

Christian Vices
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Have you ever noticed all the systems and programs in the world specifically designed to better an individual? Everybody has a problem and everybody has a special way to fix that problem. There are things for every addiction under the sun. We have Betty Ford centers, Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, and all kinds of self help groups. Even some churches are getting in on the self-help phenomenon and offering self-help groups and seminars to their congregations.

People must want to improve themselves because many of these programs are kept to full capacity and just look at all the self-help books out there. These books sell well, especially around New Years. It's a new slate and people tend to want to start fresh and improve upon themselves.

Most of these things that people get involved in are vices. A vice according to Webster is the following.

a : moral depravity or corruption : WICKEDNESS
b : a moral fault or failing
c : a habitual and usually trivial defect or shortcoming

Vices tend to mess people's lives up. An alcoholic can develop health problems, will spend all of his money on alcohol and not leave any for his family, or the individual ends up behind the wheel and take other's lives because of their vice. Gamblers gamble away their income causing financial chaos in their lives. Smokers cause not only bodily harm to themselves but their second hand smoke to others and when they develop lung cancer it affects their family members. It goes on and on. Vices do have their effect on the individual who has it and on their family and friends around them.

I think improving yourself is a great thing. Many people will go to all lengths and try gimmicks, systems, and programs to work at something they feel they need for their life or to get rid of their vice. Some people will even starve themselves to loose a little weight. What about us Christians? How hard and far are we willing to go to improve ourselves? Christians have vices too. It might not be things such as drinking, gambling, or tobacco but we have vices just the same. We have things in our lives that are just as deadly to our Christian walk, and they begin with wickedness. Usually the things we think are just trivial in our lives are rooted in sin.

What's so amazing is that we sometimes just shrug off these things when we see them in other Christians or when we see them within ourselves. We hear someone talking about another and we just shrug it off and say, "well, that's just how she is" or "I'm sure they didn't really mean that". We don't recognize it as gossip, which is what it is. There are people in the world fighting so hard against vices that have their friends and family members lives ruined, and sometimes we as Christians don't even care about how we live and we are the ones that are here to keep others from a burning hell. There ought to be some yellow lights flashing somewhere to wake us up and make us want to work on our vices. There are people dying all around us and going out into eternity. Our lives shouldn't be caught up in things that bring us down as a Christian. We ought not be a hindrance to others because of what we've been hooked on in our Christian life.

Here are some of the vices that seem to get us down.

Gossip. Since I already mentioned this above, I'll begin with this one. What a vice gossip can be. The world has made a whole business out of gossip. It's even made out to be glamorous. There are all kinds of tabloid magazines and tabloid television shows. We as Christians snub our noses at stuff like that and would never dream of picking up one of those magazines and putting it into our grocery cart, but when we say something about another sister in Christ we are guilty of the same thing. Gossip is gossip no matter what form it is in, whether it is done in a sleazy magazine or in the church vestibule.

*"The words of a talebearer are as wounds,
and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."
Proverbs 18:8*

Complaining. Complaining and grumbling is so easy to get caught up in. Don't you think we should have centers to cure that? I can hear my kids now, "No, my mom isn't here. She had to go check herself in again". Of course I don't think I'd be there alone. Complaining is another thing that seems to be so common for us as Christians. We seem to just expect it from people, but it doesn't please God. Have you read Numbers chapter 11 lately? In verse one it says,

*"And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD:
and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the
fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that
were in the uttermost parts of the camp."*

I really don't know if the Lord will zap us with fire today but I think that just like the vices of the world, complaining will destroy our lives. It also will have an impact on those around us.

Lukewarmness. We all may be familiar with the Bible verse in Revelation 3:16 *"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."* but do we really take the matter of being lukewarm to heart? Some of us are so guilty of just being comfortable in our Christian life. It has become a vice for us because it slows down our growth as a Christian. How can we be the best we can be and reach our full potential if we become comfortable with the status quo? We end up becoming just pew warmers. God wants an active people. Look at all the references for 'doing' in the bible. Our witness should be active, *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."* Mark 16:15. Even our prayer life should be an active thing, *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."* Matthew 7:7

We have to work at living for Christ in order not to be lukewarm.

*"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.
For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man
beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way,
and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."
James 1:22-24*

Anger. Anger is one of those vices that we literally wear. When a gambler comes into the room we may not know it, but in comes an angry man and he's pretty easy to pick out from the crowd. It's hard to hide this vice but lately it seems like I've heard so many excusing other people's anger. Even in our churches we are labeling people that get angry as people with 'sensitive spirits'. Like we should ignore the fact that they are angry people. My bible says to *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:"* Ephesians 4:31. It doesn't say anger is okay. Over in Colossians 3:21 it is mentioned again, right there with all those other bad things we are to put out of our lives. *"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."* When you are a Christian, anger can put some awful self-infliction on your testimony.

The above are just some of the vices we as Christians can fall prey to. It's almost like we get hooked on them and we can't stop. There aren't any 12 steps that I can recommend for these but I do know that the one step of confession will work wonders! Each of these is rooted in sin and sin breaks fellowship with God so we need to take care of confessing them to Him first. Then we need to just draw as close to Him as we can and let Him mold us into the individuals that we can be. We don't need self-help but God's help to live virtuous lives. Staying in His Word and maintaining a prayer life will help each of us to deal with our vices.

So, what's got you in its grip?