

OVERCOMING

VICIOUS CYCLES



A SIMPLE REMINDER THAT YOU HAVE
ALREADY OVERCOME

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the loving memory to my late mother Ellen Osei Afriyie, who did everything she could to educate my siblings and I because she understood that, to break the vicious cycle of poverty and ignorance we had to do something different from her generation.

Acknowledgement

I am full of gratitude to the Holy Spirit, who gives me the wisdom, strength and fire to keep writing.

To Kabby Owusu. I am too grateful for you sis. Without you, this book would not look the same. God has to continue to bless you for me. I love you

To SetApartGirl worldwide. The ministry God blessed me with to cause me to need Him every day. To every person in this ministry, know that you inspire me to keep living for God. Thank you for being a faithful fruit of God's hand in my life.

Preface

VICIOUS

/'vɪʃəs/. (Vi.sh.eous)

adjective

Definition: deliberately cruel or violent.

cycle

/'saɪk(ə)l/ (S.ai.kil)

noun

Definition: a series of events that are regularly repeated in the same order.

A **vicious cycle** is a negative series of events that build on and reinforce each other.

For example: sinning causes you to hide from God and hiding from God causes you to sin even more, this can be described as a vicious cycle.

Introduction

Right from the day we are born, we are sinful beings in need of a savior. This sinful nature continues to show in our lives as we grow older and practice all forms of sin.

This is why Jesus dying to save us from our sins was the greatest show of God's mercy towards us.

After we become born again, we must remain in Christ and live totally for Him, otherwise we are likely to backslide and fall back into sin.

Ephesians 4:28 to 31 teaches us what to do after accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The thief should steal no more; the conversations we have must start edifying others and not bring them down. We must do away with all form of malice and bitterness and become new people in the spirit and in the mind and let go of all sins that we used to commit.

This is not easy to do but God requires it of us that means we can only do it with God's help.

There are sins we indulged in when we were sinners that may have found a way to creep into our new lives as born-again Christians. When these sins take over our lives and continue to occur, we lose control to them and then they become a vicious cycle.

If we fornicated in the past and after becoming born again, we may still find ourselves fornicating even though everything in us wants to stop. That does not mean we are hypocrites; it may mean we are in a vicious cycle of sin.

Vicious cycles can be like weights holding us back and keeping us from moving forward in our Christian walk.

The focus of this book is to address in a practical, relatable way vicious cycles Christians still can be in after being born again, and how to get ourselves out of it.

Romans 8: 5-8 explains the need for this book. Verse 5 says that, they that are after the flesh

do concern themselves with the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. Verse 6 continues with, for to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Verse 7 tells why we need to be spiritually minded with this; "because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. We definitely do not want to be enemies with God. Verse 8 makes the point we all have to pay attention to; "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God".

As you read this book, write down anything that drops in your spirit, and pause to pray about it.

We have already overcome; it is time to live in victory. Go in the confidence that you are already a winner!

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Chapter 1

When Sin Becomes A Vicious Cycle



The Problem

Asor was 16 when she first started getting attention from Frank. He was a senior in her school, and very handsome guy.

This was the first time in her life that anyone was paying this much attention to her. Her parents had split when she was a child, each going their separate ways. They both seemed too engrossed with building their lives that Asor never felt like she was a priority to them.

And now Frank was giving her all the attention she wanted. He texted her often, sent her songs and videos and told her that he really liked her. One day at the movies, they kissed for the first time. Asor was not sure how to feel about it. It was nice but it did not feel right

One time she told Frank that they should put a hold to the kissing and fondling and that made him quite upset. A few months after, he stopped giving her all that attention and they broke up. Getting over him was really hard since he was the only one who ever had time for her.

Later, Asor became a committed Christian and begun to live for Christ. She had asked Jesus to take away all her sins and she knew she was a brand-new person, forgiven and whole.

