

ZCA Berean Hour

Lesson Fourteen: Habit of Holiness

"Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness."

-Romans 6:19

We are to put off our old self- our sinful disposition and its habits- and put on the new self- with its character and habits of holiness. It is a matter of training our selves in godliness (I Timothy 4:7) which is to discipline and structure our lives so that we develop godly habits. Paul calls this mortifying or putting to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13).

Thoughts to ponder:

"Repeated acts of the consent of the will unto sin may beget a disposition and inclineableness of the will unto a prouess and readiness to consent unto sin upon easy sollicitation." John Owen

Every sin we commit reinforces the habit of sinning and makes it easier to sin. These repeated acts of unrighteousness become habits that make us slaves to sin.

Habit: the prevailing disposition or character of a person's thoughts and feelings. It is the thought and emotional pattern engraved in our minds. It is an acquired behavior pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary.

Habits, good and bad, develop because of peer pressure, environmental surroundings, a person's need to investigate new and different ideas or to change a lifestyle.

Most of life is habitual. You do the same things you did yesterday, the day before and every day for the last month. It's estimated that out of every 11,000 signals we receive from our senses, our brain only consciously processes 40.

Habits, good or bad, make you who you are. The key is controlling them. If you know how to change your habits, then even a small effort can create big changes.

Keys to changing habits:

One Habit For 30 Days – Steve Pavlina, popularized the 30 Day Trial. You focus on one change for thirty days. After that time it has been sufficiently conditioned to become a habit. It definitely works to sculpt the automatic programs that run in the background of your mind.

Use a Trigger – A trigger is a short ritual you perform before a habit. If you wanted to wake up earlier this might mean jumping out of bed as soon as you hear the sound of your alarm. If you wanted to stop smoking this could be snapping your fingers every time you feel the urge for a cigarette. A trigger helps condition a new pattern more consistently.

Replace Lost Needs – If you opened up your computer and started removing hardware, what would happen. Chances are your computer wouldn't work. Similarly, you can't just pull out habits without replacing the needs they fulfill. Giving up television might mean you need to find a new way to relax, socialize or get information.

One Habit at a Time – A month may seem like a long time to focus on only one change, but I've found trying to change more than a few habits at a time to be reckless. With just one habit change you can focus on making it really stick. Multitasking between three or four often means none become habits.

Balance Feedback – The difference between long-term change and giving up on day 31 is the balance of feedback. If your change creates more pain in your life than joy, it is going to be hard to stick to. Don't go to the gym if you hate it. Find diets, exercise, financial plans and work routines that are fun to follow and support you.

“But” to Kill Bad Thoughts – A prominent habit-changing therapist once told me a great way to nuke bad thinking. Anytime you feel yourself thinking negatively about yourself, use the word “but” and point out positive aspects. “I'm lousy at this job – but – if I keep at it I can probably improve.”

Write it Down – Don't leave commitments in your brain. Write them on paper. This does two things. First, it creates clarity by defining in specific terms what your change means. Second, it keeps you committed since it is easy to dismiss a thought, but harder to dismiss a promise printed in front of you.

Keep it Simple – Your change should involve one or two rules, not a dozen. Exercising once per day for at least thirty minutes is easier to follow than exercising Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays with yoga the first day and mountain biking the third day, except when it is raining in which case you will do... Simple rules create habits, complex rules create headaches.

Consistency is Key – The point of a habit is that it doesn't require thought. Variety may be the spice of life, but it doesn't create habits. Make sure your habit is as consistent as possible and is repeated every day for thirty days. This will ensure a new habit is drilled in, instead of multiple habits loosely conditioned.

There is no better way to break bad habits than knowing you have the confidence to do so with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Confidence is the key to a life of holiness.

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