

## How to overcome Human Nature

Many people would say what is wrong with human nature? It is natural and normal. What is the problem? It is the way we are made right? What is there to overcome?

Human nature comprises the fundamental dispositions and characteristics—including ways of thinking, feeling, and acting—that humans are said to have naturally. This graphic is often used in different



shapes and styles self-help guides. Of course, it has a flaw, which suddenly becomes obvious. It is all about self. Me first. This is the real issue. We live in an age where “me first” is an accepted rule, a foundational unsaid given. I am the number one in

my life is something you can often hear.

Of course, humanists and atheists, promote the human being as being the apex of evolution, and that the way we think as humans is perfectly natural and should not be suppressed. It must be remembered that this philosophy comes from believing that human beings came about through natural selection and survival of the fittest. Survival of the fittest. People talk about this in the political, business and corporate world. Promotion of self, and selfishness. This libertarian society of all being about self, of course leads to contradictions, and competing ideals. Seen in the recent riots of locals protesting against uncontrolled immigration, or seen in the gender identification conflicts, and the definition of hate crimes, versus free speech. The Western world versus

perceived Islamification. Israel versus the Palestinians, Russia versus Ukraine, and so on... conflicts between different ideals - which highlight the abhorrent behaviour of mankind. It is obvious that human nature, the way humans behave though it might be natural, it is not conducive for peace, and the survival of the fittest idea, this 'me first' protectionism is simply leading to the human race to tearing itself apart.

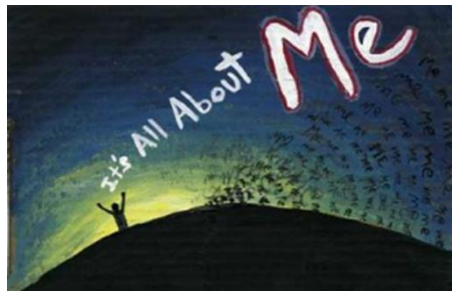
Human nature is not then a perfectly natural and healthy way of being, but it is intrinsically selfish, and is at the root cause of conflict, from the ones we have mentioned to personal relationships, the reasons we often argue and quarrel, and react when under stress in our home lives, at work with our children, parents and so on. The way we allow ourselves to be provoked or give into temptation.

Humans are capable of good deeds, of noble qualities such as patience, compassion, forgiveness, and love. Sadly, it is these positive values that get overridden by the more powerful negative aspects. Why is that?

The answer clearly is not in the theories of evolution, which in practical terms, show that human nature left to itself retrogrades, and harms survival, and how strange that if man is currently the peak product of evolution, he stands on the

culmination, the very edge of a crumbling cliff of self destruction, whether over population, climate change, conflict, exploitation of world resources, pollution, world war...

This explosion of immorality, of ruthless selfishness is driving to the extinction of humans, if left to themselves.



In fact what has happened is the opposite of evolution. Rather than improving as an organism, human beings have deteriorated. With all

the additional accumulated knowledge over centuries, improvements in science and medicine, one might be excused for thinking that the world population as a whole would be richer, more healthy, happier and in harmony, but the opposite is true. Riches lead to obesity, and decline in mental health, wealth imbalance is greater than ever before. By most metrics, it can be seen that the human race is in trouble, real trouble.

We mentioned the word immorality. It is highly unlikely, seeing the outcome today of the total sum of man's intelligent endeavours of striving for peace and equity that he has failed spectacularly. To therefore suggest that at some point in the deep ancient past that a group of cavemen somehow got together put down their clubs and discussed rights and wrongs, and set a standard and called it ethics or morals, which stuck for around for millions of years, completely misses the mark, and is deliberate ignorance.

