

RISE Part 2 – Week 1

How to Conquer Destructive Habits

(Male Edition)



By Pastor Jane Evans – March 2022

Sin. It's not a word we feel comfortable using, particularly when we're talking about ourselves! If we've had negative experiences with church in the past, we may see it as a judgmental word. It may conjure guilt, or perhaps we may feel it doesn't apply to us.

But before we deep dive into today's lesson, I want us to look at how God's Word defines the word "sin."

Firstly, the Bible clearly teaches us that we have all sinned and fallen short of God's holy standard. (See Romans 3:23) And James goes further than this to define sin for us:

"Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do, yet fails to do it, is guilty of sin."
(James 4:17, GNT)

When we view sin this way, it's easier to understand sinful habits in our lives that need breaking.

FIVE REASONS WE FAIL TO OVERCOME SINFUL HABITS

1. We try to conquer habits in the energy of the soul.

God wants us to conquer sinful habits through the power of His Spirit. Satan wants us to fight habits with the energy of our souls. Our souls consist of our mental power, our will power and our emotional power. These are no match for the bondage of sinful habits. Only through the power of God's Spirit can we conquer sinful habits.

"For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live." (Romans 8:13, NIV)

2. We are double-minded.

A double-minded person has a desire to overcome sinful habits and a conflicting desire to enjoy them. God warns that such a person cannot hope for any consistent victory over sin. A double-minded person has not yet learned to hate evil; he will be unstable in all his ways. (See James 1:8.)

3. We fail to understand what it means to be in Christ.

The only way to consistently overcome sinful habits is to enter into the victory which Christ has already won over them. (The precise steps for gaining this victory are explained in the following.)

4. We make provision for sinful pleasures.

We give outward evidence of hating evil when we remove from our lives all provisions for evil. (Remember the word "provision" means "make space for.") This means cleansing the galleries of our minds of evil thoughts and cleansing our homes of anything that feeds our sinful habits.

5. We attempt to hide secret sins.

One of Satan's biggest lies is that secret sins will remain hidden. God clearly states:

"... you may be sure that your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23, NIV)

The humbling which comes when sin is properly confessed is actually a part of God's provision to receive grace and conquer sinful habits.

"...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6, NLT)
(See also I Peter 4.)

SIX STEPS TO CONQUER SINFUL HABITS

1. Engraft Romans 6 and 8 into your soul

What does it mean to “engraft”? To engraft scripture into our souls means to make it a living extension of our lives so it can product spiritual fruit. The more scripture we engraft, the more types of spiritual fruit we will have in our lives. For example...

If we engraft 1 Corinthians 13, we will have the fruit of **genuine love**.

If we engraft 1 Peter, we will have the fruit of **patience** during suffering.

If we engraft Romans 6 and 8, we will have **victory over sin**.

How does engrafting the Word begin? The first step to engraft Scripture is to memorize it.

2. Picture yourself dead to sin.

God's Word states that we are dead to sin. Regardless of our own feelings to the contrary, God wants us to "reckon" ourselves dead to sin. To "reckon" ourselves is “to count it to be so.”

In reality, what would this mean? If a dead man were propped up against a wall, and the thing that has him locked into a destructive habit were to walk in front of him—trying to entice her to engage with it—he wouldn't even blink an eye. This is precisely the response that God wants us to have to the power and appeal of sin.

When did we die to sin? We died to sin when we became Christians. At that moment, we became part of Christ. Since we are a part of Christ, we share in all of His past achievements.

When He was crucified, we were crucified with Him: *“I have been crucified with Christ...”* (Galatians 2:20, NIV)

When He was buried, we were buried: “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death...” (Romans 6:4, NKJV)

When Christ rose from the dead, we rose from the dead: *“Since you have been raised to new life with Christ...”* (Colossians 3:1, NLT)

3. Compare the law of sin to the law of gravity.

It's one thing to say we are dead to sin. It's quite a different matter to experience it. Yet this is precisely what God wants us to do on a continuing basis. We can do this by picturing the law of sin as the law of gravity and the law of the Spirit as the

principle of aerodynamics.



Picture an eagle soaring in the air...

If that eagle folded in its wings, it would begin falling to the ground because the law of gravity would take over. A law is a law because it *always operates the same way under the same conditions*.

All that the eagle must do to stop falling is to stretch out its wings. The air rushing over its wings sets up a new force: the principle of aerodynamics. This principle is greater than the law of gravity. It doesn't annihilate the law of gravity; it overcomes it.

If we stop meditating in the face of a temptation, we will begin to fall. Falling is a very real experience. It doesn't take many seconds to be defeated.