After a year of being saved, Asor met Kojo Manu, who was also a Christian. He was interested in pursuing a relationship with her and she was convinced that his time it would be a godly relationship. Again, she loved the attention he gave her and how he always wanted to spend time with her.

One night they were alone in Kojo's house when their feelings got intense and he kissed her. From then, each time they met, they would kiss and fondle and once they even got really close to having sex. Asor knew it was not right.

Each time they got physically involved, she realized that it drew her away from God. Anytime she closed her eyes to pray, the devil would bring back memories of the times she was kissing and fondling and accuse her of being a hypocrite.

It felt like anytime she was making progress in her relationship with God, she would meet with Kojo and after their intimacy sessions, she would feel so far away from God.

She knew that God expected them to stay pure and avoid youthful lusts. However, she was afraid that if she mentioned it, Kojo would leave her as Frank had. Therefore, she continued and ignored the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Kojo left to study abroad after a year and the relationship ended shortly after.

After this, she dated two other guys and each time the relationship got physical, she knew it was not right, but she always feared that ending the physical intimacy would bring an end to the attention she got from the guys. On one hand, she wanted to obey God and stay pure but on the other hand, she knew that the physical aspect of her relationship was what kept the guys attached to her and attention was something she always yearned for. What should Asor do?

Pause A Minute:

1. On a scale of 1-5, how much can you relate to Asor's story? (Shade the number of hands below).



2. Can you identify the vicious cycle?



Getting into the Details

Asor's is trying to fill the void of having a sense of belonging through her relationships. She desires attention from others, and for her, her relationships have proven to be the only way, she gets attention from people.

After her first breakup, which came shortly after she asked Frank to stop being physically intimate with her, she developed the false mindset that in order to keep the relationship going, she needs to keep a level of physical intimacy with her partner, even if it came at the expense of having a close and intimate relationship with God.

Asor must understand that God is able to fill any void. When we choose to devote our lives to Christ, it comes with a decision to obey Him no matter the consequences. Asor must choose to obey God, seek help from a trusted therapist or counsellor and try to fill her life with good Christian friends who will spend time with her often.

Finally, Asor must make the bold decision to wait on God to give her a godly man who will be willing to wait until marriage before being physically intimate. She must stand her ground and not compromise her stance. It is never too late to restore the relationship she has with God.



The Solution

For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in. Psalm 27:10 ESV

After we become born again, we have to let the power of God deliver us from every past pain and fear. It is important that we undergo discipleship after becoming born again.

Even though Asor was on fire for God, she had not been disciplined on how to live for God through the grace the Holy Spirit provides. We cannot do away with important aspects of our faith like discipleship, baptism, prayer and fasting. This is why we cannot delete the gathering of the saints from our spiritual life. Once you become born again, find a good family of believers and become a part. It really helps.

After Apostle Paul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus in Acts chapter 9, the Lord told him to rise up and go to the city and he would be instructed on what to do. A disciple of God called Ananias guided him and taught him many things. Likewise, Asor needs someone who would teach her that serving God is not about the highs only but the lows also. The only way we can get through the lows is by trusting God. Instant gratification of kissing and smooching are not real solutions to feelings of abandonment.

The bible says in Hosea 4:6 that due to the lack of knowledge we perish. God wants us all to grow in our knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ so that when Satan comes with his lies about our rejection, we can quote the scriptures to him. If after becoming born again, you have been free styling, this is a good time to find a trusted teacher of the Word to disciple you.



Prayer

Dear Father,

Thank you for reconciling me back to you, through Jesus Christ your son. Father, I want to please you and build an intimate relationship with you.

I bring to you today, any feelings of rejection, abandonment and self-doubt I may be experiencing and any void within me. Help me to overcome them today.

Speak Your Word over me and fill any emptiness within me. Help me grow in your word and in my love for you. Help me to obey you and live a life that pleases you through and through.

Lastly Daddy, please connect me with the right people who will help me in my walk with you.

