



## **Be Transformed: The Promise of a New Life in Christ**

*January/February 2001 Bimonthly Tape*

### **The Eight Stages of Transforming Behavior**

Changing any behavior is a process that involves 8 distinct stages. We may find that we are able to move quickly through the stages regarding some behaviors, while others require a lifetime commitment. We may move quickly from stage to stage, or in some cases become hung up at a particular stage for months or even years. This overview of the changing of a behavior can help us see the whole process and where we may be hung up. Changing a behavior is like ascending a cliff, working against the gravity of our sinful nature. If we can see where the next foothold or handhold is, we may be able to reach for that successfully, even if we cannot get the vision of completely being transformed and overcoming the sinful stronghold.

1. You are completely unaware that you are doing it, being deceived by your old nature (“your old self, which is being corrupted by its *deceitful* desires.” Ephesians 4:22; “For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” Romans 7:7).
2. You are aware of the behavior but you either do not think it is wrong, or do not think it is destructive or harmful enough to motivate you to change; instead you rationalize it and make excuses (“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.” James 4:17).
3. You are aware of the behavior and know it is wrong, but you continue in it anyway. You feel shame and remorse, but keep your feelings to yourself. You do not account to others for your behavior nor connect with how they feel about you doing it (“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.” Romans 7:15).
4. You are aware that your behavior is wrong and admit it after the fact, sharing your feelings of shame and remorse with others, and particularly accounting to those whom you have hurt (“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed”. James 5:16).
5. You are aware that it is wrong, and are open about it with others, but out of impulse or habitual response you do it anyway. But you stop yourself, even in the middle of the act, apologize and account to those you hurt (if others are affected), and choose to act out the right behavior in a “second response.”
6. You think about doing, or have an impulse to do, the wrong behavior but catch yourself before you act it out and follow up with the right behavior, establishing a new habit.

7. You deliberately think about doing the right behavior before a situation arises and then act it out in the moment as opportunity arises.
8. You do the right behavior without even having to think about it. At this point you have fully educated your conscience and do the right thing spontaneously. The transformation process is now complete, and you are a new person. The number 8 means “a new beginning” biblically, and you are now fully allowing the “new man” to manifest himself in your life (“to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:23-24).