

CHOSEN WITH LOVE

Read: John 15:16

I am blessed to have been raised in a Christian family who faithfully brought me up in the church and instilled in me Christian values. Unfortunately sometimes I tend to become too confident of my own “goodness.” Because I have always had the church in my life I tend to take my faith for granted. I begin to think I can take care of myself. Hey, if I go to church every weekend I must be on good terms with God, right?

Those of us who don't know any other lifestyle besides the Christian lifestyle sometimes forget what a friend we have in Jesus. He continues to do amazing things in our lives. Our very lives are amazing signs of God's gracious love! We have been created in His image. We have been given amazing talents and abilities, a conscience and a free will informed by faith to make our own decisions. Unfortunately, we abuse these gifts. We don't always allow our conscience to help us decide what's right from wrong. Even when we know something

is wrong, we do it anyway, perhaps because it brings a false sense of joy and happiness or fulfills our fantasies.

John 15:16 reminds us of how very special we are to God. We don't have to go on a wild chase to find God. He came looking for us. He created us; He loves us, and He has graciously given us His forgiveness, grace, and salvation. He is always there for us, even in times when He seems so far away; the painful times when it seems there is no hope—He is right there beside us, reaching out with open arms to comfort and console us.

Pray: Lord, You are so amazing. Your love and grace is ever flowing. We continue to separate ourselves from Your gracious love in an attempt to be self-sufficient and independent. Help us always to do everything according to Your will, for Your glory. Help us to come to you not only in times of trial, but in times of joy. Help us to recognize Your intense love for us, a love that led to the cross, a

cross that did not bring death, but eternal life. When we feel we are not deserving of Your love because of our sin help us to admit our brokenness and need for Your mercy. Help us to live in that forgiveness, so that we may live each day to the fullest, enjoying Your creation, and one day, Your eternal kingdom. Amen.

BRIAN ERICKSON

YOU MAKE ME SICK!

Read: Proverbs 26:11

Think about the last thing you ate. What was it? Was it a hamburger, some cereal, cookies, maybe a steak? Imagine it was your favorite food. Now imagine that you suddenly vomit it up. Of course you would be disgusted, but would you later forget that you threw it up and come back to eat it? No way, right? However, I am sure you have all seen a dog do this at some time or another. Why don't humans do this? The dogs certainly seem to enjoy the meal the second time around.

By now you are probably wondering why I'm writing about eating your own vomit. If you read Proverbs 26:11 you may wonder why God felt that the digestive habits of dogs were important enough to write down in the Holy Scriptures. The answer is that when it comes to our sin, we act just like the dogs eating things they have vomited up. Every day we sin. We repent of our sins and ask God to forgive us. Thus we "throw up" our sins to God. It is no longer in us.

But all too often we come right back, having forgotten how sorry we were about the sin in the first place, and gobble it up again. Seeing His children doing this disgusts God just as much as seeing our family pet eating the hamburger he ate an hour ago for the second time disgusts us.

Now after your dog re-eats the hamburger, are you going to rush right over and pet him and let him lick your face? No, probably not, because you are sickened by his habits and his lack of memory. God, however, comes right over and helps us spiritually wipe off our mouths. He loves us no matter how much our repetitive sins disgust Him.

You may think that we aren't nearly as forgetful as the dogs are, but remember the children of Israel in the wilderness. As you read the Bible, it seems that in every other chapter they fall away from God. In the next chapter something bad happens and they run back to God and repent. As soon as things start going well, they fall away again. You might think that you are better than the Israelites. After all, your attention span is longer than 5 minutes. The reality is that it's easier to see others' sin rather than our own. But the good news is that no matter how often we fail God, He freely offers us forgiveness through His Son, Jesus.

Pray: Dear God, thank You for always being there for me even though my sins disgust You. Help me to always turn to You in true repentance. Keep me from returning to my sin through the power of Your Spirit. In the name of Jesus my Savior. Amen.

ERIKA WENTZEL