## **Morality and Sin**

The idea of morality comes from the Bible, the world's oldest book by some distance. Dating back to at least 4000 years ago, and recording events some 6000 years ago. The Bible is the world's oldest library of books, recounting the history of mankind, and provides an alternative refreshing and believable explanation to the problem human beings find themselves in today, it provides the solution. The Bible is testable, and checkable, and has confounded historians and, scientists, and critics alike by its accuracy. It explains where the vicious, spiteful, unkind, hurtful thoughtless and selfish traits in human nature come from. We have already shown the weakness in the survival of the fittest argument. It is far simpler than that. It is because of something which has become deeply unpopular to talk about. Is not politically correct. Is a victim of the cancel culture in which we live. It is a word which is unfashionable, and scoffed at. Sin. We remind ourselves of this little word. Sin. It haunts us like a

spectre, it is a baggage we have to carry around all day, it is a burden a heavy weight, which is over-whelming. It becomes all consuming, and is responsible for our death. It is an enemy. It is as much part of our life as eating and breathing. Sin. It is a word which means missing the mark. God has established His standard of perfection and approval, and all men have “missed the mark” as an archer’s arrow would fall to the ground because it fell short of its target. Thus the Bible definition of sin is in 1 John 5:17 *All unrighteousness is sin:* It is the opposite of righteousness.

There is no in between, there is no sitting on the fence. Another word which describes sin is to transgress. This means to cut across, man has transgressed and sinned, he has cut across God’s will. He has missed the mark of God’s standard, he has rebelled against God’s decision, and revolted against God’s purpose. 1 John 3:4 *Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.* God has given commandments and laws. He has communicated this standard of living through His word. It is disobedience to this law, which is our sin. Not only that, but knowing the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, having a conscience, and not taking any notice of it, but being stubborn that is also sin. James 4:17. *Therefore to him that knows to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.* So if we know that we should do good, in a particular instance, and it is within our power to say help someone, and we don’t, because we are lazy for example, then that is sin. Man has been given an intelligence, to discern morality. He has been given a conscience. He can tell the difference between right and wrong. That knowledge becomes more and more refined, the more he reads and understand the purpose and requirements of God.



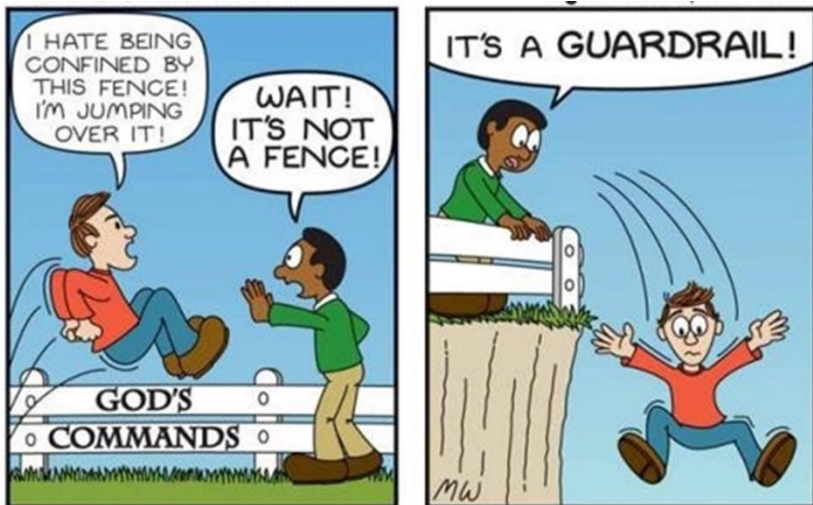
He realises there is no excuse for sin. Yet he reacts in one of two ways. He ignores or denies the morality of the Bible, and says God doesn't exist. That neatly neutralises his guilty conscience, and means he can carry on doing whatever he wants without restraint. The second, and far less common reaction is to try not to sin. To try and obey the commands of God. This requires a real effort. In the letter to the Romans Paul in a wonderful and realistic way describes the contortions and struggles of this process of fighting to resist the urge to sin.