I love you Father. Thank you for hearing and answering me in Jesus might name have I prayed.

Amen.



Study Sessions

1. How are you doing right now in your Christian journey honestly?

2. Do you have a sin that keeps repeating itself in your life even though you want to desperately stop? Why that particular sin? Do you know why?

3. If yes, how has this sin (vicious cycle) affected your faith in God? In what ways have you tried breaking the vicious cycle.

Chapter 2

Triggers



The Problem

Suban was a child who loved to read. She could spend hours reading and could escape into the world of books. When she was 14, she chanced upon a Mills and Boon romance novel and read it. She was intrigued by the sex scenes depicted in the book, but the story lines were interesting, and no one warned her against them. As time went on, she began to read more and more romance novels and unknown to her, lustful thoughts began to form in mind.

Suban did great in school and passed all her exams. She was also a great child to her parents and did not cause much trouble. When she was 16, she heard the gospel preached and gave her life to Jesus. She began to attend Scripture Union. She devoted more of her time to reading the bible and fellowshiping at church.

As she grew, many admired her walk with God, but Suban had a secret.

She was struggling with lustful thoughts, which led her to masturbate when alone.

This secret life was draining her and causing her to have depressive thoughts. She just wanted God to automatically take them away from her. She so desperately wanted to overcome the lustful thoughts and acts so that she could pursue the things of God passionately.

There were times when she was able to go for months without indulging in these secret sins, and then somehow, they would creep back in again. It felt like she was in a perpetual cycle of sin, repentance, revival, and then back to sin. She even crashed her laptop one time out of frustration.

She read scriptures on strength to overcome sin and prayed constantly about it. They seem to work for only a short while and then the nasty sin of masturbation and lustful thoughts would creep in again.

Pause A Minute:

3. On a scale of 1-5, how familiar is Suban's story to you? (Shade the number of hands below).



4. Can you identify the vicious cycle?



Getting into the Details

Whether we like it or not, the things we fill our mind with can serve as an avenue for the devil to take hold of our thoughts.

Books, movies, music and other things we consume which are unwholesome can lead us to harbour thoughts that do not edify. The romance novels Suban was reading opened her up to allow the devil to fill her with lustful thoughts, which led to lustful acts.

Matthew 12:35 says 'A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.'

Unfortunately, before we came to know Christ, we may have filled our minds with 'evil' things that form strongholds in our minds and lead us to sin. These may be in the form of sexually explicit novels, pornographic movies, profane songs or past sexual experiences.

2 Corinthians 10:5b says '...and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.' We must make a conscious effort to make our thoughts obedient to Christ.



The Solution

Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!" - Matthew 26:41 NLT

A trigger is anything that brings up emotions or memories that have to do with what we struggle with (our addictions).

The first thing Suban has to do is make an honest list of all her triggers. The next thing to do is to look at are the situations that trigger these emotions.

In a vicious cycle, a situation happens; the situation then triggers a negative emotion; to get rid of that negative emotion, the victim of the cycle does something that gives her instant gratification. She then regrets, prays for forgiveness, lives right for some time until another situation triggers another emotion and the cycle is continued.

To do away with this cycle, she has to identify the specific situations that trigger these feelings. Some people can be triggered when under a lot of stress, or when in financial difficulty or even hearing bad news about a relative can trigger these emotions.

John 1:5 says 'the light shines in the darkness and the darkness could not comprehend it'. Confronting these emotions and situations is like throwing light unto darkness.

When there is shame about a situation, we are forced to keep it in the dark but when we bring that situation out in the light, sin loses its power because we can no longer be blackmailed by it.

The next thing to do is to write down practical things she would do when faced with these situations that trigger negative emotions. She has to be willing to go through the process and not run to her addiction any time the process seems slow or hard. This step should be done with prayer because the Holy Spirit always has creative ideas to help us.

