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Do Our Bad Habits Control Us?

Proverbs 17:20: (NASB) *He who has a crooked mind finds no good, and he who is perverted in his language falls into evil.*



Did you ever stop to think how much of our lives are built around our habits? The words we use, the thoughts we think - driven by habit. Our morning routine...a habit. The time we arrive at work...habit. Our actions and reactions to our co-workers...habit. What we eat, where we eat, how much we eat...all connected to habit. How we treat our spouse, our family, our friends and acquaintances - you guessed it - all connected to habit. So, if such a large portion of our lives are based in habit, then we ought to understand what makes a habit and most importantly how to better our habits!

What makes a habit?

Some definitions from Merriam Dictionary:

5: the prevailing disposition or character of a person's thoughts and feelings: mental makeup

6: a settled tendency or usual manner of behavior <her habit of taking a morning walk>

7a: a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition or physiologic exposure that shows itself in regularity or increased facility of performance

7b: an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary <got up early from force of habit>

First Rule of Habits: Habits are!

Habit Patterns (1954) is from the "Psychology for Living" film series by McGraw Hill Book Company, with an accompanying textbook by Sorenson and Malm, targeted at 1950s teens.



Morning alarm, *Habit Patterns*, McGraw-Hill movie (1954)

- (Patronizing narrator talking while we view Barbara crying) ...It's a little late for tears, isn't it, Barbara? Even though you didn't know what was going to happen today, you still had your whole life to prepare for it! Of course, you've gotten into the habit of not being prepared. And now it's a little late, isn't it? You're a creature of habit, Barbara, we all are. Unfortunately not all your habits are good ones. This was how your day started. (Barbara ignores the alarm clock.) It started wrong. Your neighbor, Helen, is a creature of habit too, but she got up when the alarm went off, because Barbara that's what she really had in mind when she set it!

Romans 8:5-6: Setting your mind is making a habit. Where you set your mind, your actions will follow. Our body needs to naturally react through "muscle memory." This comes with repeated practice so that when tension arises, we don't have to think, we can just act appropriately. We practice so that we are ready.



Bad habits list, *Impact of Bad Habits*, *The Magnolia Show*

- Talking instead of listening.
- Forgetting someone's name sixty seconds or less after being introduced.
- Hitting the snooze alarm several times in the morning before getting out of bed, when you know that you should get up and do some stretching and exercising, give yourself time for a decent breakfast, put yourself together professionally and then leave in a great mood.
- Working long days without exercise or breaks.
- Not spending enough time with your family, your children, or your friends.

There is a process involved in the development of habits that can be voluntary or involuntary: Philippians 3:10-14

How habits work:

Verse 10: Desire - I want to know Christ

Verse 12: Assessment - Not that I have already obtained all this, the Apostle Paul is assessing where he is

Verse 13: Locking up the past habitual behavior - forgetting what is behind

Verse 14: Unlocking the new opportunities of new behavior - I press on toward the goal

How do we know if a habit is good or bad?



Bad habits list, *Impact of Bad Habits*, *The Magnolia Show*

- Answering the telephone during family meal times.



- Controlling every decision, especially the small stuff that we need to let go of.
- Procrastinating on everything from filing taxes to cleaning out your garage.

Second Rule of Habits: All habits have a reason to live!

2 Timothy 3:1-5: All of these behaviors are self-centered and driven by self-gratification. Our habits, especially those we unconsciously put in place, are generally self-centered as well. Stress and distress are classic environments for the development of unhealthy and destructive habits. They can grow and develop when we are hurting but can have serious consequences later on.

 **Quality rituals and changing habits, wakeupproductive.com**

- *Let's learn how to create habits that serve us in our lives and our businesses. I did an interview recently with Tony Robbins. One of the things he said in the interview is that the quality of our habits and our rituals is the quality of our lives. What did Tony mean by this? If we don't have high quality habits and we don't make them into rituals that we place for things and keeping them there! She uses taste in selecting her clothes. But more than that, she keeps them clean and mended. And she's able to match the right skirt with the right sweater.*

What are we choosing as the basis of our thinking? Whatever it is determines the source of our habits.

Joshua 1:8-9: But what about how we feel? What is the basis of our emotions? Whatever it is determines the source of our habits.

Proverbs 4:23-26: Where your heart finds its comfort is where your habits will begin to develop.

 **Helen's routine, *Habit Patterns*, McGraw-Hill movie (1954)**

- *Helen has trained herself to know what she is going to do, in what order and where the things are to do it with. She really doesn't have to think about it. She already knows what clothes she's going to wear today. She starts by having a place for things and keeping them there! She uses taste in selecting her clothes. But more than that, she keeps them clean and mended. And she's able to match the right skirt with the right sweater.*

Here are some other great reasons for habits to live - only certain habits will survive in this environment: Philippians 4:8-9

How do we change our habits?

Third Rule of Habits: If we do not decide what kind of habits to develop, it will be decided for us!

 **Eight-pound cookie, *How to Break a Habit*, thepowerofhabit.com**

- *Imagine for a moment that you have a habit that you really want to change. Let's say, for instance, you go up to the cafeteria every afternoon and eat a chocolate chip cookie. This habit has caused you to gain a little bit of weight. In fact, this habit has caused you to gain exactly eight pounds, and your wife has started to make some pointed comments. And when I say, "you," what I really mean is "me," because this is a habit that I had and just couldn't kick.*

It all starts with what we are thinking about. **Good advice from the Apostle Paul: Philippians 4:8-9**: The best way to break a habit is to make a habit! Break one and make one - there is a lot at stake. To break a habit we must first be honest with ourselves. We can't be defensive.

