

Three Steps to Victory

Step 1: Identify the problem

- a. Ask the Lord about your problem. Ask Him to tell you whether you have done something wrong that is causing this problem. Or does He have another reason or lesson behind it?
- b. Read the Word. Look for similar situations or problems in the Word and see how the solution was brought about. Let the Word guide you; also let it encourage you and cleanse you.
- c. Recognize the spiritual warfare. Be aware of the Devil's devices. He often tries to play on our weaknesses, frailties or besetting sins. Remember always that the Lord's power is much greater than the Enemy's.—Resist the Devil and he will flee. Don't become fascinated with his evil handywork.
- d. Accepting the responsibility for your own actions is essential if you want to make progress! Don't blame others. Concentrate not on placing blame but on finding solutions.
- e. Seek godly counsel. Ask others to pray with you. Be sure when asking for counsel that you go to someone spiritually strong who will not be adversely affected by the problem you will describe.

Step 2: Find the solution

- a. Pray and ask the Lord for help. Ask Him to solve the problem. Sometimes we have not because we ask not!
- b. Confess your sins to the Lord and if necessary to others. Of course, you cannot do this until you recognize your problems. Remember, Jesus will forgive you. The keys to receiving forgiveness are repentance and confession. Also bear in mind that sometimes, particularly if your actions have hurt others, you need to confess and/or apologize to other people.
- c. Take a stand against your problem. Then, don't give up! Sometimes if you are trying to overcome a bad habit, it can take awhile to establish a new better habit in its place. You'll get tested along the way. But keep going! Victory belongs to those who persevere.
- d. Think positive thoughts. Fill you mind with good things, and there won't be room for the Devil's doubts and discouragement. Use the Word in your fight. Memorize and quote Scriptures. Sing uplifting songs.
- e. Praise the Lord. Keep cheerful! Victories are often found along the path of praise.

Step 3: Move On!

- a. Recognize your lessons and grow. The Christian life is a growing process. Recognize what you should learn from this problem. Even if the problem is not your fault, there still may be lessons to be learned.
- b. Keep your eyes on Jesus, not yourself. Trust Jesus to bring the victories that you need.
- c. Trust the Lord that He knows best. "All things work together for good to them that love God." You will enjoy greater peace in your life if you can trust that the Lord loves you and will not allow anything in your life that will not turn out to be for the good, even though you can't understand it right away.
- d. Forget yourself and help others. Getting busy helping somebody else may in itself solve your own problems. Also remember that the Lord allows us to go through things so we can comfort and help others.
- e. Patiently wait on the Lord. The Lord always answers, but His timetable often isn't the same as ours! David Berg wrote, "Anything wonderful can happen in that little margin of time when you do not give up, but keep on believing and keep on praying."

Moving On

If you fall, don't just lie there

An elderly woman slipped and fell in a busy street. Passers-by hastened to assist her, but she was already struggling to hoist herself up.

"Thanks, I'm all right," she assured them. "I always fall forwards, never backwards."

Nevertheless, she accepted help to a seat in a nearby store. "I seem to be very fond of kissing my native town," she mused wryly.

Obviously she knew how to take life's tumbles with a smile, and the incident made me think. We can't all fall forwards physically when our feet stumble; sometimes we inevitably fall backwards.

But when life gives us a hard knock mentally, we can try to take it courageously so that we "fall forwards"—that is, looking to the future instead of dwelling on the past. In the words of Aldous Huxley: "Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him."

Finish the race

We can find inspiration from the life of John Stephen Akhwari, as told in Bud Greenspan's book *100 Greatest Moments in Olympic History*.

When the winner crossed the finish line in the 1968 Mexico City Olympic marathon, officials thought the race was over. Then, an hour later, John Stephen Akhwari, a runner from Tanzania, entered the stadium. Bloodied and bandaged from a fall, he limped painfully with every step.