The last thing for her to do is to share these struggles with a trusted person who can help her be accountable to God. We share because we need help. If the person you are sharing your struggles with cannot pray with you or lead you to God, then sharing it will not be fruitful.

God grants healing. Real complete healing. Many people can testify of that. Nevertheless, those who are not willing to put in the time, heart and commitment may not experience what real healing from God is.

If you are like our sister Suban, do not lose hope. True healing exists for you.



Prayer

Dear Father,

I am so happy to be your child. Thank You for letting me encounter the Gospel of Jesus Christ and changing my life forever. Dear Father, I seek healing over my past pain and shame. Help me to break this vicious cycle of masturbation/pornography and sexual sin out of my life.

Help me to live only for you Father. I ask your Holy Spirit to fill me with strength and bless me with the necessary resources needed to overcome this secret sin.

Thank you for your love and compassion towards me always.

I am grateful Father.

In Jesus name have I prayed. Amen



Study Sessions

1. Do you find the solution to dealing with triggers useful? What would you add to the solutions?

2. Do you know anyone who was exposed to sexual experiences, pornography or explicit books or music as a child? Do you pray for them? Will you continue to pray for them?

3. Do you know any scriptures that encourage us to write things down?

Chapter 3

Breaking the Vicious Cycle



The Problem

Deele's family has a history of teenage pregnancies. Her grandmother had her mother when she was only 16, her mother had her when she was also 16 and right now, she is 16 and pregnant with her first child. Is this a coincidence?

Dan comes from a family of alcoholics. Every man in the family drinks heavily. His father is a government worker who was recently fired because he went to work drunk. Out of anger towards his father, Dan came home heavily drunk. Why is this repeating itself?

Radolina saw her father beat up her mum every day and vowed never to tolerate an abusive partner. She is currently in the emergency room because her boyfriend of 4 years beat her up mercilessly and this is not her first trip to the ER. Why can she not just get up and leave? This is because spiritual forces back this pattern.

Allie Payne has had fifteen abortions. Every time she finished the abortion procedure, she promises to remain abstinent. Some way somehow, she always finds herself pregnant again. Unless she changes her life drastically, this would continue to happen, and she may end up dead.

Santo's dad could not be in his life because he was in prison for drug use and possession. Santo is currently in the same business of drugs. He does not use but he sells it to the addicts in the neighbourhood. He has three children with three different women. He is not married to any of them. His father had the same history. Unless he changes his life drastically, he will end up in prison just like his dad.

The vicious cycle cannot continue where there is no sin. For all the stories, the cycle continued because the people continued to live in sin.



Getting into the Details

Why A Vicious Cycle Is Not A Coincidence?

We hear of stories like these and often times just attribute them to coincidence or bad behaviour.

Satan is vicious and seeks our destruction. He has no love in him. He is full of hatred for everyone, especially God's children. If he finds out your weak point, he would use it against you repeatedly until you are able to build up a stronger defence. He is not even that creative.

Familiar spirits that study the patterns of family histories and enforce them in the lives of younger generations influence vicious cycles.

Some of the battles we are fighting currently did not start with us. The good news is this. We get to end it in our lives and in the lives of our children.

What If?

In John 21:3, after Jesus was crucified, Apostle Peter told his fellow disciples that he was returning to his previous vocation of fishing.

What if Peter returned fully to fishing? He would have missed the Pentecost and lost an opportunity to be transformed from a denier of Jesus to a bold proclaimer of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What if Joseph slept with Potiphar's wife? Would he still have risen to the position of influence in Egypt? Due to Joseph's obedience, the entire nation of Egypt was saved from a famine. A short moment of pleasure with Mrs Potiphar could have changed his destiny and even affected the nations of Egypt and Israel.

What if the Israelites had returned to Egypt because life in the wilderness was too tough? Their situation would have been worse off than before. The wilderness season in our lives can be that struggle with the vicious cycle. Giving up is not a solution, neither is going back on our commitment to live righteously.

