THE NEW CHRISTIAN'S CHALLENGE

Why Am I Still Struggling With Some Of My Past Issues?

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Prayer Is The Secret To Victorious Christian Living

Introduction

What Did You Expect?

When you come to Jesus, you can come for a lot of reasons. But, one thing you do expect, is to get an improvement in your life. Did you get this Scripture? **2 Cor 5:17 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!** And that is totally true; that did happen. You may have heard the words, "you need to be born again" or "you have been born again." And, that is totally true, as well. But, what you may not have been told is, being born again means you start out as an infant Christian. Even if you are ninety-three years old, when you accept Jesus as your Savior, you are an infant child of God.

What Does A New Christian Look Like?

Many times, new Christians get born into the family of God by spiritual parents who don't know how to be spiritual parents. Or, you get born again in a meeting with other people. Even if you got some literature and were signed up for a "new convert's class," there is typically one thing you probably didn't get told. You are going to be struggling with your old life. Yes, you are a **new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.** But, have you ever taken care of a new human baby? Even if they are a perfect baby with all their human body parts, they are not ready to go out and face life.

Why Do Babies Wear Diapers?

Even if you are a genius human, you, as a new Christian, must be cared for in a very strategic and intense way. Actually, the more successful you are, as a human, the more you have to be watched over. **Mark 10:23 (NIV) Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "<u>How hard it is for the rich</u> to enter the kingdom of God!"** Isn't that amazing? An incredibly successful business person, takes more work and care, as a new Christian. Why? Since they *are* successful, they assume they know how to be a successful *anything*. But, human effort, human skills, talents, abilities, experiences, and accomplishments won't work in Christianity. You are a child of God, and are being train how to function in the spirit realm.

How Old Are You?

Gal 4:1-2 (NIV) What I am saying is that as long as the heir <u>is a child</u>, he is no different from a slave, <u>although he owns the whole estate</u>. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. Even if you were born again quite some time ago, you are still only a *child* of God. Even though your heavenly Father is going to let you rule and reign with Jesus in His eternal Kingdom, you are still only a *child* of God right now. You have a lot to learn, a lot to experience, and a lot to unlearn.

You, like everyone else, have made a lot of mistakes in your lifetime. You were trying to learn how to be a good, successful human. You have had to sit in many a training situation learning that. So, that is what must happen to you now. Learning to be a child of God is totally different. Are you ready to learn some vital spiritual principles? Are you ready to find out what the typical, normal new Christian life starts out being. There will be a lot of crawling, wobbling, falling, and skinning knees, but, it the spirit realm.

The New Christian's Challenge
Taking A Look At The Romans 7:15-25 Spiritual Life

Romans 7:15 (NIV)

It's Confusing

I do not understand what I do. This describes what the new Christian goes through as they start on their new life in Jesus. They see all these Christians running around smiling, looking holy, and giving the impression they have all conquered sin and are living in complete righteousness. But you, as a new Christian, however, aren't experiencing this type of victory. When you start asking questions, trying to find out what the discrepancies are, you will usually get pat answers, ignored, or can even get shunned.

The truth is, most Christians don't *know* why these inconsistencies are happening to them. They have heard that spiritual growth is a process. They figure that someday they will grow into living a better Christian life. If you examine a lot of older Christians, you will discover they are not in process. They haven't grown in quite some time. The new Christian's questions can actually serve to make the older Christians miserable and upset. Most of the time, no one in the group wants to admit they are struggling in these same areas.

What's My Problem?

For what I *want* to do <u>I do not do</u>, but what I *hate* <u>I do</u>. Only the Bible would put this in print. This sounds like Christianity really doesn't work. But, millions know it does. Why isn't it working that well for you? Here's the problem you, as a the new Christian face. You can be an expert on how to live life in the world. You know the rules, systems, techniques, and motivations. On the other hand, you have no idea how Christianity works.

As you try the world system in Christianity, you run into a lot of problems. You know the world system--right? It requires you to try harder, make up your mind with greater resolve, get your mind focusing on positive attitudes, make your self-confidence stronger, read more self-help books and articles, etc. If none of that works, fake it. Look the part, talk the talk, make people believe you have it. But, you quickly discover that all this fails to produce the Christian life. And, if you don't find out the secret to the Christian life, you will end up in a life of hypocrisy. You will be trying to "fake it until you make it."

Romans 7:16 (NIV)

I Want The *Real* Thing!

And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. Now here is the pain issue. You know that acting isn't right. You **agree** that Christianity really is a good thing. Christian principles are exactly how everyone should live. The Bible, Christian books, and sermons all draw out a life worth fighting for. When you hear it being presented to you, your heart soars. That is who you sincerely what to be. Agreeing with it isn't the problem. Doing it; living it; that is where you start to struggle. But, know one thing. Jesus is going to help you solve this issue. He can take young Christians and train them, as children of God.