**Romans 7: 14-21.** *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin,* The law is good, then, and the trouble is not there but with me, because I am sold into slavery and Sin as my owner. *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.* I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.* I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws I am breaking. *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* So then it is no longer I that do it, but my nature which lives in me. *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.* I know that good does not live in me. (I mean, in my human nature.) I am ready and willing to do good, but I can't do it. *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.* Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. Now if I am doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its evil grasp.. *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.* In this most descriptive analysis of the human condition, we see a force continually dragging the person, in this case Paul, but it is the same for you and me, continually dragging the person into decisions, and actions we know are wrong, yet somehow we end up doing it. The force is sin, but the reason we allow it is because of temptation. Temptation is the allure, the magnetism,

the attraction that makes us think twice in the first place. It is a battle between our conscience and a power we can't always put our finger on, but which the Bible calls sin. We try to cover it up, excuse it, and so on, but it is sin.

## Temptation

Temptation is a really large part of our life. It is not funny, and is not something to be laughed at. It can cause us to sin. It can get us in all sorts of scrapes. It distracts us, and wastes energy in diverting our energy and focus elsewhere. The word for temptation in the Greek, is *peirasmos* (Pronounced pi-ras-mos) which means; a putting to proof - by experiment, experience [of evil], solicitation, discipline or provocation. Putting to proof. Being put to the test. This is what temptation means. It is the choice we have to make, to do good or evil. The talk tonight is focussed on how to overcome human nature. How to avoid situations or circumstances where we know our weaknesses will be put to the test. - Where our character will be proved. If know



Whoever keeps commandments keeps their life,  
but whoever shows contempt for their ways will die.

- PROVERBS 19:16 NIV

there is a high likelihood that we will fall off the edge of the cliff, and there are signs saying crumbling cliff edge, why walk along the edge, it is sensible surely keep away from danger, keep to the straight and narrow path, and not the broad path which leads to destruction. Trouble is human nature doesn't like being sensible! The first piece of advice to anyone asking how can I use my Bible to overcome human nature is of course, at first to open it! Just ask yourself, how often do you actually open your Bible and read it? Why is reading the Bible so painful, or objectionable. Maybe because of preconceived ideas, prejudice, previous ideas of religion... It really is the guide to knowledge, the handbook of life. It is odd how often we find time to open other magazines, pamphlets, or fiddle with our smartphones, and browse the internet, but actually getting to the truth of the Bible, that's too sensible! The second piece of advice is to look at examples of other people who are famous in the Bible who wrestled with their human nature, and gave in to it. A great deal is made out of them, for our benefit. They are there for our examples. You can see the sequence of events, notice the failure point, and what they didn't do, which they should have done. Let's start with the most obvious one. It is a series of incidents we repeatedly refer to, as it is the beginning. - When human nature was developed.

### **Case Study - Eve**

The example we would first look at is that of Eve. -The mother of all living -The first woman, created by God. She was aware that she had been given unlimited usage of all the trees, vines, and herbs of the garden, but that just one single tree was forbidden. The tree of knowledge of good and evil, as it was described to them. Curiosity must have been the first step, as she not coincidentally found herself in the vicinity of the tree. She had to have a look. It was time for her to be proved. Would she obey the command that had been given. Would she do good, and walk away, remembering the wonderful experiences

that were all hers, why should she upset the Creator who had made her. But a voice came from an unexpected source, that planted a seed of doubt in her mind. Instead of going back again to the command which had been given she agreed with the reasoning of the serpent. She allowed it to eclipse the truth, and she blanked out what she really knew to be right and true. She ignored it. Pretended the command never existed. Just for a moment. Moses under Divine inspiration has recorded it for us: Genesis 3: *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.* The rationale of Adam and his wife can be seen here. Temptation came along. They didn't deal with it straight away. Eve saw that it was good for food. So what she should have said. Got plenty of that everywhere else, and there are plenty of fruits and delicious vegetables I haven't even tasted yet, But no, she wanted to eat what she couldn't. That exposes the contrariness of human nature. It is dangerous to think we are in control. Put yourself in the way of temptation. You will fail. Instead of walking away, she lingered, she looked a little longer, it was pleasant to the eyes. She was gazing at it now, and longing to taste, what was the secret of this tree, that God said I can't eat of it. It looks good enough. Still no resistance. So the third temptation – it would make one wise! It was a tree which had peculiar knowledge enhancing properties, the knowledge of good and evil. She would know what that would mean, by simply disobeying. Surely the name was obvious, it gave a clue to the consequences, and could she at this late moment not spare a thought at all for the dreadful consequences that God had spelt out. In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die. But it was no barrier to Eve, she didn't know what evil was, nor did she have a clue what death was. She just had to take God's word for it. She chose to believe

