1-2**:

> *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"*

Notice Paul's expression, *"in time past ye walked according to the course of this world."* There is a course to the world. There are accepted ways of thinking, attitudes that society normalises, ambitions that people are encouraged to pursue, and behaviours that may become widely accepted even when they conflict with the Word of God.

The born-again believer has been made spiritually alive and is no longer to be carried along by that course.

The Rich Young Ruler

Worldliness can also be revealed by what we are unwilling to surrender. A rich young ruler came to Jesus asking about eternal life. He appeared sincere and had kept many commandments from his youth, but when Jesus exposed the place his possessions held in his heart, the man went away sorrowful.

Matthew wrote in **Matthew 19:21-22**:

> *"Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."*

The problem was not simply that he possessed wealth. His wealth possessed too much of his heart. When the choice became clear, he could not release it.

That remains an important test. Anything we cannot surrender when obedience to God requires it may have gained too much influence.

Demas Loved This Present World

Demas provides another sobering example. Paul once mentioned him among those working with him, but later Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 4:10**:

> *"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."*

Paul gives the reason: *"having loved this present world."* Demas did not begin as someone completely disconnected from the work of God. He had been associated with Paul, yet something in the present world captured his affection strongly enough that he left.

That is why worldliness should not be treated casually. The danger is not always a sudden decision to reject God. It can begin when the heart slowly starts loving something else more.

Worldliness Often Begins Quietly

A person rarely wakes up one morning and deliberately decides, I am going to become worldly today. The change is often gradual.

Prayer becomes less important. Scripture receives less attention. Spiritual fellowship becomes easier to neglect. Entertainment occupies more time. Material goals become more important. The approval of people begins influencing decisions. What once troubled the conscience begins to appear harmless.

Little by little, priorities change. This is why the heart must be guarded. Worldliness often advances through small shifts in affection before it becomes obvious in conduct.

Friendship With the World

James gives a strong warning. He wrote in **James 4:4**:

> *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."*

James is describing spiritual loyalty. The believer cannot embrace a system that opposes God while claiming that the relationship with God remains unaffected. There comes a point where friendship with the world's values becomes hostility towards God's authority.

The question is one of allegiance: Who governs the heart?

In the World, but Not of the World

Jesus did not pray that His disciples would be physically removed from society. He prayed in **John 17:15-16**:

> *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."*

This is the balance. Jesus said, *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world."* Christians live among other people. They work, study, communicate and participate in ordinary life.

But Jesus also said, *"They are not of the world."* The believer's spiritual identity and governing values do not come from the surrounding culture. We live in the world without allowing the world to live in us.

Do Not Be Conformed

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:2**:

> *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

The word conformed carries the idea of being shaped according to a pattern. The world continually presents patterns: this is what success looks like, this is what beauty looks like, this is what happiness requires, this is what everybody should desire, and this is what everybody should accept.

But the believer cannot allow the surrounding culture to determine what is right. The Word of God remains the plumb line. Paul says, *"be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

Our thinking must continually agree with truth rather than simply absorbing whatever the world repeatedly places before us.

Worldliness Affects Practical Choices

Because worldliness begins in the heart, it eventually affects outward life. It can influence what we watch, what we listen to, how we speak, how we dress, how we use money, what we desire, what we admire, what we pursue, how much importance we place upon social acceptance, and what we are willing to compromise in order to succeed.

This does not mean creating a religious rule for every possible decision. The Christian life cannot be reduced to an endless list of permitted and forbidden things. The greater question is: What is governing this choice?

Is it pride? Lust? Covetousness? The desire to impress others? The need to fit in? Or does the choice agree with the Word of God and the life of Jesus Christ within?

Prayer and Scripture Keep Our Attention Upon Truth

Prayer and Bible study are important, not because they cause us to receive more of Jesus Christ, but because they keep our hearts attentive to the One who already dwells within us and our minds grounded in His Word.

The believer who continually fills the mind with worldly influences while neglecting Scripture should not be surprised when worldly thinking becomes stronger. Likewise, prayer keeps our dependence directed towards God rather than ourselves.

These spiritual practices do not replace Jesus Christ. They keep us consciously centred upon Him.

Make No Provision for the Flesh

Paul gives a practical instruction in **Romans 13:14**:

> *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."*

For the born-again believer, this does not mean that Christ is absent until we perform some daily religious action. Jesus Christ already dwells within His people as Spirit. Paul's instruction calls us to live consistently with the Christ we have received and to refuse provision for desires that oppose Him.

If something continually feeds lust, do not keep feeding it. If something continually awakens pride, examine its place. If something repeatedly draws the heart away from God, stop treating it as harmless.

Worldliness Is Defeated From Within

The answer to worldliness is not isolation. It is not an outward religious appearance, and it is not a longer list of rules. The believer possesses the Person. Jesus Christ dwells within as Spirit, and His life within gives the believer a new spiritual centre.

The world may still appeal to the flesh. Its values may surround us, its approval may tempt us, and its possessions may attract us. But none of these things has to govern the heart.