What if Samson had lived a life of sexual purity and stayed true to his calling? Would he have had a different ending to his life story? Even though in his death he killed more Philistines than he ever killed in his

lifetime, if he had lived in complete obedience to God, his life would have been more meaningful than that.

Imagine going to the airport to catch a flight but your car keeps going around the roundabout repeatedly. Even though you are moving, you will never reach your destination if you do not change the course and go on a straight path. Vicious cycles prevent us from truly growing in the spirit. It is important to our spiritual growth to break every vicious cycle.



Prayer

Dear Father,

I thank you for the gift of true freedom from sin. I acknowledge that You have given me the power and the victory over sin, but I still play around with sin from time to time.

Please give me strength and wisdom to be able to move out of that darkness, I am currently involved in.

I choose light today. Break every destructive cycle in my life Lord.

In Jesus name. Amen



Study Sessions

1. Write down six new things you have learnt from this chapter.

2. Write out in full three scripture used in this chapter and memorize them.

3. Why is it important to break all vicious cycles?

Chapter 4

Applying God's Grace



The Problem

Dele has a drinking problem. He recognizes the problem and asks God in prayer for help.

He needs to specifically ask for help for strength to resist the urge to drink, strength to stay away from bad company who encourage his drinking behaviour and wisdom to fill the void of drinking with a Holy Spirit activity like praying, studying the word or even volunteering at church.



Getting into the Details

The grace of God should not be used as an excuse but rather as a tool. Every time we sincerely ask for the grace of God to help us, we would receive help.

As we continue to ask for grace more and more, we begin to gain stamina over the situation. That is how our weakness is transformed to strength.



Prayer

Dear Father,

I thank You for making the truth about Your grace clearer to me. Right now, I pray for grace to be able to please You in all my ways.

Grant me the grace to overcome every emotional barrier set before me.

Teach me how to apply Your word in my life and grant me the grace to hold on to it all the days of my life.

In Jesus name have I prayed. Amen



Study Sessions

1. Did you find this chapter on applying grace practical?

2. From the text, what do you understand by praying specific prayers?

3. How are you going to apply grace to what you are dealing with right now?

Chapter 5

Overcome

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. - 1 Corinthians 10:13

Overcome Through Faith

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. This is true according to Hebrews 11:6. In Mark 11: 24, Jesus told His disciples that they can declare to any mountain to move into the sea and if they do not doubt in their hearts, the mountains will move. Living freely of every vicious cycle of sin requires faith in God.

From the previous chapter we learnt that grace is available and all we have to do is to continue to ask for His grace. After grace, we need faith to stand.

Sometimes even after, we have been delivered from an evil spirit, we go back to the lifestyle that invited

the demon in because we did not believe we had truly been delivered.

Sometimes we do not believe in our deliverance because we did not fall under the influence of the anointing. The centurion in Matthew 8:9 said to the Lord, I know that no matter where you are, if you speak a word over my son, he would be healed. Jesus spoke a word and the Centurion was informed that his son was healed at the very time Jesus spoke.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Faith is as simple as believing what the Word of God says about you and living it. God says do not fear, you are free. Do not give up on that struggle with your addiction. Keep speaking over yourself in faith. One day you will realize that a whole year has gone by without you falling back into the sin.

Overcome Though Praise and Worship

Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in. But the Lord said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors. You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day, you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town. - Joshua 6:1-5

When you indulge in a secret sin for so long, it grows wings and becomes as thick as the walls of Jericho. You see where I am going with this point. When it does not make sense to, still worship and praise God for victory over the situation.

Imagine how proud and secured the people of Jericho felt about their wall. Yet the bible says in verse 1 of Joshua chapter 6 that they were afraid of the Israelites. Satan is afraid of what you would become if you mature spiritually. He is afraid that you would hear from God on how to deal with him. He wants to do everything to ensure you remain untransformed by the Word of God. He

does not care about the outer appearance. Satan knows that if our spiritual life were intact, he would never have his way with us. That is why he will not stop you from going to church if he already has you doing his bidding in secret.