How do we overcome the law of sin? God designed the eagle to soar in the air, and God designed the Christian to speak His truth in his heart day and night. God tells us to:

- Pray without ceasing. (See I Thessalonians 5:17.)
- Meditate on His truth day and night (See Psalm 1.)
- Speak the truth in our hearts. (See Psalm 15:2.)

This weaving of the Word into our thoughts is equivalent to the Hebrew phrase *"waiting upon the Lord."* God promises that as long as we meditate on His truth, we will soar above the power of temptation.

"But they that wait upon the Lord ... shall mount up with wings as eagles ..."
(Isaiah 40:31, KJV)

Satan wants us to believe that when we start falling, there is nothing we can do but surrender to the temptation. However, all we need to do is stretch out those spiritual wings by quoting Romans 6: *"Well then, should we keep on sinning...?"*

In a few moments, the temptation will lose its power and appeal, and we will once again soar above temptation. In this way, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus lifts us above the law of sin and death. (See Romans 8:2.)

Why is it fruitless to pray for victory?

While we're falling into temptation, one of Satan's favorite tricks is to get us to pray for victory. This prayer isn't very effective because it's not based on Scriptural truth. God doesn't want us to pray for victory; He wants us to enter into the victory which He has already provided in Christ. We were part of Christ's victory when we died and rose again with Him.

Why must we meditate the moment we are tempted?

Just as the eagle has only a few seconds to stretch out its wings before falling to the ground, so we have only a few moments to visualize Romans 6 before we fall.

4. Personalize the truth of Romans 6.

Part of the process of engrafting Scripture is turning it into a first-person prayer. As soon as you have a thorough grasp of Romans 6, begin to quote it to the Lord in the following way:

"Well then, should (I) keep on sinning so that God can show (me) more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since (I) have died to sin, how can (I) continue to live in it? Or have (I) forgotten that when (I was) joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, (I) joined him in his death?..."

After personalizing this Scripture, there is one more important step to follow. It's identifying the particular temptation that Satan would bring us. Rather than using the word sin, name the temptation.

For example, if you are tempted to be bitter, quote:

"Well then, should (I) keep on (being bitter) so that God can show (me) more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since (I) have died to (bitterness), how can (I) continue to live in it?

5. Make no provision for temptation.

If we desire Christ's victory over a particular temptation, but we have provided the means to continue that temptation, we are only deceiving ourselves.

Remember to make provision for something means to set a place at the table for it, to prepare for its presence in your life.

God commands us:

"Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh." (Romans 13:14, NIV)

6. Become accountable for consistency.

Go to those who are concerned for your spiritual well-being, such as your spouse, church leaders, or mature Christian friends, and ask them if they would regularly check on your progress toward spiritual growth in this area. Tell them what your spiritual goals are, and give them precise questions which they can ask you.

HOW WE YIELD TO SIN

1. We experience a sinful desire.
2. We visualize the sensual pleasure that we would receive from this act.
3. We decide to fulfill our sensual desire.
4. We become the servant of sin -- *"Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey?..."* (Romans 6:16, NLT)
5. We yield the members of our bodies to carry out the sensual pleasure (e.g., our hands click on the website; we walk to the fridge; we rehearse our bitterness about the hurt we have felt; our minds imagine further evil).

HOW WE YIELD TO GOD

1. We experience a prompting from God (e.g., to reach out to someone, to invite someone to church.)
2. We visualize the action required to obey this prompting.
3. We make a decision to obey the prompting, confirming that we are God's servants.
4. We make provision to act upon our decision by prioritizing it in our day.
5. We yield the members of our body to carry out God's prompting (e.g., we use our mouth to invite someone to church. (See Romans 12:1–2.)
6. We share our joy with friends to strengthen their faith and ours.

CHECKLIST FOR VICTORY OVER SINFUL HABITS

- I have memorized Romans 6 and 8:1-15.
- I am meditating on this Scripture, day and night.
- I can personalize Romans 6 and 8.
- I have proposed to put myself to sleep each night while quoting Scripture.
- When I'm tempted, I picture myself falling to destruction.
- I instantly quote Romans 6 and picture the principles of aerodynamics taking over.
- I compare the law of sin with the law of gravity.
- I picture myself dead to the power of sin.
- When I'm tempted, I visualize how a dead man would respond to sin. While quoting Romans 6, I name the sin that I'm tempted to commit.
- I have removed every provision for sinful habits.
- I have cleansed my heart and mind of impure or negative, self-destructive thoughts.
- I am accountable to God-given authority.
- I have presented my body as a living sacrifice to God and my members as weapons of righteousness for His daily use.