We can live among people without adopting everything society values. We can possess material things without allowing them to possess us. We can participate in ordinary life without conforming to a system that opposes God.

True separation from worldliness is not primarily measured by how far we stand physically from the world. It is revealed by what has captured our heart.

When Jesus Christ remains first, the world loses its power to define who we are, what we value and what we live for.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does keeping Jesus Christ first loosen the world's power to define our values?

Personal Reflection

Where has the world's measure of success, appearance or acceptance begun to shape your values?

Action Step

Identify the belief underneath that pressure and choose one decision that reflects the truth of God's Word rather than public approval.

JESUS CHRIST WITHIN IS GREATER THAN EVERY SNARE

BACK TO CONTENTS

Throughout this Study Guide, we have considered a number of snares that can draw the heart away from God. Profane language can make what is holy common. Addictive behaviours can begin to exercise control. Disrespect can develop into contempt, while rebellion can place self-will above rightful authority.

Idolatry can give something created the place that belongs to God. False religion can substitute outward form for spiritual reality, and worldliness can gradually capture the affections and priorities of the heart. Each of these dangers must be recognised and resisted.

But the final emphasis must not be upon the power of the snare. The greater reality is Jesus Christ dwelling within the born-again believer.

Christ Liveth in Me

Paul wrote in **Galatians 2:20**:

> *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

Paul does not describe the Christian life as an attempt to copy Jesus from the outside. He says, *"Christ liveth in me."* That changes how we understand spiritual victory.

The believer is not left alone to overcome temptation through determination, personality or willpower. The believer possesses the Person. Jesus Christ has come to dwell within as Spirit, and His life within is the source from which the believer now lives.

The Spirit of Christ Dwells Within

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ. The born-again believer has received Him.

This does not remove personal responsibility. We must still guard the heart, refuse temptation, remove provision for the flesh, receive correction, test teaching by Scripture and make choices that agree with truth. But those choices are not an attempt to create spiritual life.

They are the response of someone who already possesses spiritual life in Jesus Christ.

Greater Is He That Is in You

John wrote in **1 John 4:4**:

> *"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."*

What a powerful statement: *"greater is he that is in you."* Our confidence is not in ourselves, our ability to recognise every danger before it appears, or in perfect circumstances. Our confidence is in the One who dwells within.

The world may exert pressure. Temptation may approach. False teaching may sound convincing. Wrong desires may seek attention. But none of those things is greater than Jesus Christ.

Our Responsibility Is to Yield to His Life

The believer must therefore remain vigilant. When speech begins to become careless, bring it under His government. When something begins to master the life, refuse its control. When resentment develops, do not allow it to become rebellion.

When something competes for God's place, put it back into its proper position. When religious teaching contradicts Scripture, reject it. When worldly values press upon the heart, return to the truth of God's Word.

This is not external imitation. It is the life of Jesus Christ within being allowed to govern the believer's thoughts, desires, words and conduct.

The snares of the enemy are real, but they do not need to rule the born-again believer. We do not overcome because we become strong enough in ourselves. We stand because the One who dwells within is greater.

Jesus Christ within is greater than every snare.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is the life of Jesus Christ within stronger than the snares of speech, false religion, and worldliness?

Personal Reflection

Which temptation or snare have you begun to regard as greater than the One who dwells within you?

Action Step

Bring that belief before Christ, refuse to magnify the snare, and take one obedient step grounded in His indwelling life.

CONCLUSION: RESISTING THE SNARES AND REMAINING IN CHRIST

BACK TO CONTENTS

Throughout this Study Guide, we have considered several snares that can influence the heart and gradually draw a person away from faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Profane language can cause us to treat lightly what should be reverenced. Addictive behaviours can begin to exercise control over our choices. Disrespect can grow into contempt, while unresolved resentment can develop into rebellion.

Idolatry gives something created a place that belongs to God. False religion can substitute outward form, human teaching or religious experience for biblical truth. Worldliness can quietly reshape our desires until the values of the world begin to govern the heart. These dangers may appear different, but they have something in common: they seek a place that should be governed by Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 2:11**:

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

The believer must therefore remain spiritually watchful. We should examine what influences our speech, what controls our habits, how we respond to correction, what receives our loyalty, what teaching we accept and what values are shaping our lives.

But vigilance must never become fear. The answer is not to spend the Christian life anxiously searching for another snare. The answer is to remain centred in Jesus Christ.

The born-again believer possesses the Person. Jesus Christ dwells within as Spirit, and His life within is greater than the temptation that approaches from without. Our confidence is therefore not in our ability to identify every danger perfectly, but in the One who lives within.

We are responsible to refuse what is wrong, remove provision for temptation, receive biblical correction, test religious teaching by the Word of God and guard the affections of the heart. Yet none of these actions creates spiritual life. They flow from the life already received in Jesus Christ.

The enemy may tempt, deceive and attempt to entrap, but he cannot force the believer to yield. Therefore, remain vigilant. Guard your speech. Refuse what seeks to master you. Receive correction without rebellion. Give God the place that belongs to Him. Test every teaching by His Word. Do not allow the world to capture your heart.

