

How to Break an Addiction

by Frank Viola

Addictions to the flesh are rather common today, even among believers.

Over the years, I've been asked by people if I knew anything about breaking them. Some of these folks were addicted to cigarettes, others to illegal drugs, others to pornography, and still others to eating toxic foods.

I firmly believe what Paul said in Romans 6. Jesus Christ broke the power of the flesh in order that "sin shall not have dominion" over the believer.

Salvation in itself is not a cure-all. But it provides you with the graces of Jesus Christ to break any and all fleshly addictions.

Regarding addictions, a believer can position themselves to receive the power of the cross and the resurrection life of Christ in breaking the back of a particular addiction.

My hope is that the following exercise will spread to any and every Christian who is struggling under the power of an addiction. And I trust that the Lord will use it in their lives to "purge themselves" from a stronghold.

Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honour, and some unto dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work. But flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy. 2:20–22 ERV)

The following exercise will not work if the addicted person still wants to keep their addiction. They have to be ready and willing to give it up and see the Lord break its power forever. So the most basic step is to deal with the Lord—violently if you have to—and come to the place where you are finished with the addiction. The place where you are through with it, and you sincerely want to be free from it with all of your heart.

Note that you cannot go on with the Lord if you continue with an addiction of the flesh. You will only be able to rise so high in Him. It's a roadblock hindering you from spiritual growth.

Having settled the matter in your heart, you are ready to go on to these steps. You may want to have one other person you trust to confidentially stand with you during these steps. Especially during the fasting part (just for them to be with you during that time).

Following the Steps

Each step is important. So if you go through with this exercise, you won't want to miss any step.

1. You will go on a three-day water-only fast. Throughout the entire Bible, fasting was a tool used by God's people to seek the Lord and gain answers to their prayers. When coupled with prayer, fasting weakens the impulses of the flesh and strengthens the human spirit. To learn about the value of fasting from a biblical standpoint, *God's Chosen Fast* by Arthur Wallis is the gold standard.
2. Make a "resolute decision" to fast for the entire three days. You will probably break the fast prematurely unless you make a resolute decision. A resolute decision is a decision that under no circumstances will be broken. Once made, you will utter your decision out loud so you can hear yourself speak it. "With God as my Help, I will not allow food to cross my lips until 6 am Monday morning," for instance.
3. Drink only distilled water. Distilled water is better on the stomach and on the hunger pains during your fast. While distilled water is not recommended for everyday consumption, it's good during a fast because of its increased ability to bind to toxins. When I go on a fast, I buy gallons of distilled water before I start. (Health Note: If you have diabetes, hypoglycemia, or something similar, you may need to drink orange juice from time to time when your blood sugar gets low AND you should stay in bed most of the time on the fast. If you run around doing errands, etc. you could endanger your health. This can be very serious.)

Consult a medical professional before you go on a long fast.

4. A fast done the proper way has the power to break addictions and besetting sins if it's coupled with pursuing the Lord. The reason—the flesh gets weak and the spirit grows stronger.
5. Each time your hunger pains get severe on the fast, turn to the Lord. And take Him as your food. Also, drink lots of water, but no more than a gallon a day. Note: the first day is the hardest. The second day is a bit easier. The third day is easier still.
6. You will fast three full consecutive days. Example: all day Friday, all day Saturday, all day Sunday. Break the fast Monday morning.
7. During the fast, read these Scriptures that pertain to Christ's victory over breaking the power of sin:

Romans 6

Romans 8

Romans 12:1–2, 9

Romans 13:14

1 Corinthians 6:19
1 Corinthians 11:31
2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1
Hebrews 8:10–12
Philippians 3:13
2 Corinthians 5:14–17
Hebrews 10:16–17
1 John 1:7–9
1 John 2:1–2
Psalm 103:1–12
Galatians 1:4
2 Timothy 2:19–22

Fellowship with the Lord over these texts. Declare and confess them out loud during the three days.

8. On Sunday night (or the evening of the third day), write down the besetting sin or sins on a sheet of paper. Then, go get baptized by someone or baptize yourself WITH the paper in hand. Full immersion. So the paper gets dunked with you—this is an incredibly powerful symbolic act, indicating that the sins on the paper are being put into the grave also.

For the baptism, you may use a pool or even a bathtub if need be. Go fully under the water. In baptism, you are making a full break and separation from the flesh, the world, and the devil. It's a powerful testimony. Even if you have been baptized in the past, you can be re-baptized at this point to break the addiction. (Jesus said to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2 to repent and do again “the first works.” Baptism is one of the things that falls under “the first works.”)

9. When you break the fast on Monday morning, take a piece of unleavened bread (a matzo loaf or cracker will do—most supermarkets have matzo crackers without leaven) and a cup of grape juice or red wine.

Important: Put a symbol representing the sin in front of the cup and the bread.

For instance, let's say you're addicted to cigarettes. Put the cup and the bread on a table in front of you. In front of the cup and the bread, put a picture of a cigarette or cigarette box. Put your hands on the cigarette photo and say, “I have no need of you anymore in my life.” And surrender it to Jesus Christ. Then push the photo away and take the bread and the cup. Give thanks and praise to the Lord. Now eat a light breakfast. The fast has ended (don't eat much on the day after the fast). Rest in the Lord the remainder of the day as you go about your business.

The power of your flesh has been broken. It will no longer have control over you. While you still may be tempted, you now have the power to say “no” to the temptation.

10. Finally, once the addiction is broken, you must maintain your victory over it.

It is important that you rid yourself of all vestiges of the addiction so that you are not strongly tempted in the future. If you allow yourself to be exposed to the addiction (such as having the items of temptation in your home or nearby), you could fall right back into it.

If you have friends who partake of the addiction, it would be unwise to be around them when they are partaking.

A Word About Pornographic Addiction

Recent research has shown that viewing pornography alters brain chemistry, much like the use of crack cocaine. This makes the addiction even harder to break.

For this reason, in addition to following the steps above to initially break the addiction, some people have had success *maintaining* their freedom by using filtering software that blocks undesirable websites.

You can have someone else create the administrator's password and keep it from you or you can create a long impossible-to-memorize password and then give it to someone you trust to hide. Or just destroy the password.

You may also find it helpful to confide in at least one other person concerning the addiction and what you did to break it, then ask them to walk with you in staying away from it. Having someone to talk with on a regular basis is a good thing. You don't have to white-knuckle it. You may even want to have that same person be with you during the three-day fast.

For additional help, there are online support sites like NoFap.com (scientific on how to "reboot" your brain from the addiction), and CovenantEyes.com (Christian) which contains valuable resources and support.

Additional Help

Different people have different convictions when it comes to using medications. Some believe God uses them; others do not.

If you have no problem with using medicine to help defeat your addiction . . .

For those addicted to cigarettes, many people have had success using prescription and non-prescription medications.

For those addicted to alcohol, some have had success with Alcoholics Anonymous for accountability. Others have used Antabuse to break the addiction.

For those who have food addictions, some have had success reducing binge cravings using Topamax (the generic name is topiramate). Also, the book *Overcoming Overeating* by Jane Hirschmann and Carol Muntter has helped many in this area.

In my experience, if someone really wants to purge something out of their life, and they are willing to get rid of it once and for all, these instructions will help them lay hold of the Lord's power to conquer it.

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