

## **Destructive Habits**

I had become trapped in a destructive habit, an addiction. For years I searched for a way out, but I simply couldn't handle the temptation. It was a private battle; I was too ashamed to discuss it with anyone. I would always repent, and God would always forgive and renew, but the failure could continue to recur.

On one particular day, I had failed, and God had given me an unusually clear glimpse of how free and wonderful forgiveness really is. But I had no idea what that forgiveness would involve for me.

Later that same day, God used circumstances to bring me face-to-face with those I had hurt with my habit. I was utterly humbled before them. Not only did I have to deal with my own shame but also with the deep hurt I had caused them. But I sensed I was under the Lord's chastisement, so I didn't try to escape or minimize it. I realized that God was helping me deal with the habit I had so long and so desperately wanted to break. Thus there was a sweetness about the chastisement, even through the pain.

Having faced the problem together, we worked through the hurt into complete healing.

Reflecting back on that period in my life, I see that as long as I tried to deal with the problem in hiding, I wasn't fully dealing with it. When I faced the consequences of my sin and made "restitution," the Lord could and did completely heal me.

I praise my Father for His chastisement. It was so merciful. He answered my prayer for deliverance and virtually forced healing on me, though certainly not in the way I expected.

The Lord led me to two safeguards against recurrence of the problem. First, I made myself accountable to the one I had hurt the most. I promised to immediately confess to that person any future failures.

Second, I promised God and myself that I would do my best not to expose myself to the temptation. The most effective way of handling temptation is to avoid it whenever possible.

What has happened in the intervening years? In the early days, a few times I carelessly exposed myself to the temptation. I stepped across the safeguard God had given me, and I failed.

But God forgave, and accountability has proven to be a real key. Temptation still comes, but the habit has never returned. The compulsion, the addiction is broken. And by His help, I will not take that road again. I know where it leads, and I am not going back.

I'm no expert on addiction. All I can offer is this personal testimony. The Scriptures still teach that repentance isn't complete until we fully face our sin, make restitution for it, and then turn away from it. That kind of painful repentance is merciful, healing, and utterly liberating.

Hymn: [Everything I Need](#)

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