Above all, remember the central truth with which this Study Guide closes: Jesus Christ within is greater than every snare of the enemy.

Remain in Him, walk according to His Word, and allow His indwelling life to govern the whole person. The believer is not called to live in fear of the enemy, but in faithfulness to Jesus Christ. The snares are real, but they do not have to rule.

Jesus Christ is greater. His life within is to govern the heart, the mind, the words and the whole manner of life.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the snares of speech, mastery, dishonour, self-will, idolatry, false religion and worldliness threaten the whole life?

Personal Reflection

Which snare has found the most room in your thoughts, speech, habits or loyalties?

Action Step

Name its influence honestly, set a realistic safeguard, and respond in a way that gives Jesus Christ His rightful place.

MODULE CONCLUSION: THE SIN QUESTION

BACK TO CONTENTS

Throughout this module, we have examined The Sin Question from its biblical foundation through to its practical effect upon everyday Christian living.

We began with Understanding Sin, establishing that sin must be defined by the Word of God rather than by human opinion, religious tradition or changing social standards. Scripture showed us the seriousness of sin while also helping us distinguish between temptation and

actually yielding to temptation. Temptation may confront a person, but temptation itself is not the same as committing sin.

We then asked the important question, Is Sin Inherited? This brought us to the biblical truth of personal responsibility. Scripture does not teach that a newborn child enters the world personally guilty of Adam's sin or possessing an inherited sinful nature that makes obedience impossible. Each person becomes accountable for their own response to truth and for the sins they personally commit.

This understanding is important because it preserves both personal responsibility and the reality of salvation in Jesus Christ. Adam introduced sin into the world, but every soul remains responsible before God for personal disobedience.

In Guarding the Mind, Words and Conduct, we moved from the definition of sin into the practical areas where temptation often develops. Thoughts can be entertained until they influence attitudes. Emotions can be allowed to develop into bitterness, anger, fear or wrong desire. Words can wound, deceive or destroy trust, while dishonesty, stealing and cheating can appear in both obvious and subtle forms.

We therefore learned the importance of guarding the whole life. But this guarding is not an attempt to produce righteousness through human determination. The believer possesses the Person. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer as Spirit, and His life within is the source from which truthful speech, integrity, obedience and righteous conduct flow.

Finally, in Resisting the Snares of the Enemy, we considered specific dangers that may seek to gain influence over the heart. Profane language can remove reverence from our speech. Addictive behaviours can begin to exercise mastery. Disrespect can develop into rebellion. Idolatry can give something created the place that belongs to God. False religion can substitute outward form for spiritual reality, while worldliness can gradually reshape our desires and priorities.

These snares must be recognised, but they need not be feared. John wrote in **1 John 4:4**:

> *"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."*

That verse brings the entire module into focus. The Christian life is not built upon fear of sin or constant anxiety about temptation. Neither is it an effort to imitate Jesus from the outside. Jesus Christ lives within His people.

His indwelling life does not remove our responsibility to choose what is right. We must still reject temptation, guard the heart, control what we allow into the mind, speak truth, walk honestly and refuse the snares that would draw us away from God. But we do these things from the spiritual life already received in Him.

The Sin Question therefore brings us to a clear conclusion: sin is real, personal responsibility is real, temptation is real, and the snares of the enemy are real. But greater than all of them is Jesus Christ dwelling within the born-again believer.

Having established the biblical problem of sin, we are now prepared to consider God's answer more fully. The next great question is the Gospel: what Jesus Christ has accomplished to save, deliver and give spiritual life to those who come to Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does this module's account of sin prepare you to consider what Jesus Christ has accomplished?

Personal Reflection

Which truth from this module most clearly challenges how you now respond to sin and temptation?

Action Step

Identify one needed change, respond to the truth you already know, and explain how it directs your confidence towards Jesus Christ.

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

How can an ordinary influence become a spiritual snare, and why is the life of Christ within greater than determination alone?

2. Understanding

How can careless speech or a controlling habit reveal what has begun to govern the heart? Why is society's approval not a reliable standard?

3. Personal Reflection

Has the teaching about respect and rebellion exposed a wrong motive in any disagreement you have faced? Explain what should change without naming private people.

4. Response to Truth

How might approval, possessions or success take a place that belongs to Jesus Christ? What warning sign do you recognise in yourself?

5. Action Step

Identify one habit or influence that needs a boundary. What specific boundary will you establish, why is it needed, and when will you begin?

6. Early Response

Have you begun the boundary described in Question 5? If so, explain what you did and what it revealed. If not, what has prevented you from beginning?

7. Ongoing Practice

How will you keep testing religious claims by the Bible while refusing to let ceremony, personality or experience take Christ's place?

8. Doctrinal Clarity

What is missing from an outward form of godliness that does not possess Christ's indwelling life? How does this help you recognise deception?

9. Living the Truth

In one present conflict or temptation, how can you remain truthful and respectful while obeying God above human pressure?

10. Final Response

Which snare most needs your attention, and what has the Bible revealed about it? Explain how you will respond through the life of Jesus Christ within.