



Seven Phases along the Sin-Killing Continuum The sin-killing that Paul describes happens along a continuum with seven phases. Try to figure out where you stand:

**Phase 1:** Sin is an old-fashioned superstition. I'm not at war against the sarx (flesh). Life by the sin nature does not lead to death.

**Phase 2:** The sarx does exist and leads to self-destruction. I need to do something about it. But the sin nature is a general, faceless problem.

**Phase 3:** Aha, I can see now what specific forms the sarx takes in my life. All I need is a few self-help measures to kill those sinful behaviors.

**Phase 4:** There is something way deeper going on here. My behavior modification isn't working. Underneath my sinful behaviors there must be sinful states in my heart that need to change.

**Phase 5:** My self-help efforts still aren't getting me anywhere. I'll take the sin in my heart's closet out into the light of community. I'll enlist trusted friends as allies in this battle.

**Phase 6:** I still haven't made my sin die. I need supernatural sin-killing power here. I will pray persistently, calling in the divine air support of the Holy Spirit to blast these internal evils to smithereens.

**Phase 7:** I have been prayerfully relying on God's power as I strive to kill sin, and sin is actually being killed. All praise and thanks to the sovereign God who changed my heart!

Which phase do you find yourself in? Wherever you find yourself, surrender and yield to the Holy Spirit at work in you.

Adapted from: Williams, Thaddeus J.. Don't Follow Your Heart: Boldly Breaking the Ten Commandments of Self-Worship. Zondervan.

## Don't Follow Your Heart Week 7

### A Heretic's Prayer

*God, Shatter the primrose glasses of our self-serving bias so we can see ourselves honestly. You are perfect. We are not. Help us practice the discipline of meditating on your words so frequently that your truth wins out over the lies we believe. May your thoughts become our thoughts. Replace the catastrophizing, generalizing, and blaming in our minds with "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable" (Phil. 4:8). And by the Holy Spirit, the omnipotent third person of the Trinity, would you kill the sarx, the anti-God, antilife, self-destructive drives inside us. Replace them with your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Amen.*

### A Heretic's Field Manual

This week do three or four of the following to sharpen your skills at violating #theanswersarewithin commandment:

1. Read Galatians 5:19–21 and pay attention to how Paul describes the works of the flesh. If Paul were writing to you instead of the first-century church in Galatia, what deeds of the sin nature might he include? Try to identify at least three. Take those immediately to the cross.

2. Read Galatians 5:22–23 about the fruit of the Spirit. The original Greek enlists something called a genitive of production to convey that this fruit is produced by the Spirit. Pray through the list, pausing at each one and identifying an area of your life where you most desperately need the Spirit to produce that particular fruit.

3. Take another look at Lukianoff and Haidt's list of nine cognitive distortions. Pinpoint your top two or three. Ask the Holy Spirit to go to

*work resetting your psyche and to replace your distortions with his reality.*

*4. For one week, carve out a few minutes each morning to read Ephesians 1. Throughout your day, meditate on what this passage affirms about who God is and who you are.*

*5. To get better at biblical CBT, form a habit of meditating on a psalm before you fall asleep.*

### **Notes/Insights:**

Nine of the most common cognitive distortions that occur within us. Mentally check off how many of them you have fallen for:

1. **Emotional reasoning:** Letting your feelings guide your interpretation of reality.
2. **Catastrophizing:** Focusing on the worst possible outcome.
3. **Overgeneralizing:** Perceiving a global pattern of negatives based on a single incident.
4. **Dichotomous thinking:** Viewing people or events in all- or-nothing terms.
5. **Mind reading:** Assuming you know what people think without having sufficient evidence of their thoughts.
6. **Labeling:** Assigning global negative traits to yourself or others.
7. **Negative filtering:** Focusing almost exclusively on the negatives and seldom noticing the positives.
8. **Discounting positives:** Claiming that the positive things you or others do are trivial.
9. **Blaming:** Focusing on the other person as the source of your negative feelings; you refuse to take responsibility for changing yourself.

Nine of the common moral distortions we fall for.

1. **Idolatry:** Making some finite thing the foundation of our identity.
2. **Pride:** Giving more reverence to ourselves than to God.
3. **Malevolence/resentment:** Harboring hatred and unforgiveness toward others.
4. **Lust/infidelity:** Looking at people as mere bodies to gratify our sexual drives and failing to honor the sacred marriage covenant.
5. **Deception:** Failing to keep our word, bending facts or outright fabricating facts in our own favor.
6. **Apathy/laziness:** Shrugging our shoulders at injustice, scrolling our minds into oblivion rather than working for the good of our neighbors.
7. **Over-indulgence:** Letting our appetites for food and drink control us rather than us controlling them.
8. **Theft:** Taking what doesn't belong to us.
9. **Greed/ungratefulness:** Hyperfocusing on what we don't have and hoarding what we do have.

The Bible calls us to war: **“Put on the armor of light. . . . [And] put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires”** (Rom. 13:12, 14). **We must “crucify” our sin nature** (Gal. 5:16–24). **“For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live”** (Rom. 8:13).

**By God's grace, through faith, we can experience the work of the Holy Spirit in us, cleansing our heart from sin, enabling us to live in entire devotion to God, continually being transformed and conformed into the image of the Son.**