

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 42

Recidivism – Recycling The Curse

By Sharon K. Griffiee

When the subject of *recidivism* comes up, statistics never paint a pretty picture. A few months ago I read some grim statistics which stated that half-a-million prisoners are being released each year, with two-thirds of them re-offending. As the prisons become more and more crowded, recidivism remains a hot topic in society. What exactly is society's definition of recidivism? If we look at the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, *recidivism* is defined as; *a tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behavior esp: relapse into criminal behavior.*

While recidivism remains a hot topic for society, it doesn't stop there. It is also a hot topic for Jesus. Though from His vantage point, *Recycling the Curse*, is the Kingdom perspective of what is actually happening in our society today. A trip back to the Garden of Eden will help in our understanding.

The Lie – The Curse Cycle Begins

Genesis 3:1-4 (KJV) - Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

In these verses of scripture we get an impression of just how crafty Satan is. Satan didn't come as some brute, physically over-powering animal and force Eve into doing whatever he wanted her to do. Satan didn't have the authority or power to do that. He had to come up with something less obvious. He came at her with words. And as Eve began to listen to his words, he began to influence the way she thought. That is the way Satan operates. That is the way he tempted Adam and Eve, and that is the way he tempts you and me.

Satan doesn't force us, nor does he overpower us. He can't *make* us do anything. Jesus set the example of how to handle Satan. (See: **Luke 4:1-13; Matthew 16:23**)

So, how does he get to us? He comes to us with subtle words and thoughts. Words are powerful! If Satan can mess with our thoughts and gain a stronghold, he can

destroy us! Notice that the very first thing Satan did when he came against Adam and Eve was to come against the Word of God. The reason? God's Word contains life! It will stop sin in its tracks! Knowing this, Satan set out to cut off the lifeline. How? He began to mock God's authority.

"Yea, hath God said?" This is subtle! Satan came against what God had said. He came against God's Word. Eve's mistake came in debating God's Word (what He had said), with an unfamiliar bystander – the serpent. The first thing Satan does when he finds a listening ear, is to entice that person to doubt God's Word. *"Yea, hath God said?"* When they begin to take the bait, he comes in for the kill – get them to deny God's Word!

What bait did Satan use on Eve to win her over? It was that of *discontentment!* Though she lived in a beautiful garden with all her needs met, Satan filled her mind with *discontentment* about her present situation. He got her to believe she could have so much more, if she would only eat the fruit. Of course, Eve did not perceive that the serpent was up to no good purpose. Speaking hard thoughts against God, Satan offered her the false hope of advantage to be gained by sin. The truth, there is no advantage to be gained by sin. None whatsoever! The Word of God is our number one line of defense against sin in any area of our life. God's Word teaches that Satan is a liar from the beginning. Jesus said that Satan is the father of lies. (See: **John 8:44**).

His lie? One can sin and get away with it! Watch out brothers and sisters, his lie is a deadly trap! Death, God says, is the penalty for sin. This truth is in God's command to Adam and Eve.

Genesis 2:16-17 (KJV) - And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God's Word, siding with "Satan's lie", a curse came upon the whole human race. Anyone since that day, who has believed "his lie" has been trapped in the curse cycle. As sin is repeated, again and again, the curse continues to be recycled! This is true, despite the fact that Jesus went to the cross over 2,000 years ago to redeem mankind from the curse.

Galatians 3:13-14 (KJV) - *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

Jesus paid the awful price for what Adam and Eve did. He broke the power of the curse, making it possible for us to have a new life in Christ.

Where We Miss Connecting With God!

II Corinthians 4:4 (NIV) - *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

People who have been blinded into a pattern of rebellion against God and His Word for so long, frankly don't know *how* to be submissive to God's authority and leadership in their life. This rebellion against God's authority trickles all the way down through society. When someone first brings them to Jesus, they are ecstatic! But then they try to live the new life, with the same old thought pattern. That old mind-set of rebellion keeps popping up. Though they accept the Word of God on the surface, they don't allow themselves to come totally under its authority. They don't allow God's Word to be the foundation of everything that goes on in their life. So what happens? They apply only those scriptural truths that are convenient. And society suffers.

The big problem? We can't tack Jesus on to our old life style – sometimes doing things our way, sometimes doing things God's way. Jesus said,

Matthew 9:16-17 (KJV) - *No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.*

It is impossible to have the new life in Christ, while hanging on to the old one. If we sincerely want different results in our life, we need to stop *recycling the curse*. We must instead, trust God's Word and let it completely change us. (See: **Psalm 19:7-14**)

Death Of The Old Self, Brings New Life!

The only way our old man is kept alive, is by holding onto it – not letting it go – continually feeding its desires. Praise God, Jesus showed us how to let go! When the hour had come for the Son of Man to be glorified, Jesus said,

John 12:24 (KJV) - *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

Jesus wasn't trying to hold on to His life in this world, thinking only of self. His death on the cross would bring Satan's ultimate defeat! Jesus said,

John 12:31 – (NIV) - *"...Now the prince of this world will be driven out!"*

Let's celebrate Jesus' victory! Let's drive Satan out of our life, and stop the curse cycle once and for all!

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Questions for personal or group study:

1. Society is concerned about *recidivism* (repeated criminal behavior). From Jesus' vantage point, what is the Kingdom perspective of what is happening in society today? Where did it begin?
2. The Bible tells us in **Genesis 3:1** that the serpent was subtler than all the beasts of the field. Since the serpent (Satan) can't *make* us do anything, what did he use to tempt Adam and Eve, and you and me?
3. The very first thing Satan did when he came against Adam and Eve was to come against the Word of God. *Yea, hath God said?* What does Satan have against the Word of God?
4. What specific *bait* did Satan use to win Eve over?
5. Jesus says in **John 8:44** that Satan is the Father of Lies. What is *his lie*? Why is it a deadly trap?
6. In God's command to Adam and Eve he described the penalty for sin. What is it? See: **Genesis 2:16-17**
7. Jesus broke the power of the curse, making it possible for us to have a new life in Christ. Why are so many people not enjoying freedom from the curse? See: **II Corinthians 4:4; Matthew 9:16-17**
8. What must we do to stop the curse cycle in our own life, once and for all? See: **John 12:31- NIV**