

Become Familiar with Four Radical A's

Adapted from Mike Cleveland's *95 Theses for Pure Reformation* and Shon Bruellman article

It has typically been a problem in the church that one struggling with habitual sin could not find help from the church. The typical response has been to tell the captive to "read the Bible and pray more" which lacks substance for actually helping him out of sin. It is a superficial cure to the deep wound of the captive.

"And they have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, 'peace, peace,' But there is no peace. Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were nor even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall. At the time that I punish them, they shall be cast down," says the Lord (Jeremiah 6:14-15).

Each person in the church should be familiar with the basics of helping another out of bondage to any sin so that the church will be better equipped to face the future with many captives seeking help.

It is simple to memorize the four "Radical A's" to present to someone in bondage, and then to seek to help them to apply it. Here are the basics for helping men and women to freedom from habitual sin:

1. Radical Amputation

The manner of being free from habitual sin is to radically amputate every avenue through which it enters, and to be radical in cutting it off at the source:

"If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:29-30).

Jesus is not teaching here the dismembering of our bodies, rather He is teaching the need to be radical in cutting out those avenues through which sin enters. In other words, He is saying to make it so that it is practically impossible to get to your sin or to gratify your flesh in the same way you've been doing. We who truly want victory will not allow any provision for our flesh, to gratify the lusts thereof (Romans 13:14), for we recognize that if it is available we might turn to it in a weak moment.

God the Father dealt with sin in this radical manner. Jesus was "cut off" from the land of the living after God placed our sins on Him (Isaiah 53:8).

The story of Achan in Joshua 7 teaches that hidden defilement weakens the ability to fight. Only as the Israelites "radically amputated" Achan and his entire family did they have victory over their enemies. Purity precedes power. This does not mean that radical amputation is the entire answer to overcoming sin. It is an important step in the change process, but it is not the whole process itself. This step can't be overlooked, but it must be accompanied with ongoing seeking of the Lord and growth in grace if we really want to be free.

If you want to be free consider every avenue through which you have fallen, and set out to make it so that you have zero access to it in the future. The devil lies and says that real victory would be to have the way to gratify ourselves and then to refuse it. There does come a time when this victory can indeed happen, but initially the way to freedom is through a radical removal of the source of temptation. “Pluck out the eye, cut off the hand.” As we are radical in amputation we find freedom (Matthew 18:8-9).

2. Radical Appropriation

If we cut off access to our old sin patterns we will now have a void (Luke 11:24-26). We used to turn to that sin as a drunkard turns to alcohol: for excitement, stress relief, comfort, medicating of pain, etc. Now, because of radical amputation this option is not available and we must learn to replace this previous sinful energy in pursuing our idolatry with pursuing the Lord (1 Timothy 6:11). We have previously been “feeding on ashes” (Isaiah 44:20) and our souls are starved for nutrition.

Now, as we cut off all our ability to feed on that which destroys the soul it becomes important to begin learning how to truly feed on Jesus (John 6:50-58).

3. Radical Accountability

We who have indulged in feeding the flesh through habitual sin have made sure that our lives are private so that nobody will discover our sin, and we have been accountable to no one. Now, when we seek to be free we need to learn how to invite accountability into our lives, as daily encouragement is an antidote to the power of sin:

“But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13).

Accountability does not mean a support group, though accountability can happen there. It means reporting in to someone as to how I am living, how my walk with the Lord is, how my sin struggles are going. As our indulging in sin was daily, so now accountability needs to be regular as well (Hebrews 3:13).

4. Radical Adoration

Shon Bruellman adds this fourth A when he says, “Though we can often point to a lack of amputation or a failure to remain accountable to someone locally or lack of time in the Word as the problem the truth is... Radical Accountability, Amputation and Appropriation are in and of themselves of little lasting value without... ‘Radical Adoration’.

People can read the Bible, repent and be sorrowful for their sins and sever the areas of access to that which trips them up. We could find a local accountability partner but we cannot rely on our accountability partners because sooner or later those relationships drift away or we will be unable to get a hold of them in a moment of need... Without falling in love with Jesus Christ and seeking to serve Him daily with all their heart, mind, soul and strength it is only a matter of time before our resolve to stay away from the old idols begins to weaken and down we will go.”

We can become fine upstanding church members who read the Word and memorize great portions of it and still be cold as ice in our heart if we are not seeing Jesus within the pages and asking the Lord to

convert our heart and show us Truth. This is no different than a dying person in a desert taking a sip of cold refreshing water... swishing it around in his mouth and then spitting it back out. They are SO CLOSE to finding true satisfaction and nourishment but they reject it.