the serpent, and disbelieve God. She committed the first sin. She failed, because she didn't believe God, didn't think of the consequences, didn't reason away the temptation, she lingered. In 1 John 2:16, the Apostle sums up the three fold aspect of this temptation: *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* This is the essence of our nature our natural reactions. Lust of the flesh, she saw it was good for food, Lust of the eyes. She saw it was pleasant to the eyes, and the pride of life, a tree to be desired to make one wise. Once we get our head around what happened back then, we suddenly see the relevance for ourselves. It is exactly what goes through our head. It will be one of these three aspects that catch us out every time.

### **Case Study - Esau**

We have the example of Esau. Genesis 25 He was starving hungry. Been out in the woods, and across the plains, hunting, and now he needed feeding. His brother Jacob was at the cooking pot, and it smelt good. He demanded give me some of that. Jacob was the tempter this time. Sell me your birth right (that is the right to receive the first blessing of inheritance) he saw the opportunity. He knew his brother. Esau was so intent on filling his belly he did not see the danger. Nothing else was important. He exaggerated for effect; I am at the point of



death I am so famished, what do I want the birth-right for! He was very

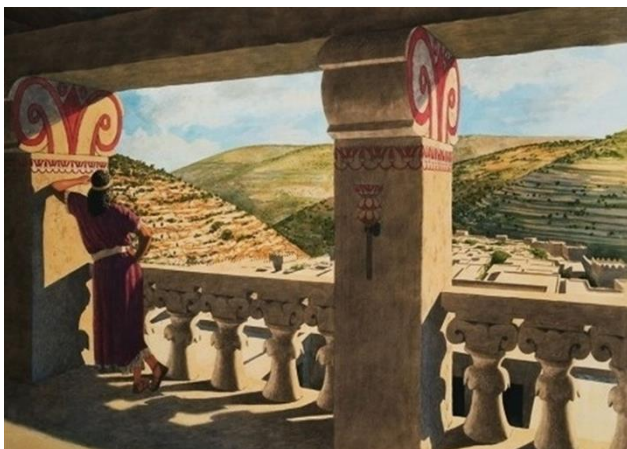
glib about such an important thing. It was important, because it gave the right for the special blessing. Jacob knew what that meant, it meant being associated with the covenant of God, Esau didn't care less. Just give me the soup! He didn't care about any long term promises and prophecies, despised his birth-right. He gave in to his own natural cravings, because he didn't believe God. He gave in, because the here and now was so much more important than the future. Short term gain, but at the expense of his long term welfare. He allowed his judgement to be clouded by the lust of the flesh.

### **Case Study - Achan**

Another example is in Joshua chapter 7, about a man named Achan. Achan, was lusting after some of the spoil of war he had seen in the destroyed city of Jericho, after the walls fell down. He couldn't believe his eyes, such riches, and a really beautiful priestly Babylonish garment. He knew full well, that the whole nation had been expressly commanded not to help themselves to the stuff, it was all to be destroyed, they were not to allow the culture of the idolatrous city corrupt them. Well Achan had other ideas. Gold would be good, he could melt it down, and it would make him ever so popular. The garment, why that would make him stand out from the crowd and make him noticed. See the pride of life again, and the lust of the eyes. He got his family involved and they all conspired to bury the hoard under their tent. In the event they got found out, and they all perished. Achan, allowed himself to be overcome by his own nature because he allowed his judgement and natural thinking to be clouded by short term gain, but ignored the massive long term tragic loss, the consequences. He failed because quite simply he didn't believe, he didn't think of the damage, the consequences, nor did he think that he would ever be found out. He thought by hiding the loot, he would get away with it. We can't ever think no one else will know, no one else can see. God sees it all. He knows.

