

## **MAINTAINING YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH**

*It happened before you knew it. You had been walking closely with the Lord and steadily growing in your Christian life. But almost imperceptibly the maturing process began to slow down. Then, somewhere along the line, it stopped altogether. You even began to slip backward. Some of the old attitudes returned. You began saying things you hadn't said for a long time. You were trying frantically to solve all your problems on your own. Your thoughts were becoming irreverent and obsessed with the self.*

Then came the sudden, startling realization that you had suffered a mild spiritual crack-up. You recognized the signs immediately and took the steps prescribed in the Bible to restore fellowship with God: confession, repentance, accepting forgiveness, and renewal.

But the nagging fear remains: What if it happens again? How can I maintain spiritual health? This article offers several suggestions for staying in shape spiritually.

### **WALK IN THE SUNSHINE**

A careful study of Romans 6 will give the believer a view of himself that should produce a victorious attitude toward sin. The contrast in this chapter is between two ways of living: The unsaved person, still under law, is “dead” to God and “alive” to sin. He is, in effect, a “walking dead man,” for he is under the control of the enemy and susceptible to sin.

The believer, on the other hand, is spiritually alive. He is regenerated; he is given new life. He is resurrected with Christ. He is now “dead” to sin and “alive” to God. Spiritual life surges within him. He has come out of the murky graveyard and into the bright sunshine of God’s Easter love. He is alive! Even though he still transgresses, he walks in the sunlight.

In the process of maintaining spiritual health, it’s important to see yourself as spiritually alive. Count yourself dead to sin and see it as powerless over you. Don’t let the shadow fall. Stay in the sunlight by walking the path of obedience (Romans 6:16,17).

### **VIEW YOUR BODY AS A SACRIFICE**

The self is a most powerful foe. The cravings of the flesh lure the dedicated believer back toward the darkness. It may be through physical appetite, pride, lust, or a whining self-pity. Or it may be a craving for material things or an honest desire for having the best.

This was a problem with the believers in Rome. Instead of ruling over the flesh, they were ruled by it. That’s why Paul wrote:

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1).*

Some Christians feel the sacrifice of self-denial has to be perfect before God will accept it. Knowing they fall short, they become discouraged. But God accepts you because you have been made perfect in Christ.

True, you will fail. But fellowship is restored by confessing your sin and receiving God’s forgiveness (1 John 1:9). The time to confess and forsake that sin is the very moment you are aware of it. Don’t wait until the next communion service.

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#### **FOUR MARKS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

A willingness to name and confess to God every known sin.

A refusal to let the shortcomings of others affect your relationships.

An ability to cope with the gap between your ideal view of the Christian walk and where you actually are.

A determination not to alter the truth to fit the circumstances.

#### **REFUSE TO CONFORM TO THE WORLD**

The way of the world is diametrically opposed to the Christian view of life. Therefore, we are not to conform to it. We're not to love the world. This doesn't mean that we should always wear black, or that we should use horses and buggies instead of automobiles. But we must continually push away the attitudes and thoughts of a lifestyle that has no regard for God. Paul wrote:

*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 (Romans 12:2).*

A renewed mind thinks of things from the viewpoint of God. It looks into the darkness from the vantage point of the bright sunlight and sees it for what it really is.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGE THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE**

The Christian who maintains his spiritual health will remember that he is always locked in an intense battle with a powerful foe. To give Satan the slightest advantage is to invite disaster.

*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness... (Ephesians 6:12).*

Keep impure thoughts out of your mind. When

you are aware that they have appeared, deal with them at once. Put down feelings of pride, hostility, or whatever can be used by Satan to drag you down spiritually.

God has given the Christian a number of spiritual resources: *truth* that wards off Satan, the father of lies; *righteousness* that gives the enemy no room for advantage; *peace* that keeps doubt from the mind and heart; *faith* that shields us from the enemy's attacks; *salvation* that keeps us safe in conflict; *the Word of God* as a sword in our hands to combat our foe.

In summary, maintaining spiritual health is possible if you will walk in the sunshine of resurrection power, offer yourself as a living sacrifice, and think like a citizen of heaven.

*by David C. Egner*