

LEARNING TO MONITOR OURSELVES

Because of the fall of man, our ancestral lines, the teaching from our past, the pressures from the world, the hidden and not so hidden working of Satan, and our own sin we all have a subtle and powerful network of error, excuses, defense mechanisms, lies, protective devices, wrong conceptions of life, deceptions, wrong attitudes, and rationalizations deeply embedded within us. This maze of sin and error produces powerful pressures and needs that often structure our thinking and life even though we may be largely unaware of what is happening.

Most of our sins and failures can be traced to this hidden network. When we have an area of life in which we find pressure, or in which we are often characterized by sin and failure -- the problem needs to be traced back to its root. It is not enough to simply confess the behavioral sin -- confession also applies to what **caused** the sin (I John 1:9). And that cause will almost always have to do with **the way we have accepted error in our thinking.**

One way of approaching this problem is to ask the Holy Spirit to open our spiritual eyes to what is hidden within us and in our past. We must also ask Him to help us to be honest. And then when we sin or fail -- ask ourselves the following questions:

1. What exactly am I doing? (It will help to write it out fully.)
2. Why am I doing this? (What emotion, desire, or pressure is behind it?)
3. What needs do I have that I am trying to satisfy?
4. To whom or what am I responding?
5. Where did the pressure to do this first begin?
6. What triggered this recent pressure and action?
7. What error(s) have I accepted that has (have) made me so vulnerable?
8. What kind of a pattern has this produced in my life?
9. What is causing me to continue practicing this pattern?
10. What is my emotional response when I think of praying about this pattern?
11. What commandments apply to my attitude and action?
12. What promises apply to my attitude and action?
13. Why have I not made a full confession of this pattern?
14. Am I willing to confess this pattern as a sin? When?
15. Am I willing to confess my sin to a trusted friend? When?

Be honest with God and with yourself. Be specific. Try to understand the error that was the root of the practice. Make a full confession. Renounce the error as well as the behavior as the sin that it really is. Ask God to teach you the truth -- and how to think on that which is truthful.

It may help to cure the problem of erroneous thinking by making a list of the negative thoughts that run through your mind. Do more than just think about it -- write out the list. As you look at how you think in negative ways ask yourself whether or not you are believing the error you have written out? Most of us, without realizing what we are doing, often interpret the Bible, ourselves, and life itself on the basis of our negative and erroneous thinking -- instead of on the basis of the truth. Do not permit yourself to continue this practice.

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