If I do what I do not want to do: Another big issue is doing wrong things you don't want to do. You are probably still doing some things you were doing before. A major reason you came to Jesus was to be delivered from the life you were currently living. It is starting to look very disappointing, if you are just going to act delivered.

Romans 7:17 (NIV)

I Feel Like I Have A Duel Personality

As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. At first this sounds like mumbo jumbo. At best it sounds like a person in denial. However, this is one of the first steps to being set free from the sinful nature and starting to actually live by the Spirit. How many Christians realize they are divided into at least two major parts? Did you know you *are* a spirit, living in a body? The spirit part of you is the actual you, you are a spirit being. The second part is your body, and unfortunately, it has a sinful nature in it.

Jesus is going to be joining you, a spirit being, and helping you resist your body. Fortunately, the Bible isn't going to be teaching you how to fight yourself. If you start using Scripture against yourself, you are going to have a real problem. If you think your only enemy is the devil, you are going to have another problem. Jesus is going to be helping you resist the world, your body, and the devil; and, He and you will win!

Romans 7:18 (NIV)

Do I Have A Split Personality?

I know that nothing good lives in me, <u>that is, in my sinful nature</u>. Your body has a sinful nature controlling it. It makes your body be very animalistic. It has survival instincts, procreation, sexual drives, nutritional needs, pleasure orientations, and pain aversions. You and your body got along fine, as long as it and you were on the same page. But, when you decided to turn your life over to Jesus, that was when a split took place inside of you. There were things you were doing with your body that were wrong, bad, and maybe even evil. But, many of them provided your body with pleasure; and, it still wants that experience.

Can't I Just Make Up My Mind?

<u>For I have the desire to do what is good</u>, but I cannot carry it out. From the moment of salvation, you started desiring to do good. Before, your motives were to just have fun. Now you want to start doing moral, good, and beneficial things. Very soon, in your new life, you discovered that wanting and doing were two different things. In your life in sin, wanting and doing often were exactly the same. If you wanted to do it, you quite simply did it. Now you are on the right track and you can't *will* yourself into doing things you know are the right way. That is when confusion sets in. What is going on here? What does all of this resistance mean? Here comes part of the answer.

Isn't My Body Just My Slave?
For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.

What I *do* is not the good I *want* to do: What may not be obvious is, your body's drives, urges, cravings, and needs are very powerful. Its sex drives, survival drives, food, water, and air needs, pleasure cravings, and pain avoidance desires can push your spirit hard. When you wanted to eat healthy, exercise, and push yourself in physical training, your body let you know it wasn't happy. So it is in Christianity; when you want to get up early to read your Bible, study, pray, get ready for church, and other spiritual things, your body lets you know how it feels about it. And, the sinful nature in it, will let you know how it feels about spiritual things.

No, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing: There were things you were involving your body in that brought it pleasure. It isn't going to appreciate that Christianity doesn't allow it to experience these any more. It will crave, drive, urge, bring to your memory, and lure you toward going back into those things. You need Jesus and His power to help you resist your body's past experiences, the world's enticements, and the devil's temptations. This is where you start getting involved in Biblical study and prayer. You need training and practice.

Romans 7:20 (NIV)

What Does The *Real* Me Want?
Now if *I* do what *I* do not want to do, <u>it is no longer *I* who do it</u>, but it is sin living in me that does it. Jesus knows you are being pushed. He understands what you are facing.

Now if I do what I do not want to do: Before salvation, you and the sinful nature in your body were living in unity. You wanted to sin and you sinned. It wasn't just the sinful nature in your body sinning. It was a collaboration. You and your body were a team. You wanted to sin and the sinful nature in your body got the plan moving forward. Only on special occasions did you feel the existence of another side to yourself. Sometimes you would do something and feel guilty about it. Those were the moments where you felt a little schizophrenic. One part of you enjoyed doing it and some other part, deep down in there, was feeling a little conflicted.

It is no longer I who do it: <u>Now, as a Christian, you are in complete disagreement with the sinful nature in your body</u>. Jesus' power, through the grace of salvation, gave you a whole new desire. Now you are in complete agreement with God's way of life. But you are still having trouble with a second opinion inside your body. Which desire is the real you? This Scripture is saying that the real "you-desire" is the one that wants to do right. It is also saying that the other desire (even though it is coming from inside you), isn't you.

For a lot of reasons, you can struggle with the concept of having two parts. You may feel like you *are* doing it. It looks a lot like you doing it. It feels like you want to do it. It can sound and feel hypocritical. If this is Christianity, you are going to be very disappointed; but, it isn't. The biggest problem is the "you-desire" is losing to the "not-you" desire. Why is that?

