

Finding *Renewal* in the Love of God

Unit 4: Dedicating Ourselves to Renewal by Obedience

Unit Introduction

My friend Sara's two-year-old daughter was an Edward Scissorhands with a crayon in her hand. This child could write all over anything in the blink of an eye, and she regularly decorated all parts of her family's home with her artwork. One particular décor addition could be admired for months. It was the hall-length line, drawn at her arm's height with the black, indelible Magic Marker®. Try as they might, her parents had little success in repairing the wall. Finally, with advice from a local paint store manager and several coats of a particular paint, the wall was once again clean. The very next afternoon, however, Sara was shocked to find lipstick smeared all over the wallpaper of her older daughter's room—again only as high as a two-year-old could reach. My friend, who was truly the most patient mom I have ever known, yelled for the toddler. Wide-eyed little Raquel stood, looking up quietly, shocked by her mother's tirade. "Raquel Lee," Sara started, "We do not mark on walls! Mommy doesn't mark on walls; Daddy doesn't mark on walls; Sister doesn't mark on walls, and Raquel, **YOU will not** mark on walls! **WE DO NOT MARK ON WALLS!**" There was a moment's silence as little Raquel let the bad news sink in, but she never broke eye contact with her mother. "Well," she replied, standing near the evidence, "**sometimes** we do."

You know, here's the deal. I really **don't** like to sin. It ruins my day, makes me feel cheap and disloyal, and disgusting. I berate myself, replay my bad choice in my mind's eye—fairly wallow in self-degradation. Though I don't always **do** what I wish I had done, like the apostle Paul, I "delight in the law of God in my inmost self." I am thankful sin remains so distasteful, but I also wish I were more like little Raquel. I wish I could face my sin as the matter-of-fact truth. **Sometimes** we do! Instead, error has the capability of distracting me from my focus and totally stalling my forward motion. How do you deal with sin in your life?

Though he made no excuses for sin, John recognized that there was a difference between an instance of sin and a life of darkness. The first is continually covered by the blood of Jesus; the other amounts to a confession that I live in darkness—in the realm of the Evil One. Minimizing our sin because we are privileged to possess God's forgiveness misses the point entirely. Yet, being consumed by our weaknesses is as much an act of arrogance as failing to see our faults. Both require that we focus only on ourselves. Finding the balance between hating the sin and loving the sinner (me) can make all the difference in how we view God—and in the amount of fellowship we share with Him. Remember, fellowship means simply "things in common." Claiming a godly view of sin increases our intimacy with God.