



## Rapha's Step Studies for Overcoming Sexual Addiction

### STEP 6

**We commit ourselves to obedience to God,  
desiring that He remove patterns of sin from our lives.**

*Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.  
James 4:10*

When we came into treatment or recovery, it may have been for one of two reasons: we either were confronted with our behavior and couldn't escape the obvious facts pointing to our addiction, or we were experiencing relational problems and/or emotional pain as a result of our addiction. We wanted relief. What we really wanted was to be rid of the negative side effects that accompanied our addiction. We wanted the people around us to change. We wanted to feel better. We wanted to be relieved of our emotional pain. We thought that these problems were the source of our troubles. When confronted with our behavior, our addiction, and the issue of purity, we were less than enchanted.

It is much the same when we come to the cross of Christ to commit ourselves in obedience to Him. We may be happy to know Jesus as our Savior because of the many blessings that accompany salvation: receiving His love, forgiveness, complete acceptance, and gift of eternal life. But when we begin to consider submitting ourselves to Him as our Lord, many of us hesitate. Why?

Even as Christians, we still may be uncertain that God is capable of transforming our lives. We lack faith in His resurrection power. In addition, we may feel that we are unworthy of the love He gives, which can so drastically change our lives. We may also have misperceptions about the true character of God. These can lead to wrong motives in both serving Him and seeking Him as our source for healing. Finally, we may be trying to achieve spiritual growth through our own determination and willpower, rather than relying on the Holy Spirit, our source of change.



## MOTIVATIONS FOR OBEDIENCE

God's love and acceptance of us is based on His grace, His unmerited favor, not on our ability to impress Him through our good deeds. But if we are accepted on the basis of His grace and not our deeds, why should we obey God? According to scriptural principles, there are at least six proper motivations for obedience:

### Christ's Love

When we experience love, we usually respond by seeking to express our love in return. Our obedience to God is an expression of our love for Him (John 14:15, 21), which comes from an understanding of what Christ has accomplished for us on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:14–15). We love because He first loved us and clearly demonstrated His love for us at the cross (1 John 4:16–19).

This great motivating factor is missing in many of our lives because we don't really believe that God loves us unconditionally. We expect His love to be conditional, based on our ability to earn it.

Our experience of God's love is based on our perception. If we believe that He is demanding or aloof, we will not experience His love and tenderness. Instead, we will either be afraid of Him or angry with Him. Faulty perceptions of God often prompt us to rebel against Him.

Our image of God is the foundation for all of our motivations. As we grow in our understanding of His unconditional love and acceptance, we will increasingly want our lives to bring honor to the One who loves us so much.

■ Does the love of Christ compel you to obey Him? Why, or why not?

### Sin Is Destructive

Sin is destructive in many ways. Emotionally, we can experience guilt and shame as well as the fears of failure and punishment. Mentally, we may experience painful flashbacks and expend enormous amounts of time and energy fantasizing and rationalizing our guilt. Physically, we may suffer psychosomatic disorders or a number of illnesses, some of which may result from sexual diseases. Relationally, we can alienate ourselves from others. Spiritually, we grieve the Holy Spirit, lose our testimony, and break our fellowship with God. The painful and destructive effects of sin are so profound that why we don't have an aversion to it is a mystery!



- In what ways have you seen specific effects of sexual sin in your life?
  
- How can viewing sin as destructive be a motivation for being obedient to God?

### The Father's Discipline

Another purpose of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin. Conviction is a form of God's discipline, which serves as proof that we have become sons of God (Hebrews 12:5-11). It warns us that we are making choices without regard to either God's truth or sin's consequences. If we choose to be unresponsive to the Holy Spirit, our heavenly Father will discipline us in love. Many people do not understand the difference between discipline and punishment. The following chart shows their profound contrasts:

	<b>PUNISHMENT</b>	<b>DISCIPLINE</b>
<b>SOURCE:</b>	God's Wrath	God's Love
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	To Avenge a Wrong	To Correct a Wrong
<b>RELATIONAL RESULT:</b>	Alienation	Reconciliation
<b>PERSONAL RESULT:</b>	Guilt	A Righteous Lifestyle
<b>DIRECTED TOWARD:</b>	Non-Believers	His Children

Jesus bore all the punishment we deserved on the cross; therefore, we no longer need to fear punishment from God for our sins. We should seek to do what is right so that our Father will not have to correct us through discipline, but when we are disciplined, we can remember that God is correcting us in love. His discipline leads us to righteous performance, which is a reflection of the righteousness of Christ.

- Do you sometimes confuse God's correction with punishment? If so, why?
  
- How can understanding God's discipline be a motivation for you to obey Him?



### God's Commands for Us Are Good

God's commands are given for two good purposes: to protect us from the destructiveness of sin, and to direct us in a life of joy and fruitfulness. We have a wrong perspective if we only view God's commands as restrictions in our lives. Instead, we must realize that His commands are guidelines, given so that we might enjoy life to the fullest.