Romans 7:21 (NIV)

Pay Attention To This!

So, I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For as long as you live on this planet, you must have an earth suit. Your body is mandatory for living here. So, you are stuck with a body; and right now it looks like it is going to be fighting you and Christianity for the rest of your life; but it isn't.

Romans 7:22 (NIV)

Jesus' Salvation Made This True Of You

For in <u>my inner being</u> I delight in God's law. This is the real you! Jesus' salvation changed your spirit's desire. Your *will* in now in agreement with God's will. But, you just *wanting* and not being able to *do*, may not seem important to you. But it is totally important to God. As long as you didn't want to live the Christian life, God didn't help you. God honored your will before salvation. And, He will continue to honor your will after salvation. He is not going to force spiritual growth on you. You must do what it takes to become victorious.

Romans 7:23 (NIV)

This Is Without Spiritual Growth

But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and <u>making me a prisoner</u> of the law of sin at work within my members.

Even though it isn't you, as a spirit being, doing the sinning, you are being imprisoned or forced by the members of your body to do things you don't want. But, don't get use to that. It must always be your *will* to be free from sin. And it must continually be your *will* to become active in God's law. And, the way that happens is through spiritual growth. That is what all the things on wctlc.com are about--helping you win against your body. Jesus wants to empower and train you how to live <u>as a child of God in the spirit realm</u>.

Romans 7:24 (NIV)

Spiritual Growth Step One

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? This is step one, which is prayer. Asking Jesus to help, is a major key to all of Christianity. Notice the intensity being expressed here. That needs to be in your heart. Ask Jesus to give you a deep desire to be rescued from your body of death. Allow the desire to change, the frustration, the confusion, and the dissatisfaction to rule your heart. Don't bury it, suppress it, or fight it; but, don't yield to it; *use* it to pray a prayer of desperation to Jesus.

WARNING: If you find yourself happy about the fact that it isn't your fault that you are sinning and start relaxing, you are in a dangerous place. Don't join those who have accepted Romans 7:15-24 to be the normal Christian life. Don't just hope that maybe some day you will grow into doing better. Don't expect it to just gradually happen to you, if you keep going to church, reading your Bible, and reading good Christian books. Romans 7:24 is showing you the secret of prayer. Specific prayers *must* be added to all these other things.

This Is Your Future
Rom 8:13 (NIV) For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; <u>but if *by* the Spirit *you* put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live</u>.

This Isn't Where You *Want* To Live
For if you live according to the sinful nature, <u>you will die</u>. True Christians don't look for ways to keep sinning. They hate sinning. They also delight in God's ways. **But if <u>*by* the Spirit *you*</u> put to death the misdeeds of the body, <u>you will live</u>.** Jesus wants to train and empower you to constantly be putting to death the misdeeds of your body, not to accept things the way they are. That means you will be studying and praying. Then Jesus *will* set you free from those things the Bible and your conscience are telling you are wrong. You will fail, from time to time. But, you will keep on fighting, because you are a true Christian.

This Is Who You Are
Phil 3:12-14 (NIV) Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but <u>I press on</u> to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But <u>one thing I do</u>: <u>Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on</u> toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

But if *by* the Spirit *you* put to death the misdeeds of the body, <u>you will live</u>. This takes time, study, prayer, and practice. When you are pressured by your body, enticed by the people of this world, or tempted by the devil, there *is* a battle. Start working on the ones that are the easiest to defeat. Learn how to believe that ***by* the Spirit *you*** are being empowered to win. It will feel like it is your old determination, human effort, and skill. But, if you believe it is the Holy Spirit empowering you, you will start winning.

Romans 7:25 (NIV)

Spiritual Growth Step Two
Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! You take step two, when you get your eyes off of yourself and *your* abilities and put them on Jesus. Will a life of victory start taking place over your body of death that is trying to force you to go back into sin? Yes, Jesus has a system whereby you are able to start winning over various areas of failure. Jesus' study and prayer system in "The Jesus Life" book, lays out this procedure in detail. Just go to wctlc.com and select, "I would like good BOOKS to read." and it will take you to the welcome page. Read that introduction and then select "I'm Ready To Go To The Book List" and it will take you there. Just follow the instructions.

Spiritual Growth Step Three
So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law. Step three is when you understand the difference between the attitudes of your mind, that's in you, a spirit being, and the sinful nature in your body. You mind is the foothold that God is looking for. He is mainly looking for you to have a **want** to start doing good things and a **hatred** for doing bad things.

