



Dear Phil

LIVING ABOVE WILLFUL SIN

“I’m wondering if you could help me out with scriptures and an explanation on how we as Christian can live a life above willful sin. I’m unsure how to witness to people who feel they have to sin.”

You have raised a very important question. I’m glad you asked! Let me divide my answer into the following sections:

(1) *What do we mean by willful sin?* Willful sin is any consciously chosen attitude, word, or action that violates either the Word of God (Jam. 4:17; 1 John 3:4; 5:17) or our conscience (Rom. 14:23).

(2) *Do people have to sin?* The Bible answers this question plainly. All unsaved men are slaves to sin (Rom. 6:20-22; Eph. 2:1) and cannot stop sinning (Rom. 7:15-23). In stark contrast to the bondage of the sinner, all men who trust in Christ are free from sin’s control over them (Rom. 6:6-10). As Paul says, “being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom. 6:22). In addition to freedom from (p19) •

• (p5) from the north, Nnamdi said, and four other candidates are after his job.

Hoping to form a separate Islamic state under its own Sharia law, the heavily-Muslim north is forming a multi-ethnic alliance. Nnamdi fears this movement will further threaten the Christian south. Indeed, International Christian Concern regularly documents ongoing persecution of Christians .

But God did not take Nnamdi and Adaeze back to visit Nigeria to leave them hopeless. He has planted in the broken hearts the seed of an idea. The Oziris want to enlist the church and interested business leaders in establishing a top-notch Christian medical facility that will offer treatment free of charge. Their vision is big; they are not looking to open a small village medical clinic but a major hospital. In addition, they hope to see Christian radio return to Nigeria.

Since 1993 Adaeze has operated a thriving healthcare business with locations in Dayton, Cincinnati, Middletown, and Columbus. With 100 employees, the company, International Quality Healthcare, provides nurses for both home healthcare and for supplemental hospital staffing. Nnamdi earned both his master’s degree and his doctorate from the University of Cincinnati, and he also has strong experience in administration. He currently teaches psychology and economics at U.C. and God’s Bible School and works with his wife as well.

“Nigeria is a tough country,” Nnamdi said. “We want the church to come in there in a strong way, a big way. The gap between the rich and poor is wide, and the best hospitals are only in the north.” Besides building the hospital, the couple wants to train nurses and send them out to the villages – to “launch out,” said Adaeze.

As one young Nigerian said during a recent visit to Cincinnati, “the dream is to rebuild what the enemy has destroyed.

—Adapted from Moments for Missions, Springdale NMI and reprinted

TIME FOR “A RIPE HARVEST”

In addition to his plans for a “top-notch Christian medical facility” in Nigeria, GBS graduate Dr. Nnamdi Oziri—known to his GBS friends as “John”—wants our readers to know how African Christians are assisting their brothers and sisters here. He points out that the AMIA is an African mission to Anglicans in America distressed by liberal trends in the Episcopal Church. African Christians, headed by the Anglican Church in Negeria, have denounced and boycotted the American church’s recent installation of a gay bishop. “The holiness movement can use this opportunity to reach out to these churches in Africa and comfort them to be strong in the faith,” Dr. Oziri adds. “This can cause a great impact in Africa, and I recommend that we do immediately whatever we can do. The time for a ripe harvest is now.”



DR. NNAMDI OZIRI

• (p14) sin's control, 1 Cor. 10:13 promises that God never allows a Christian to be tempted beyond his capacity to resist the temptation through God's grace. Therefore, no Christian ever has to sin willfully.

(3) *What does it mean to live above willful sin?* First, it does not mean that a Christian cannot be tempted. There is no level of spiritual maturity that frees us from temptation, for Christ Himself was tempted (Mat. 4). Nor does not mean that a Christian cannot chose to sin willfully. No orthodox theologian, Wesleyan or otherwise, has ever claimed that we can reach a level where we are unable to sin willfully. Second, it does mean Christians do not have to sin willfully. Stated positively, it means that at every decision point in life a Christian can, because of God's grace, choose to do right. It means that Christians can live lives characterized by obedience to all the truth of God's Word that they know. We can walk in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7). We can live lives that are holy, just, and blameless (1 Thess. 2:10). The Bible directly affirms that Zacharias and Elizabeth lived this way (Luke 1:6). Paul testifies that this is the way he lived his life: (2 Cor. 1:12, nasb).