In addition, God's commands are holy, right, and good. Therefore, since they have value in themselves, we should choose to obey God and follow His commands.

Avoid trying to keep God's commands by legalism and self-effort. That leads only to bitterness, condemnation, and rigidity. The Holy Spirit will give you power, joy, and creativity as you trust Him to fulfill the commands of God's Word through you.

- Read Romans 7:12 and 1 John 5:3. How are God's commands described?
  
- Read Deuteronomy 5:29; 6:24. What are some results of obeying God's commands?
  
- How can viewing God's commands as good motivate you to obey them?

### Our Obedience Will Be Rewarded

With a better understanding of what it means to confess our wrongs to God, we are ready to analyze the best way to complete a successful fifth step. We begin by determining who will be the best person for us to talk with. Choosing a good listener; choosing the right listener is imperative for a good fifth step. In fact, this choice should be made only after prayerful consideration.

- Read 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 and 2 Timothy 2:3–7; 4:7–8. How does receiving a reward become a motivation for obedience?



### **Christ Is Worthy**

Our most noble motivation for serving Christ is simply that He is worthy of our love and obedience. The Apostle John recorded his vision of the Lord and his response to His glory. Read Revelations 4:1–4, 9–11.

Each time we choose to obey, we express the righteousness we have in Christ. Our performance, then, becomes a reflection of who we are in Him, and we draw on His power and wisdom so that we can honor Him.

- Read 1 Corinthians 3:1&–17 and 1 Peter 2:9. How are you described?
  
- What purposes for our lives do these passages suggest?

### **IMPROPER MOTIVATIONS FOR OBEDIENCE**

Jesus repeatedly emphasized that His concern is not only what we do, but why we do it. The Pharisees obeyed many rules and regulations, but their hearts were far from the Lord. Motives are important! The following represent some poor motivations for obeying God and their possible results:

#### **Someone May Find Out**

There are problems with determining behavior solely on the opinions of others. First, there are times when no one is watching. If the motive to refrain from sin is missing, we may indulge in it. A second problem is that our desire to disobey may eventually exceed the peer pressure to obey. Finally, once someone has found out we've sinned, we may no longer have a reason to obey.

- Is the "fear of someone finding out" a motivation for you to obey God? If it is, identify the specific sin you are trying to avoid; then, go back over the six reasons to obey Him. Which of these proper motives seems to encourage you most in regard to your specific sin?



### **God Will Be Angry with Me**

Some people obey God because they think He will get angry with them if they don't. We've already discussed the difference in God's discipline and punishment, but to reiterate, God disciplines us in love, not anger. His response to our sin is grief, not condemnation (Ephesians 4:30).

God doesn't want us to live in fear of His anger, but in response to His love. This produces joyful obedience instead of fear.

- If you knew that God's response to your sin was grief instead of anger, would that affect your motivation to obey Him? Why, or why not?

### **I Couldn't Approve of Myself if I Didn't Obey**

Some people obey God in an attempt to live up to certain standards they've set for themselves. Sadly, the idea of yielding their lives to a loving Lord is often far from their minds. They are only trying to live up to their own standards, and if they don't meet those standards, they feel ashamed. These people are primarily concerned with do's and don'ts. Instead of an intimate relationship with God, they see the Christian life as a ritual, with the key emphasis on rules. If these people succeed in keeping the rules, they often become prideful. They may also tend to compare themselves with others, hoping to be accepted on the basis of being a little bit better than someone else.

God gave us His commands out of love for us. We are protected and freed to enjoy life more fully as we obey Him.

- What things are you not doing because you couldn't stand yourself if you did them? What are you doing to obey God with the motivation to meet your own standards?



### **I'll Obey to Be Blessed**

God doesn't swap marbles. If our sole motive to obey is to be blessed, we are simply attempting to manipulate God. The underlying assumption is: *I've been good enough...bless me*. It's true that we will reap what we sow. It's true that obedience keeps us within God's plan for us. But our decision to obey should never be based solely on God's rewarding us.

We may try to bargain with God, saying, *I'll obey You if You will "fix" me*. We reason that if we are "fixed," we will be better equipped to serve God (and we'll be freed from having to deal with a particular problem or temptation). However, God sometimes has something important to teach us through a particular weakness.

■ Do you try to make deals with God? Why, or why not?

As you become more aware of correct motives for obedience, and as you begin to identify improper motivations in your life, you may think, *I've never done anything purely for the Lord in my whole life!* You may feel a sense of pain and remorse for your inappropriate motives. But try not to demean yourself for your past attitudes...they are common to all of us. Instead, realize that the Lord wants you to make godly choices today so that you can enjoy the benefits of those decisions in the future. Then, ask the Holy Spirit to help you develop a sense of intensity about these choices, as Paul wrote, "...we have as our ambition...to be pleasing to Him" (2 Corinthians 5:9).

Your motives won't become totally pure until you see the Lord face to face (1 John 3:2), but the more you grow in your understanding of Him and relationship with Him, the more you will desire to honor Him with your love, loyalty, and obedience.

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