

Obedience

Stuart L. Brogden, Jan 2003

The Hole in the Sidewalk - How We Make Changes in our Life

By **Porsha Nelson**

Chapter 1.

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I am lost, I am helpless. It isn't my fault, and it takes me forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I'm in the same place! But isn't my fault, and it still takes me a long time to get out.

Chapter 3.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it there, I still fall in. It's a habit! My eyes are open, I know where I am. It is my fault. And I get out immediately.

Chapter 4.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

Chapter 5.

I walk down another street.

This is how many of us handle sin, ignoring the warning signs our Father has given us about the pot-holes and hazards ahead. We lie to ourselves and say "it's not my fault!" or "I didn't mean to!" Jerry Bridges put it this way, "Too often we say we are 'defeated' by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated; we are simply disobedient." Indeed, hasn't Jesus already given his brothers victory over sin? (**Romans 6:6**)

May be anger, selfishness, lying, stealing, or lust. How many times do we walk down the same street and into the same hole? How often we need a brother to help pull us out of our hole. Far too often, our pride keeps us from being honest with our selves and our brothers and we dare not ask for help. A French dude said, "Most of our faults are more pardonable than the means we use to conceal them." The Lord says, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." (**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**).

Is there one among us who does not fall into or jump into a hole in our walk from time to time? No. That Man, who was and is God, walked perfectly and paid the price for we who stumble. Each of us is in need of Christ, daily, and in need of other brothers who do not fall into the same holes we do. (**Galatians 6:1**) If accountability be a crutch, then we should swallow our pride and use the crutch! We plan for success in our business and personal finances – we should plan for success, and use all the tools available, in our spiritual life as well.

"Why do so many Christians feel constantly defeated in their struggle with sin? Our first problem is that our attitude toward sin is more self-centered than God-centered. We are more concerned about our own 'victory' over sin" than the grief we cause our Father in heaven. Our first focus, then, is to look to Christ and love Him more than ourselves. Christ said that those who love Him would obey His teaching. "As we concentrate on living an obedient, holy life, we will certainly experience the joy of victory over sin." (Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*)

Andrew Bonar said, "It is not the importance of the thing, but the majesty of the Lawgiver, that is to be the standard of obedience." Is your hole a traffic law? Fix your mind not on the trifle that is the speed limit. Fix your mind ("you shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, soul, strength, and **mind**") on the One who gave us the government (Romans 13). Chuck Colson says, "Christian life begins with obedience, depends on obedience, and results in obedience. We can't escape it."

Who among us has committed adultery? Haven't been sleeping around with your neighbor? Where have you been with your mind? (**Matthew 5:28**) How many of us have NOT committed adultery? Bill Perkins says in

"When Good Men Are Tempted", "Few things stir up our sinful appetites like the word 'forbidden.'" The 55 MPH speed limit does not cause you to want to go 55 – it causes you to want to speed! "You'll look at the commandment and know what you should do. You'll even tell yourself you're going to do the right thing. When you tell yourself that, the part of you that wants to do right enters into hand-to-hand combat with your sinful nature. And you don't have a chance." Anyone besides me experienced this? The answer to temptation is not to resolve to resist it. **The answer is Jesus!** When you come upon a hole in the road, don't resolve to avoid it; look to Jesus for His way. (**Galatians 5:16!!!**)

Randy Alcorn reminds us "Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny." He goes on – "Our thoughts are the fabric with which we weave our character and destiny. We must actively fight off thoughts of impurity. But the key to doing this is not simply saying, 'I will not lust, I will not lust' – that often has the same effect of saying 'I will not think of purple elephants.'" (Anyone **not** thinking of purple elephants right now?) We must cultivate our hearts and minds with what is godly and pure. These better thoughts will displace the others (read **Philippians 4:8-9** to get started on better thoughts)."

Once upon a time, a young man moved into a cave in the mountains to study with a wise man. The student wanted to learn everything there was to know. The wise man supplied him with stacks of books. But before he left the cave, the wise man sprinkled a powder on the man's hand that caused it to itch.

Every morning the wise man returned to the cave to monitor his student's progress. "Have you learned everything yet?" And every morning the young man answered, "No, I haven't." So he sprinkled the powder.

This went on for months. One day the wise man entered the cave, but before he could ask his question, the student reached out, grabbed the bag of powder, and tossed it into the fire. "Congratulations! You know everything you need to know. You have learned that you don't have to wait until you've learned everything before you can do something positive." Are you more concerned about learning than you are about obeying? Do you obey that Word which you know? (**2 Timothy 3:1-8**)

Why should you and I be concerned about being obedient in secret? Alcorn says, "an unholy world will never be won to Christ by an unholy church." (**1 Thessalonians 4:3**)

In Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, there was no one more seemingly invincible than Smaug, the mighty dragon. But unknown to him, there was one small chink in the armor of Smaug's underbelly. That was all it took for the Bard the hunter, a skilled marksman, to seal the doom of the presumptuous dragon. Unaware of his weakness and underestimating his opponents, Smaug failed to protect himself. Bard's arrow pierced his heart, and the lake people were saved. Satan knows only too well the chinks in the armor of the most mighty Christian warriors – not to mention the rest of us! He isn't one to waste his arrows, bouncing them harmlessly off the strongest plates of our spiritual armor. His aim is deadly and it is at our points of greatest vulnerability that he will most certainly attack." (Randy Alcorn in the Nov 2002 edition of "Spirit of Revival" newsletter.)

