



Send Her Packing

Living Under God's Grace

by Karen Lembo

"For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want" (Galatians 5:17).

The other day, I was startled to realize I've been haunted by an old lady for years now. She sits on the side of my bed while I sleep and complains when I have to get up. She hates exercise. As I start my day, she follows me around with a running commentary: "Look at those dishes still in the sink. Didn't your husband say he was going to do those? And look at the stuff strewn around the family room. Can't anyone pick up

after themselves? No, apparently you are the only one who knows how to pick things up."

Other times she starts picking on my choices: "Why do you stay home? Other people are out there working, and look at you—you're never going to amount to anything. Do you think you're going to succeed at this? You're crazy, you know." Late at night she starts demanding unhealthy food. She has an insatiable appetite: "Give me something sweet. No, that wasn't enough. I want something salty now . . ."

This old lady drains my energy and my patience. When my

children or my husband need me, I feel exhausted and resentful. I don't want to be this way. I want to love freely, but I feel like I have nothing to give. Who is this old lady, and why is she haunting me? Well, I've begun to realize she is my old self, back from the dead, and she keeps rattling her chains, trying to keep me a slave to her demands. For the most part she is successful because I don't realize she is there. We are so closely connected that I don't realize her influence. Before you decide I need to call a psychiatrist to be tested for multiple personality disorder, read this:

Spirit of God:

"I say then, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want" (Galatians 5:16-17).

I have seen the enemy, and she is me. But I'm onto her. It's time to obey my new Master and send the old lady packing. But how do I do that when my old habits are so persistent?

"Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as

*I have seen the enemy, and she is me.
But I'm onto her.*

"For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin's claims. So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:6-7, 11-12, 14).

I don't have to obey this "old lady." I need to send her back to the grave. The one I need to obey is the

obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey—either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). My sin nature will persistently tempt me to react selfishly every time I face an uncomfortable circumstance. I must retrain myself to avoid "knee-jerk" reactions, take a breath, and obey my new Master. This requires rigorous training because the old lady doesn't give up easily!

The old lady has terrible habits, and when I listen to her, all I reap are negative consequences. "So what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of?

For the end of those things is death" (Romans 6:21). Instead, when I deliberately obey my Master, "the benefit [I] reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life" (Romans 6:22, NIV).*

Perhaps you've been bossed around by your own "old lady" lately. Try this experiment with me today: when you feel the urge to blow up, have a pity party, complain, or gossip, take a breath and pray, "Heavenly Father, please help

me say 'no' to the 'old lady' and my sinful inclinations and 'yes' to Your guidance. I recommit myself to obeying You. Please give me the strength to do what is right. Amen."

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*From the Holy Bible, New International Version, © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.



New Life in Christ

The Bible tells us, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Because of sin (falling short of God's righteous standard), we are separated from God and are spiritually dead (Romans 3:23). However, because God loves us, He provided a way for us to connect with Him and be delivered from the wages of sin by sending His Son, Jesus, who never sinned, to die in our place as payment for our sin. John 3:16 says, "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."

To begin a personal relationship with God, agree with Him about your sin and your need for forgiveness. If you are ready to make this choice, as an affirmation of your belief, you may wish to pray a prayer like this one: *Dear God, I understand I am a sinner, but I believe Jesus died for my sins, and I now accept His gift of eternal life. Thank You for forgiving my sins. Thank You for my new life. From this day on, I choose to follow You and Your will for my life.*

If you begin a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus, please share this with the person or church that gave you this magazine.

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