

The Power to Change

First Ingredient: Obey - What does God want you to do?

If you have a known pattern of sin in your life, then start with God's commands. Do you realize that God's commands are not just rules? They are stepping stones that lead you into the freedom of the will of God. God's commands tell us how He wants *you* to respond. For example: Do you struggle with anger? Do you tend to respond with anger...losing your temper, saying hurtful things? Then you'll find that in His Word, God says,

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander...Ephesians 4.31

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. **Galatians 5.22-23**

That is how God wants you to respond. This is obedience. But knowing what God expects isn't enough. What do you do next?

Second Ingredient: Depend - Ask God to do what you cannot.

Talk to God...pray. This is what dependence looks like. Prayer is an act of dependence. When we pray we ask God to give or to do what we cannot provide for ourselves. As you pray, admit to God that you can't obey His Word. Admit that you need His power. Ask Him to give you the power to respond in ways that are loving, kind, gentle, and patient. Ask Him to fill you with Christ's character.

Third Ingredient: Believe - Claim a truth or a promise.

What next? You need a truth to believe...and God's promises are statements of truth. They are true even when they don't seem like it. So find a truth to believe, or a promise to claim. For example, here's are two truths that are also promises:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. **2 Peter 1.3-4**

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. **Philippians 1.6**

How do you claim these? You could turn these promises in prayers. You could say...

Lord, you say in Your Word that Your "divine power has given me everything I need for life and godliness through my knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

You have said that it is through your great and precious promises that you will enable me to participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Lord, I admit that I struggle with anger, that I am no match for sin, but I am "confident of this, that You have begun a good work in me, and I believe that You will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Fourth Ingredient: Obey - Plan your response and do it.

Then make a plan. Decide ahead of time what your obedience will look like. If you always respond by blowing up and shouting, or by accusing or criticizing, then replace it with actions that reflect the character of Christ. James has some good suggestions:

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. **James 1.19-20**

Quick to listen: ask the other person to explain more, and listen without interrupting.

Slow to speak: say, "you've given me a lot to think about. Would you give me some time to think about what you have said?"

Slow to become angry: as you leave, ask God to give you perspective. Is there truth to what was said? Is there a reason the person behaved as they did? Is there a blind spot you are missing?

How does this differ from a self-help action plan? It brings God's power into the equation. We're not just asking for assistance, we're admitting that we can't do it. You'll find that at the moment of truth, when the crisis arrives, one of two things happen:

None of the righteous behaviors occur to us. Our instincts take over. If you bring God into the equation, you will find that He will supernaturally remind you of a better alternative.

Or, you do think of the right thing to do, but you don't do it. You will find that over time you will choose God's way over your way. It won't happen every time, but over time the frequency will increase, and as it does your character is being conformed to that of Christ.

This is just a start. If you need help identifying the commands and promises God wants to use in your situation, don't hesitate to ask someone who knows their Bible.