## Case Study - David

Another famous example is that of David. 2 Samuel chapter 11. He was king of the whole of Israel; and he was bored, and being bored, when he really should have been involved with the welfare of his family or



people, he fell into temptation. He espied a goodlooking woman washing herself in one of the town houses below the palace walls. King

David in his grand palace overlooking the city, decided to ogle. He decided almost instantly and on a whim, that he was going to make intimate acquaintance with this woman, and he sent for her. He had his way, and then proceeded over the next few months to cover up his crime by performing even more and more crimes and dreadful sins in a clumsy and pathetic attempt to hide from his initial weakness. How did that original temptation come about? It helps us, to see how he failed, that way we can also be on guard. He was not doing what he was supposed to be doing. He was being lazy. He was bored. He was at a loose end. That is danger. We are our own worse enemy. Then he had to have a good old look didn't he. He should have just airbrushed the images from his mind, and quickly found something to distract his fevered brow. Cold shower perhaps. The lust of the flesh, it can overcome us. Our passions must be controlled. Avoid such situations, keep occupied, stay focussed, be disciplined, and maintain a pure mind. That is the moral from David's failure. The Bible can really help. If

David had paid attention, it would have stopped him from coveting, committing adultery, lying, deceiving, plotting, and conspiring to murder, and then orchestrating the death of a faithful man. Just because he had to have another look.

### **Case Study - Gehazi**

Another example shows how the way human nature reacts can come in an altogether different direction. 2 kings 5. Elisha was a famous prophet of Israel, and did many wonderful miracles and signs. He healed a well-known captain of the Assyrian Army. Naaman by name, who was quite a rich man. Elisha also had a servant, called Gehazi. This fellow, was struggling a little spiritually, and watched as Naaman offered to reward Elisha with a large payment, and some rather fine looking clothing. To his amazement Elisha declined the reward, asking that instead Naaman give praise to God. Then Gehazi, quickly but secretly followed after this rich soldier pretending that Elisha had for some reason changed his mind saying he needed the silver and the clothes. Naaman gave him two lots of each and went his way. Gehazi was delighted having made a quick buck, for no effort at all. What he did was deceitful, undermined the miracle and kindness which had been carried out, and more importantly diluted the message about the way God rewards the faithful. What made Gehazi do this? He allowed human nature to overcome him, because he coveted. Why did he covet? Because he was not content.

The root cause was discontentment. Because he didn't kill the covetous thought, it changed his character so that he began to evaluate everything in life with material reward. The result was that when temptation came he fell at the first hurdle, the consequences being that he then lied, made up another elaborate story, and dragged Elisha's name into it, then as a result he got caught out, and caught leprosy, as the narrative reveals. We would urge you to reread these episodes at

your own leisure. It is interesting, because, using situation ethics, how would we react if we were in those situations? Do we think the same. The Bible is a mirror. There are great stories that are more than just that, they are true events, the Book is a book about people for people, it is true, and true to life.

### **What have we learned so far?**

The cause of much of the problems in the world today has been caused by human behaviour, whereby man is governed by his own sinful nature, whereby he gives in, and allows himself to be overcome. By looking at these case studies, we have learned about human nature within us, which is common to each and everyone. We are all the same. We have learned about the enemy within, and knowing it, is the start to overcome it. We have seen the manifestation of that human nature in its practical outworking in anger, jealousy, covetousness, fear of missing out, pride, sexual lust, boredom, anxiety, fear and laziness.

We can quite easily see the root causes behind the temptations of these poor folk we have looked at. But quite often we don't recognise the root causes behind our own. That's what we need to become skilful in. One problem is the tendency for us to blame other people for our failures instead of taking responsibility for our own wrong way of thinking. We can blame the past, our parents, our job, the neighbouring country, we can blame migrants, the neighbour, not having enough money, we can and do blame everybody and anything rather than address our own participation in indulging our own weakness and failings. The Bible tells who is to blame. The Apostle James had this to say if we turn to his first chapter. James 1 12.

