



What Do You Do When You Mess Up?

“But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.” (1 John 1:9, NLT)

Imagine that you have blown it again! Even though you determined in your heart not to lie again, today you lied to your Mom. Big time! Curiously, before you became a Christian, lying came as easily as the truth if it kept you from punishment. However, now you feel guilty because you know God hates a lying tongue and is grieved. You even had the thought that you are acting just like your former master who is a “liar and the father of lies.” What do you do? (John 8:44b, NLT)

The struggle within

The sin with which you struggle may not be lying, but as long as you live in your “earth suit,” there will always be a struggle between right and wrong. You will mess up! No matter what your age, there will always be that temptation to do your own thing. The good thing God wants you to do is just the opposite of your natural desire (self-nature).

The Apostle Paul talks about his struggle: “The things I want to do, I don’t do; and the things I don’t want to do, I do.” Do you sometimes feel that way? Frustrated and miserable, Paul cried out, “Who will free me from my sinful life?” With a cry of relief, he said, “Thank God, Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:15, 24-25) Paul knew Jesus sympathized with his weaknesses because he had faced all of the same temptations, yet never sinned.” (Hebrews 4:15) He knew Jesus did not condemn him. “*So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.*” (Romans 8:1, NLT) Jesus had set him free from the slavery of sin. (Romans 6:1-14) Paul knew that by the power of Jesus working in him he could do what is right. He had a choice!

The Conviction of Sin

God helps you make a choice. What does he do when you sin? This is beautiful! When he sees or hears you sin, he lovingly acts to help you see things as he sees them. He may reveal your sin to you through a Bible verse, a sermon, a youth pastor, another Christian, circumstances or a word in your mind. In the Old Testament, God himself spoke to Adam and Eve when they disobeyed. (Genesis 3:9-19) When King Saul disobeyed God’s command, God sent the prophet Samuel to help him see his sin. (1 Samuel 15) After King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah murdered, he sent the prophet Nathan to him to convict him of his sins. (2 Samuel 12:1-

14) When Peter sinned, by denying three times that he was a follower of Jesus, Jesus “turned and looked” at Peter with an intense, loving look. Peter, overwhelmed with conviction of his sin, went out and wept bitterly. Can you feel Peter’s sorrow?

The restoration

Follow carefully how Jesus restored fellowship with Peter (your relationship with Jesus is never broken). When Jesus resurrected, he sought out Peter. The angel at the tomb told the women to go tell the disciples, including Peter. (Mark 16:7a, NLT) Then Paul said that Jesus was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. (1 Corinthians 15:4b, NLT) In John 21:15-19, John recorded how Jesus talked to Peter to restore their fellowship. Peter had repented of denying Jesus. Jesus had forgiven him and commanded him to “Feed his sheep [his people].” (John 21:15-22) God would use him mightily to spread the Gospel.

Your actions to restoration

When you recognize you have sinned, your first action is to repent. Change your mind. Turn around. Go in the other direction! God wants you to feel the grief that he feels, to have a broken heart for offending him or perhaps someone else. *“For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation.”* (2 Corinthians 7:10a, NLT)

- Confess your sin. The first step to healing a problem begins with admitting you have one! Confession does not mean begging God to forgive you. He already has. Legally, he has declared all your sins forgiven – past, present and future. However, continued sin damages your personal fellowship with God. You feel uncomfortable in his presence. He hasn’t moved, but you have. Restoration begins with confession. The Greek word for “confess” literally means “to say the same thing along with someone” or “to agree with someone.” So when you confess your sin, you simply agree with God that you did something he says is wrong. It is a time to be honest with God, not a time to deny, to hide, to give excuses or to blame others (like Adam and Eve). Do you think God is ever surprised or shocked by what you say or do? *“You know what I am going to say before I even say it.”* (Psalm 139:4, LB) Using the example of lying, you would agree with God that you lied to your mother.
- Receive God’s forgiveness. By faith, you receive his forgiveness already given. Simply pray, “Father, I thank you and accept your forgiveness.” Otherwise, you may keep worrying and feeling guilty about what you did wrong. Satan would love for you to do that! When you continue to worry, you are not acting in faith but are further grieving God by refusing to receive his forgiveness!
- By the Holy Spirit’s power, quit the sin. The process is not complete just to agree with God that you have sinned and receive his forgiveness. He wants you to quit

sinning! He did not condemn the woman who committed adultery but told her to *“Go and sin no more.”* (John 8:11b, NLT) Trust God to empower you to obey.

- Make restitution when necessary. If another person is involved, you need to make it right by asking the person’s forgiveness. If it involves stealing, return or pay for the item. In the example of lying, you would tell your Mom you lied to her, ask her to forgive you, and take the consequences. That’s called restitution – restoring something or a relationship that was taken away. Until you do, you may not have peace in your heart.

Isn’t it wonderful? God doesn’t condemn you. He seeks to restore you! His goal is construction, not destruction! Awesome! He may not send you an angel, but the Holy Spirit will restore your fellowship with Jesus when you confess your sin and accept God’s forgiveness. The next time you mess up, remember that God knows everything and wants to forgive and restore you to fellowship. How precious you are to him!

Attitude Check:

- How willing are you to make things right with God and others when you sin?

Explore:

- Read, “Our Lives Should Show That God Is at Work in Our Hearts” (Romans 7:4). What does “God reaching out to restore you” mean to you? Write in your journal.

Talking to God:

- Thank you, Father, for your forgiveness and gentle restoration of our fellowship when I sin. Help me to make things right when I hurt others by sinning.