The Scriptures point to JESUS as the One who restores life to corpses who are dead in their sins and trespasses.

Eph 2:5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--

The Scriptures point to JESUS who brings us Life.

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet **you refuse to come to me that you may have life.**

John 5:21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also **the Son gives life** to whom he will.

John 14:6 I am...life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

No Jesus.. no life. Period. Like a chicken with its head cut off there is lots of activity going on but there is no life. This is the danger of seeking counsel anywhere than from the Word of God because even IF (and that is a very big `if) someone finds some help or relief from their struggles and they do not know Jesus and the Life He gives they will burn in hell one day. As Piper says `Morality without the Gospel is still spiritual suicide'.

The Scriptures point to JESUS who is the Living Water. The Bible is Truth and tells us of Jesus Christ who is the Living Water that we are to drink of deeply.

John 4:14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The Scriptures point to JESUS who is our life sustaining Bread and Food.

John 6:27 Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

John 6:45 It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me-- not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life.

John 6:53-57 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

'My flesh is true food... my Blood is true drink.....whoever feeds on Me and drinks of Me abides in Me...Whoever feeds on Me will live... whoever feeds on Me will live forever'. This is not referring to communion or the Catholic teaching of Transubstantiation because if that was the case then it would be communion that saves us and we know that is not the case. This is talking about placing our complete trust and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ to save us from our sins and our sinful desires; opening our mouth, mind and heart to drink and eat deeply of Him. We will become ONE with Jesus Christ and we will abide with Jesus Christ and serve Him out of love and not compulsion as we realize that He came to us to save us, feed us, teach us, and give us life. It is at the Cross and looking to Jesus for help that freedom from habitual sin is found, brothers and sisters and without Christ as the goal and the passion of our soul all the efforts in the world to modify behavior will be fruitless for we'll be building our house on the sand.

Matt 7:26-27 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Do you know Jesus? I mean do you REALLY know who Jesus is? If your response is one of dullness or even irritation for being asked '*such a stupid question..*' then I urge you to pause and consider your heart because the Name of Jesus ought to invoke an attitude of thankfulness, humility, awe and reverence.

I recently found an old cassette recording of a men's choir in Illinois that I sang in about 8 years ago and one of the songs on it is called '*Do You Know Jesus?*' It is a beautiful hymn rich with truth but when I sang it at the time my heart was dead and cold for I was lost in my sins. They were simply words I was singing and there was no personal experience of the riches of Christ. Eight years later those words brought me to tears as I listened to them in my car and shouted aloud: '*Yes...yes I DO know Jesus!*' I again ask... do you?

If you would like to listen to the melody of this song as you read through the words here is the link to it:

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/j/s/jsonogod.htm>

Do you know Jesus, Our Lord, our Savior,
Jesus the Son of God? Have you ever seen Him,
Or shared of His favor? Jesus the Son of God.

O sweet Wonder! O sweet Wonder!
Jesus the Son of God; How I adore Thee!
O how I love Thee! Jesus the Son of God.

God gave Him, a ransom, Our souls to recover;
Jesus the Son of God. His blood made us worthy
His Spirit to hover; Jesus the Son of God.

Refrain

O who would reject Him, Despise or forsake Him,
Jesus the Son of God? O who ever sought Him,
And He would not take Him? Jesus the Son of God.

Refrain

If you will accept Him And trust and believe Him,
Jesus the Son of God, Your soul will exalt Him,
And never will leave Him; Jesus the Son of God.

Refrain

Then some day from heaven, On clouds of bright glory,
Jesus the Son of God Will come for His jewels,
Most precious and holy, Jesus the Son of God.

O sweet Wonder! O sweet Wonder!
Jesus the Son of God; How I adore Thee!
O how I love Thee! Jesus the Son of God.

For those who continue to struggle with habitual sin they need to enroll in the course called: 'The Cross; Finding Life In Jesus's Death' which can be found under "Our Courses" at www.settingcaptivesfree.com. This is where they will learn of the greatness of Jesus Christ and the power that came down to earth through the sacrifice of the Perfect Lamb of the Cross. They will learn to look to the Cross to be delivered from the snakebite of sin. They will hear of how God's wrath and His arrows of hatred rained down upon Calvary and begin to realize that their sin was the reason for this occurring. They will also be reminded of the love of Jesus for them and how He was the Good Samaritan who came to bathe and clean our wounds after Satan the robber came to plunder us. And the list goes on and on and on...

Shon Bruellman Executive Director, Setting Captives Free Ministry