As Akhwari made his way around the track, the crowd began to cheer loudly. When he crossed the finish line, you would have thought by the roar of the crowd that Akhwari had been the victor.

Later, when asked why he had not dropped out, Akhwari replied, "I don't think you understand. My country did not send me to Mexico City to start the race. They sent me to finish the race."

When you're bruised and bloodied by life, press on; your Creator did not send you here to start the race, but to finish it!

Keep going, no matter what the cost. Keep fighting, no matter what bruises you get. Keep running, no matter how many times you stumble and fall. Your cuts and bruises and scrapes and scars are medals of honor in the Lord's sight, signs that you had the faith, courage, determination and commitment to keep going, even though it was tough! You may have fallen, but you refused to quit.

At the end of the race, you'll then be able to say like Paul did of old: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Reflections: Lean on Him

Trust in Him

While in India I was on my way to a convention. With several of the national brethren I arrived at the bank of a stream which seemed to be fairly deep. There was a plank over which I might cross to the other side, but I hesitated. "Why do you hesitate?" they asked. "You simply have to walk across the plank and in a few seconds you will be on the other side. This is the only stream that has to be crossed to get to the convention."

Still I hesitated and replied, "Yes, but I do not think the plank is strong enough to bear my weight."

"No need for any fears on that score," said they. "Hundreds have already crossed in safety before you came."

"Yes," I replied, "that may be so, but I'm taller and heavier than those I have seen going across, and what is sufficient for them might not bear my weight."

To prove the strength of the plank, two well-built, hefty fellows walked across together.

"Look," they said, "two of us are heavier than you, and the plank took us both together."

"All right," said I, "I'll venture." So, very slowly and hesitantly, I made my way across as they stood watching me with amused smiles.

When I reached the other side, they said, "Didn't we tell you that you would be quite safe? Why didn't you take our word for it and trust the plank in the first place?"

"Yes," I explained to them, "you see it was not the strength of my faith that took me safely across, for my faith, as you know, was very weak. But it was the strength of the plank, the object in which you advised me to put my trust."—John 4:42; Acts 16:31; 2 Timothy 1:12.

Have patience for the answer

"Have you, perchance, found a diamond pendant? I feel sure I lost it last night in your theater," asked a woman who did not identify herself to the manager of the theater. "Not yet, madam," said the manager, "but we will search diligently for it. Please hold the line for a minute while I make inquiry." Returning a few moments later to the telephone, the manager said, "I have good news for you! The diamond pendant has been found!" There was no reply, however. "Hello! Hello! Hello!" said the manager, but the woman who made the inquiry about the lost diamond pendant had failed to wait. The manager endeavored to trace the call, but without success.

Many of God's children are like that woman. They fail to wait on the Lord. His answer to our prayers will come in His good time. The promise is sure: "Call to Me, and I will answer you" (Jeremiah 33:3).

Trials are meant to cause us to cling closer!

The vine clings to the oak during the fiercest of storms. Although the violence of nature may uproot the oak, twining tendrils still cling to it. If the vine is on the side of the tree opposite the wind, the great oak is its protection; if it is on the exposed side, the tempest only presses it closer to the trunk.

In some of the storms of life, God intervenes and shelters us; while in others He allows us to be exposed, so that we will be pressed more closely to Him.

Keep yourself above the cares of this world

If you go to the banks of a little stream and watch the swallows that come and bathe in it, you will notice that, while they plunge their bodies, they keep their wings high out of the water and fly away with their wings unwet. Now, that is the lesson for us. Here we are, immersed in the cares and business of the world, but let us keep the wings of our faith and love out of the world so that, with these unclogged, we may be ready to take our flight to heaven.

The Christian is not ruined by living in the world, but by the world living in him.

(John 17:16–19; Galatians 6:14; 1John 2:15–17)

You can have Him

Dr. S. D. Gordon tells of an old Christian woman whose age began to tell on her memory. She had once known much of the Bible by heart. Eventually only one precious bit stayed with her.