Find a day and just decide to worship God for your breakthrough. Give the Lord the day; do not be in a hurry. Just flow in worship, He would speak to you. He will give you a simple answer to your victory. He told the Israelites to shout on the seventh round, he told Moses in Exodus 17:11 to keep his hands up and as long as Moses kept his hands up, the Israelites won the victory over the Amalekites. The woman with the issue of blood in Luke 8: 44 touched the hem of the garment of Jesus Christ and she was made whole.

Our God wants to heal us of every disease and He wants to make us whole but there are so many distractions in our lives when we are caught up in a vicious cycle so much so that it becomes difficult to know or hear Him. Isaiah 59:1 and 2 tell us that the Lord's arm is not too weak to save us, nor is His ear too deaf to hear our call. It is our sins that have cut us off from God. We cannot ignore the sin factor.

When King David was convicted of his sinful life, He went to God and wrote Him a song. Go to God. Invite His presence with your truthful worship. Do you crave for that sin when at a worship concert or in church or during bible study? No. That is because the atmosphere is

saturated with God's presence. So, go ahead and create a suitable atmosphere for God's presence in your room. The darkness will flee sharp!

Overcome Through Humility

And He gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
-James 4:6

This is a spiritual principle that will guarantee your greatness in life. Pride can be so subtle that many believers forget to pray against it. Pride has caused the downfall of many great people both spiritually and physically.

Pride is what has prevented many of us from truly surrendering fully to God. We care about our reputations too much. When we give up everything to God, we would have no need to prove ourselves to anyone. What a relief that is. Instead, we take pride in proving ourselves to people.

It is pride to tell God with our actions that we would not obey His commandments concerning marriage. We would rather have our sex now and do marriage later. It is pride to lie about things and not see anything wrong with it. When we act as if God should give us a break because of the kind of era we find ourselves in, we are being prideful before God.

Humility is a key to overcoming hurdles in life. Humility caused Joseph to run away from Mrs. Potiphar. He did not evaluate his strength. He just ran away. In addition, humility gave Joseph the wisdom to know that if he compromises with his madam, he is not only sinning against Potiphar but against God too. We are prideful when we do not see God in any equation in our lives except when we need His help.

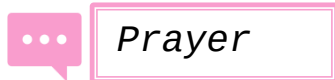
In Philippians 2:8, we are told of how Jesus humbled Himself before God and went ahead with the Will of God for His life, which was to die on the cross for us. In the end, He was glorified. Trust God to glorify you. You do not need to prove a point to those who have hurt you in the past. With their own eyes, they would see the glory of God in your life. If they do not see it or acknowledge it, do not be worried. What matters most is that the glory is real and it is coming from Your heavenly Father.

When we repent of our pride and start living a humble life, our need to be dependent on God increases and that is how we are made whole.

Everything we are going through is supposed to get us to this point. The point where we realize that, without the grace of God, indeed, there is nothing good in us. Then when people meet us and ask us how we are doing, when we respond with by the Grace of God, we would truly mean it. It will no longer be a meaningless jargon in our lives.

You know the truth now. Have faith, worship His name, fast and pray, surrender totally to God in humility. Overcome. This is it.

Go and sin no more.



Dear Father,

Thank you very much. I am free because Jesus died in my place. I do not have to go through the darkness again. I have freedom because Jesus overcame every difficulty on the cross for me.

Deliverance is mine in Jesus name.

Healing is mine in Jesus name.

Forgiveness is mine in Jesus name.

In the name of Jesus, I have overcome the vicious cycles in my life.

Amen.



Study Sessions

1. Why is Satan against your relationship with God?

2. What four things can you do to overcome vicious cycles?

3. Write a heartfelt prayer to God here. Mark it down and wait for Him to answer. When He does (because He will), come back to this page and write answered beside the prayer.