(4) *How does a Christian live above willful sin?* A Christian can live above willful sin only by total dependence upon God's grace. This kind of life is the product of (1) loving God totally, for love keeps His commands; (2) walking in the Spirit, for "If you are walking in the Spirit, you will never fulfill the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). (Logically, that means if you ever fulfill the lusts of the flesh, it must have been because you were not walking in the Spirit); (3) not making provision

for the lusts of the flesh (Rom. 13:14); (4) resisting the devil's temptations (James 4:7; Jude 1:9); (5) fleeing youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22a); and (6) pursuing "righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22b).

Life free from willful sin is the blood-bought privilege of every child of God. Praise the Lord! Let's be diligent to live up to our privileges in grace!

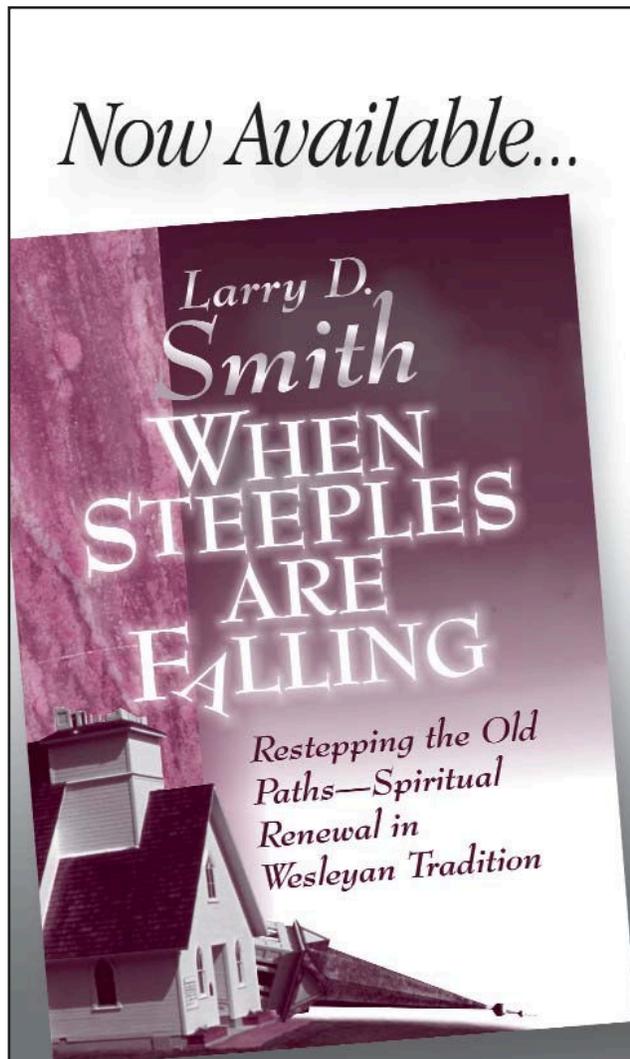
Your friend, ■
Philip Brown

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Necessary to building intimacy are words, actions, and non-verbal expressions that regularly affirm the worth and value of one another. Taking people for granted is rude and lazy. We all need affirmation—even if we are too proud to admit it! In the sharing of affirmation, intimate relationships will flourish; and as you will find, ■ is the best cure for loneliness.

"Mending Nets" explores God's readiness to "mend" the breakdowns which so often mar our lives. It is written by the Rev. Richard Miles, GBS Vice President for Student Affairs. He invites our readers to send questions to be addressed in this column. His email address is Mendingnets.@gbs.edu



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