"I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

By and by part of that slipped its hold, and she would quietly repeat, "That which I have committed unto Him." At last, as she hovered on the borderline between this and the spirit world, her loved ones noticed her lips moving. They bent down to see if she needed anything. She was repeating over and over again to herself the one word of the text, "Him, Him, Him." She had lost the whole Bible, but one word. But she had the whole Bible in that one word.

Stay in Contact with the Source!

A message from Jesus

Spiritual strength comes from Me—from abiding in Me, abiding in My Spirit. It is Mine to give, and I give it to those who feed heartily upon My Word, who cherish it, who draw their nourishment from it. For these are My true followers—those who desire true strength, those who have the faith to put other things aside and to feast upon My strengthening Spirit that comes from My Word.

It takes faith to put things aside and to come to Me. This step in itself causes strength of spirit, because it is trusting in Me. Trust in Me with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Me, and I will direct your paths.

It's so easy to get busy with a little here and a little there, for there's always so much to do. But remember to take that time with Me, to make that contact with Me, to keep that contact with Me, for in so doing, then My Spirit is able to flow. When it's needed, it will be available, it will be there for you, it will help you with the solutions.

Stay in contact with the Source! Let Me constantly replenish your reservoirs of spiritual strength. Take time to come to the fountain, to open your vessel and let it be filled. Cherish that which is most needful. Absorb it, and let it become a part of the very fiber of your being. Let it be such that you can do nothing without it. Be so dependant on it that you will be afraid to move without it, to make any decision without it, without knowing that you're on My channel, abiding in the flow of My channel and letting it lead you, guide you, strengthen you, refresh you, and keep you sane, happy and fulfilled.

True inspiration comes from the fountain of My light, and I give abundantly. I would that it flow freely upon everyone that comes to it, desires it, and knows that they need it. It will flow from you onto others. So be happy to be immersed in the flow of My Spirit. I have oceans to swim in that you know not of! The only way you can find them is to launch out, swim with all your might, and then coast and rest upon Me.

Let Me fill you! Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit (John 15).

You know the importance of staying close to Me, and I want to encourage you to strive to continue to do that. I'm there for you and I'll help you. Continue to look to Me, continue to lean on Me, continue to put your hand in My hand, to let Me guide you. Your faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. You have an abundance of Word. Use that weapon. Use that tool. Perfect your use of it. Develop your skills in using it, and it will profit you much!

Continue to trust in Me, and I will continue to use you and help you. Continue to cast your burdens upon Me, and I will carry them. I will sustain you. I will strengthen you. I will uphold you. I will be your help in time of trouble. I will be your Counselor, your Comforter. I will help you to mend the broken hearts, to bind up the wounds, to pour out the soothing, healing balm of My love and My Spirit.

Continue to let go and let Me have My perfect way. Continue to yield. Continue to give your all, and I will continue to strengthen you. I will keep you and I will help you. Continue to wait upon Me and trust in Me.

Setting Goals

Life is full of decisions, lessons, experiences, challenges and ups-and-downs, but that's what makes it so rewarding and fun! You love to learn and experience new things, and the Lord likes to see you set goals for yourself. But remember, there are many things to learn, and you can't learn them all at once. So don't get discouraged or set your goals so high that you can't reach them.

The best way to set goals is to break them down into small, attainable goals. Once you achieve one, then right away strive for more, and on and on. It takes many trials and errors and tests and battles to learn all the things you need to know. So don't get discouraged that it takes time. You have your whole life ahead of you—and eternity too!

Just because you have to struggle, it doesn't mean you're *not* progressing. In fact, that's how you learn and grow—by struggling and fighting on. Just keep fighting and keep your eyes on the goal, and you'll be going forward.

One thing that would help you reach your goals is to spend more time with the Lord. You can do that by reading His Word and by hearing His voice in prophecy, and then doing the things He asks you to do.