What is your armor? Is it the truth of God's Word? Or is it the comfortable lie of the enemy, or your own deceitful heart? "We watch and listen to and are amused by suggestiveness and immorality, and we subtly adopt the world's values instead of the Word's." God tells us, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (**James 4:4**)." It is not a small thing with our Lord if we are comfortable in a sin that is acceptable by the lost world. It is His will that we be holy and He has given us everything we need to be obedient in this arena. We must look to Jesus for life itself. Christ, who is our life, bids us to obey Him. (**John 14: 15, 21, 23**) Jesus **didn't** say "If you keep my command I will love you." As James teaches us, our actions demonstrate our love for our King. If we do not obey, how can we say we love Him?

The opposite of obedience is unbelief; the essence of obedience is belief.

Check out the following two news reports to see how socially responsible men, men who had everyone close to them thinking they were "good men." Men who were willfully disobedient to almighty God, whose Word tells that our sin will find us out (**Numbers 32:23**).

Net porn police officer jailed

A POLICE officer who admitted possessing thousands of pornographic images of children was beginning a jail sentence last night.

Officers who raided the home of Chester constable Robin Mc-Innes found images of children "of the vilest possible nature".

The single 46-year-old, who had been a serving police officer for 27 years, quit his job with the Cheshire force following his arrest last September.

Yesterday, he was jailed for 18 months at Chester Crown Court after pleading guilty to 14 charges relating to more than 15,000 indecent photographs of children.

Judge Elgan Edwards told him: "These images are of the vilest possible nature and those who look at them and compile them, albeit in the privacy of their own home, commit a serious offence."

McInnes said he had begun visiting child porn sites because of media cover-age and material he had seen through his work.

When police searched his home in Foregate Street, Chester, McInnes admitted he had "loads of porn stuff", some of which involved children, and added he knew he had lost his job, the court heard.

He told police he had initially downloaded what he described as "arty shots" of young teenagers before being drawn to more serious images.

Pornographic images of children are graded from one to five in severity and the court heard that the pictures in McInnes' possession ranged through all five grades.

Sue Goddard, defending, said Mc-Innes had co-operated fully with the police when they searched his home and had showed them where to find his stash of child pornography.

Nov. 22, 2002, 8:47AM

Porn shows up in businessman's slide show

Associated Press

EXTRA

FORT WORTH -- A North Texas businessman has been jailed after co-workers reported an image of child pornography showed up on a screen as he gave a computer slide presentation recently.

James Andrew Smith of Denton was in the Mansfield Jail under \$300,000 bond after he was charged with two counts of possessing child pornography and one charge of promoting child pornography.

Exel Inc. co-workers told police Smith had just completed a PowerPoint presentation on Sept. 4 when he tried to open another document on his laptop computer. The co-workers said a photograph of a nude young boy appeared on the screen.

Exel Inc. is a logistics company in Fort Worth.

According to the police report, **Smith told Exel officials that a computer virus had caused the image to appear.** Nevertheless, police said Exel officials fired Smith and contacted police the following week after a search of his laptop found pornographic photos of children that appeared to have been e-mailed to others.

Police seized the computer, as well as disks containing child pornography and a folder with 65 pages of printed pictures of child pornography that Exel officials had found in Smith's desk, the report stated.

Smith is also pastor of Landmark Baptist Church in Sanger. His wife, Julie Smith,

"He finds it almost impossible to explain how he commenced with his habit.

"He says he simply couldn't stop," said Miss Goddard. "Part of the appeal was the excitement of doing something illegal that he thought would never be caught."

Following his release from prison, McInnes will be required to sign on the Sex Offenders Register for the next 10 years.

Deputy Chief Constable of Cheshire, Ian Holding, said: "It is important that those who seek to commit these reprehensible crimes are caught and brought to justice to ensure the safety of the public.

"This sentence should serve to reassure the public that all those committing such offences can be traced and prosecuted, regardless of their back-ground or occupation."

said they have been married for 13 years and have two children.

"He' s never hurt our children. As far as I know he' s never hurt anyone' s children," she said. "He has always taken very good care of me and our children. Anything we needed or wanted, he worked and I got it."

She said **the congregation at the Sanger church was told Wednesday night that her husband was resigning immediately, but was not told why.** He had been pastor of the church for 3 1/2 years. She said he had a valuable and well-respected position in the local community and had now lost his good name.