

THE THINGS WE DO, BUT SHOULDN'T

Our world is broken. The “natural” order isn’t natural at all; it’s not at all as it was intended. The world, our flesh and Satan would love for the twisted affairs of our everyday lives to entangle us in despair (2 Timothy 2:4). The false belief promoted to us is that the order of our world – this “natural” state of things – is all there is and that nothing will ever change. We are pushed toward despairing over the sinful state of the world or reveling in the pleasures offered by the world. Either way, the temptation is the same: to give up and give in. If we think the world will never be any different than it is now, we will become despondent and lament without hope, or we will throw ourselves into hedonism and pleasure to mask the pain of imperfection. But when we sin, we perpetuate what is wrong with the world, grieve the heart of our Father and, by our example, convey the message that there is nothing beyond this life (1 John 2:17).

The first sin promised to make humans like God but dimmed the clear view of his image in us (Genesis 3:5). Each subsequent sin attempts to mar that image further, to suppress it, to cover it like shovelfuls of mud spread over a royal robe. But each step of obedience, each season of suffering driving us into his care, each act of faith and each step of repentance wipes more of the thick dirt aside and reveals more glimmers of what is to be restored in us (1 John 3:23).

When God convicts us of our sin, instead of seeing the need to change, we might try to change circumstances, or other people, or our view of God in order to accommodate our patterns of disobedience. Our only hope for true transformation is found in Jesus alone (2 Corinthians 3:18).

In confession and repentance, we show the glimpses of the grand, future restoration as we live, not as permanent residents, but as those passing through in this world (1 Peter 2:11). We say, “There is more to come, and we wait and live for our hope” (Titus 2:13). In turning from sin and turning to God’s plan for our lives, we walk an upward path that leads us deeper into his presence and into the likeness of Christ. When we live our lives in this way, we offer God-breathed reality to a truth-starved world.

Prayer prompt: Take some time to honestly, thoughtfully and carefully reflect on the following questions from the book *Returning to Holiness* by Gregory Frizzell as well as the corresponding verses for each question. As you read, think and pray, if God convicts you, confess the sin to him, repent, and then thank him for his faithfulness to forgive (1 John 1:9).

- **Have you placed other things ahead of God? Do you worship and serve God only if everything else is done first? Who or what is really number one in your life? (Exodus 20:2-3).**
- **If all church members followed your example of service, how strong would be the ministry of your church? (1 Peter 4:10).**
- **Have you allowed the world (instead of Scripture) to influence or change your standards for sexuality? (Ephesians 5:3-5).**
- **Do you work “as if to God” or do you tend toward laziness, dishonesty or irresponsibility in your job? (Colossians 3:23-24; Proverbs 13:11).**
- **Do you harbor a heart of greed? Do you covet other people’s lives or possessions? (Luke 12:15).**
- **Do you rationalize and make excuses for rejecting biblical standards? When the pressure is on, do you ignore Scripture and “go with the crowd?” (Romans 12:2).**

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Romans 6:23

If Christ has died for me, I cannot trifle with the evil that killed my best friend. - Charles Spurgeon

After a minister had spoken strongly against sin one morning, one of his members said, “We don't want you to talk so plainly about sin... Call it a mistake if you will, but do not speak so bluntly about sin.”

The minister went to the medicine shelf and brought back a bottle of strychnine marked “poison.” He said, “I see what you want me to do. You want me to change the label. Suppose I take off this ‘poison’ label and put on some mild label such as ‘peppermint candy.’ Can't you see the danger? The milder you make the label, the more deadly the poison.” - Billy Graham