*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.. Then when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. Clearly*



then, temptation happens chiefly not because of outside influences, but because of our uncontrolled and unbridled desires, which respond to external signals and prompts. We like to blame the prompt. Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent. Perhaps Gehazi blamed Elisha. Esau certainly blamed Jacob. But really, to avoid temptation we have to face up to the fact, that our nature is the trigger, it is the lusts within us that cause us to respond to temptation. How to overcome? Some prefer to lock themselves away in a monastery, convent or cloisters to hide away from all these temptations. Or cover their women and hide them away. That is not good advice at all. It is wholly inconsistent. Take this example: Money is an everyday commodity, that unfortunately this society functions on. It has become in itself the reason for living for so many, the endless quest for more material and economic comfort. Money in itself is not wrong, but the Bible warns how a uncontrolled and undisciplined mind will fail time and time again, to being tempted by the love of money 1 Timothy 6:9-10 *But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: ...* Strange how people do not hide away from money or avoid handling it or covering it up! The way to avoid the wrong way of thinking about riches and money is to take this advice that we can read: 1 Timothy 6:6-8 *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing let us be content.* Hebrews 13:5 *Let your way of life be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for he has said, I will never leave you, or forsake you.*

It is similar with other lusts and desires. To overcome our human nature, is first to want to overcome, and now you are aware of the damage giving in, does to you, does to your relatives who you hurt and injure, and to the nation we live in, and to the world we inhabit. Do we not want to make a change? It starts with us. Each one. To overcome is

to alert to our own weakness, and never forget that God is watching. To overcome, is to kill the thoughts immediately, it is to manage our reactions, to learn self control.

### **Case Study – Jesus Christ**

A superb example of how to overcome is given in how the Lord Jesus Christ dealt with his temptations when he was in the wilderness. On his own in the countryside away from everyone. He went without food for forty days, a very long time indeed, enough to drive anyone mad. He was obviously very hungry, and saw stones and imagined bread. “I could turn them into bread” he could smell the fresh baked bread, the taste. But it meant misusing the power God had given him. It wasn’t for his own personal convenience. Matthew 4:4 *But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.* He killed the thought. We note how. It is written. He used the Word of God to stop the thought in its tracks. Right and wrong. It mattered to him. He began to fix the world by fixing himself. Time passed slowly, temptations increased. In his mind’s eye he saw himself transported miles away to the highest point of the great temple in Jerusalem, and the lust of the flesh in human nature prompted him to realise that he could take the amazing feat of jumping off, as no harm would come to him, as prophecy had decreed it. How fantastic! He stopped his wandering mind in its tracks! Danger. Stop. *It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* It worked. The realisation of offending his dearest friend caused the subject to be dropped in his mind. Once again the pride of life in his human nature providing another trigger to be tempted. He imagined himself on the highest mountain in the known world, where he could see all the kingdoms of men. All that vast expanse, all, could be his right now, if he forsook the path laid out for him, and served himself. This was a temptation which was very realistic. It had to be destroyed right away. How? it is written, *You shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only*

*shalt thou serve.* Every time he used the positive message of God to overcome the negative selfish desires within. It is greatly encouraging to know that Jesus was tempted just like we are. More than this we do well to remember Paul's kindly and fatherly advice 1 Corinthians 10:13 *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Always remember that. We don't have to sin. There is always an alternative. Let us all here make an concerted effort identify our own personal weaknesses, and get to the root cause, sort out the problem, by praying for help and wisdom, read the word, look at other examples, and don't forget that next time you resist that temptation pray again, and thank God for his love towards you. Jesus has a message for all who do this : Revelation 2:26 *And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:* a repeated message, a reward is there and a blessing, if we learn to control our own self, we have proven the capability to assist in the ruling of the Kingdom of God.

We conclude with this simple message from the New Testament:  
Romans 12:21 *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