In verse 18 you already saw that *you* can't carry this out. So, it is going to take Jesus and the Holy Spirit to empower you to win. Once again, it explains this process in **Romans 8:13b (NIV) But if *by* the Spirit *you* put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.** It's **by the Spirit's** power; but Jesus will teach ***you*** how to **put to death the misdeeds of the body** while using **the Spirit's** power. This should give you faith that things are going to change.

Jesus' salvation transformed your relationship with God. He gave you a perfect record with God. That was the *only* way you were going to get the **Spirit's power.** Even though you are having a problem living what you have been credited for, you are on the road to a full victory. A lot of it will take place here on earth. And, then the final completion or perfection will take place in eternity. In God's eternal Kingdom, you will no longer be confronted with any issues of sin. No sin or possibilities of sinning will be present in God's eternal Kingdom.

Spiritual Growth Step Four

But in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. Step four is to realize that your body didn't get saved. It is going to have to be dealt with in a different way. Jesus will deal with it through a process called sanctification. It basically means spiritual growth. Just like you had to learn how to live as a human, you are now learning how to live as a child of God. Just like you had to study and practice getting good at human, earthly things, you must study the Bible and pray for the things that make you good at being a child of God. If you just study them, you will just know them. But, if you *ask* Jesus to put them in your life, you will *live* them.

Spiritual Growth Step Five

But if *by* the Spirit *you* put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. This is step five. From here on, you will be learning how to do this. And, from here on, as you learn a Biblical principle, you will be praying and asking Jesus to apply that principle to your life. If you find yourself *trying* to live the Christian life, you have slipped back into the Romans 7:15-24 system. If you start praying over each Bible principle you learn, you are moving into the Jesus life. The way for ***by* the Spirit *you* put to death the *misdeeds* of the body** is to look to Jesus and the Holy Spirit to empower you. And, the way to look to Jesus and the Holy Spirit to empower you, is to pray and ask them to. But, these aren't just one-time prayers.

Moment-By-Moment And Issue-By-Issue

As you are going through your day, you will face temptations from the devil, pressures from your body, invitations from people, and enticement from the world. When that happens, if you *try* to resist that thing you are being tempted to do, invited in to, or being shown by the world, you will fail. **Rom 7:18 (NIV) I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the *desire* to do what is good, but I *cannot* carry it out.** Human effort and human skill will not work in Christianity.

James 4:2 (NIV) You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, *because* you do not ask God.

Moment-By-Moment And Issue-By-Issue--pray!
Matthew 7:7 gives you three keys that unlock all the power and provisions of Jesus' Christianity. **Mat 7:7 (NIV) *Ask* and it will be given to you; *seek* and you will find; *knock* and the door will be opened to you.** Ask is the most important of these three keys. It is a part of prayer; but, it is you requesting that Biblical principles and provisions be installed in your behavior and life. The *seek key* is a part of the *ask key* that keeps you from just asking casually. For example, if you ***seek* first His (God) kingdom and His righteousness…all these things** (physical needs) **will be given to you as well.** *Seek* is an *ask* that puts the request in a first priority place.

As you are going through your day, you are used to *thinking* and *trying* your way through it. You *try* to *think* of ways to accomplish things. If you go through your day as a Christian, you will invite Jesus into every moment and into every issue. If you *try* to do the right thing, at a certain moment over a certain issue, it will fall short of Jesus' goal for you. If you try to *think* of the right way to do things during your day, it will fall short of Jesus' plan for you. If you invite Jesus into your efforts and your thoughts, you will get His knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and power all during your day. That is how to live the victorious Christian life.

When Do You Need Good Gifts?
Mat 7:11 (NIV) If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give *good gifts* to your children, *how much more* will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who *ask* Him! If you just want to live a life with **good gifts** from your heavenly Father on special occasions, then you would only apply the *ask key* every now and then. But, if you would like to live the Jesus life all day long, then it will be a matter of learning how to invite Jesus into every aspect of every day. Your Christian life is only going to be as good and as successful as you learn how to stay attached to Jesus all day long.

Learning How To Remain
John 15:5 (NIV) I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. You aren't having trouble with your old life because you are weird. You and every new and untrained Christian in the world are living in the Romans 7:15-24 life, for as long as you try to apply human effort and world training to the supernatural gift of Christianity. However, you can speed up your journey through the Romans 7:15-24 life by applying verse 25. If you discover that it is **through Jesus Christ our Lord,** then you are on your way into the Romans chapter eight life.

Using The Content Of Ephesians 1:17-19a To Ask
This passage has been altered with your pronouns, so as to make it personal for you:
Eph 1:17-19a (NIV) I keep asking that the God of my **Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give** me **the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that** I **may know Him better. I pray also that the eyes of** my **heart may be enlightened in order that** I **may know the hope to which He has called** me**, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for** me, **who believes.**