

TEN QUESTIONS TO KEEP YOURSELF FROM SIN

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All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.
We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that the wicked one toucheth him not.
And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

I John 5:17-19

I recently heard preaching on this passage from Pastor Mike Cox, and the following thoughts came to me:

First, God does not kill us the first time we sin. That is pretty simple to understand, because if God did reward immediately the wages of sin, there would be no one alive today. The first verse shows God's mercy and longsuffering in the life of his children. We all sin, but we ought not to "continue in sin" (Romans 6:1). The sin you are thinking you are getting away with may come to be the sin unto death. Take advantage of God's grace and confess and forsake sin before it is too late.

Second, as a child of God you ought not to continue in sin, but rather "keep yourself" from sin. It is your responsibility to flee youthful lusts, eschew evil, follow after righteousness, and live a sanctified life for God. That, too, is pretty simple – but notice the promise in this next point.

Third, those who keep themselves from sin find that the "wicked one toucheth him not." That is what I want – for the wicked one to keep his grubby hands off me. And although the whole world lieth in wickedness, we can escape the grip of the devil.

There are three ways to avoid the grip of the devil:

First, confess and forsake sin – Proverbs 28:13. That is the stuff you **KNOW** is wrong and against the word of God.

Second, avoid evil communications – 1 Corinthians 15:33. That means, do not expose yourself or associate with stuff that can tempt you. It may not be sin now, but it tempts you to sin. Lot vexed his righteous soul in Sodom (2 Peter 2:8) by associating with the wrong kind of people. A person learns the behavior of those with whom he associates.

Third, and a point most people miss, beware of habits or practices that bring you under their power. It is that weight that so easily besets us (Hebrews 12:1). My son loved to eat chips. That is not a sin, but *needing* to go to the store to get some shows he is addicted. Now, he's not fat or unhealthy, but the longer he reinforces that habit, the more he will be fat and unhealthy; and eventually the devil will have a "strong hold" (2 Corinthians 12:4). So, I asked him, "Are you getting addicted to those chips?" He quickly said, "No, I can give them up any time." So I said, "Great! Give them up now!" He did, but I still wonder how strong the cravings are.

You see, reading a novel, watching a movie, playing a game, going to a store, exercising, tap dancing, surfing the net, talking to friends, phone texting, sports, video games, etc.; are usually not sinful. They can be, but I think believers are pretty careful not to do something "too bad."

However, the devil knows if you get "addicted" to an activity where you cannot stop, he knows he can lead you astray by it, and eventually into very sinful practices. The devil will use anything "he can get his hands on." No one who first got a computer went first to a pornography site. The first time someone texted it wasn't to solicit bad behavior. The first time someone read a novel it was not an evil one. The evil comes in increments.

The question to ask yourself is, am I under the power? Do I think of this thing too much? Do I love this thing too much? Can I live without it? Things done in excess will lead to those things having power over you.

In I Corinthians 6:12, Paul said, "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."

I challenge everyone reading this to ask God what you ought to stop doing – not because it is wrong, but because you love it too much. Of course, this statement assumes you are striving for a sanctified life, and living pretty well before the Lord. And remember, when you stop one thing, you need to replace it with a better thing – nature abhors a vacuum.

I list some questions that will cause you to think and evaluate your actions. Most of the things on this list came from Pastor Mike Cox:

- 1 Does the act violate God's word?
- 2 Does the act take the edge off spirituality or hinder the Holy Spirit?
- 3 Can you ask God's blessing on the act?
- 4 Is the act a stumbling block to others?
- 5 Would you care if the act were known to the church?
- 6 Is the act expedient, and does it help you press toward the mark?
- 7 Is it something you can stop now for good, or would you find yourself returning in weak moments?
- 8 Considering the old saying, "What you do in moderation, your children do in excess"; how would you feel about your children doing it even more so than you do?
- 9 Do people know you by this action or desire? Is that what you talk about so much that people identify you by it? Has it formed part of your character in respect to speech, clothing, décor, etc? Does it attract people of like action?
- 10 If you are found so doing when Jesus comes, would you be ashamed?

These questions have helped me to clean out some things in my life. I hope they will help you.

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Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.
Philippians 4:5