Proverbs 12:19-22

 **Quality rituals squeeze out bad, wakeupproductive.com**

- *If we habitualize all the important things - if we actually create conscious rituals around them, then all of the other stuff will take care of itself. In fact, the more high quality habits and rituals you create, then the more it squeezes out the other stuff that distracts you from your life.*

To break and remake a habit, we must seriously choose and embrace our new direction.

Joshua 24:15

 **Barabara's "non-routine," *Habit Patterns*, McGraw-Hill movie (1954)**

- *(Narrator) You started your day with no plan at all. Looking for your hair brush? Can't remember where you left it? You forgot other important things today. You meant to fix that collar, but you've gotten into the habit of putting things off. And, oh yes! The sweater you were looking for. You decided to cover the spots on your sweater with a scarf. You often do that. But you can't forget that the spots are there. If you had a habit plan for your mornings, you might get off to a decent start some day!*



Just because we decide something doesn't make it easy to accomplish. Think of New Year's resolutions! What deciding does is IDENTIFY the habit being broken and FOCUSES on its replacement. Deciding gives us "permission" to act. Romans 7:21-25: Even the Apostle Paul, as great as he was, had to make that decision every single day. He had the courage to fight for the correct habits. We need to be active in the choosing of our habits.

Fourth Rule of Habits: Habits can be abandoned!



One new habit at a time, wakeproductive.com

- *We are creatures of habit. Most of us never learned how to change our habits and with the little bit of willpower we get, we don't usually focus it on changing our habits. And that's really the equation. That's the magic formula - to take the willpower that we get and focusing it on making a new habit. It's important to only create one new habit at a time. If we try to create more than one new habit, we get all stressed out and fall back into our old patterns and never actually do it. So, one new habit at a time.*

How do we change a habit effectively? Break one and make one to replace it! There is much to change - get out your Christian toolbox!

1 Corinthians 6:9-11: Why is the Apostle even talking about these extremely terrible things to a group of Christians?!? Because we are all the same with the same possible temptations. We can't always see our true selves. We pray for Him to reveal our "secret faults."

With so much at stake, we are blessed to have the tool of **EXAMPLES** to follow:
Philippians 4:11-13

With so much at stake, we are blessed to have the tool of **GOD'S PROMISES!**
James 1:12



First step: The cue, *How to Break a Habit*, thepowerofhabit.com

- *Every habit functions the same way. At first there is a "cue" - some type of behavior that makes the behavior unfold automatically. Studies tell us that a cue can be a location, a time of day, a certain emotional state, other people or just a pattern of behavior that consistently triggers a certain routine. To figure the cue for my craving I spent a few days tracking exactly when the urge to eat a cookie happened. What I noticed pretty soon was interesting. The cookie craving always hit between 3:00pm and 3:30pm. That was my cue - a certain time of day.*

With so much at stake, we are blessed to have the tool of **SCRIPTURAL LOGIC AND REASON**:
Romans 6:17-19: Logic: You were a slave to sin without your choice, so why not choose to be a slave to righteousness?

With so much at stake, we are blessed to have the tool of **KNOWING WHERE TO GO FOR STRENGTH**: James 4:7-8

What about extreme habits?



Second step: The routine, *How to Break a Habit*, thepowerofhabit.com

- *The next part in the habit is the routine, the behavior itself. For me, though, it was pretty easy to figure out. Every day between 3 and 3:30, I would get a craving for a cookie. I would get up out of my chair and walk over to the elevator and take the elevator up to the 14th floor. I get out, get a cookie and then eat it while talking to my colleagues in the cafeteria.*

Fifth Rule of Habits: No habit remains abandoned without a new habit having been put in its place! Nature abhors a vacuum - new habits must fill the old ones.

Ephesians 5:18-20: True fellowship is a good way to replace a bad habit.

The more extreme the damaging habit, the more extreme the new habit must be:
Romans 1:20-25:



The problem, *David's Dark Secret*, CBN.com

- *(Narrator) David grew up going to church so he knew pornography was wrong.*
- *(David) I tried to put on this good Christian face and go to church and play the part. Part of me wanted to be so close to God, and then part of me felt so guilty. I knew if people found out, they would see me differently.*
- *(Narrator) When he was 17, he met Valerie. They later married and started a family. David loved his wife, but pornography warped his view of sex.*



We bring this up because it is a very real problem. The internet has made it very easy for evil to live in your house. We are all sinful beings and many of us have "emotional black holes" we try to fill. Like it or not, this is a choice. When we get ourselves stuck in this circumstance, we have chosen to be there. When we look at extreme habits that are the result of extreme actions because of extreme choices, we have to counteract that with something just as extreme in the other direction!

When our conscious is deadened, it is just a small step to dwell in evil and sin: Proverbs 17:20:

With the darkness of evil habits comes the darkness of shame and secrecy: Proverbs 28:13

Fortunately, the Almighty sees all and will justly judge: Jeremiah 17:9-10: So, again we are faced with the choice - break a habit/make a habit - where are your tools? James 4:4

What about spiritual habits?

Sixth rule of habits: Thoughtfully and prayerfully choosing new habits alters your destiny!



Third step is the reward, *How to Break a Habit, thepowerofhabit.com*

- The last part of the habit is the reward. In some respects, the reward is the most important part because that's why habits exist - so that we can get the rewards that we want. But figuring out the rewards can be tricky. To figure out what reward was driving my habit, I did a little bit of an experiment. One day when the cookie urge struck, instead of going up to the cafeteria, I went outside and I took a walk around the block. Then the next day, I went up to the cafeteria but instead of finding a cookie, I got a candy bar and then ate it at my desk. Then the day after that, I went up to the cafeteria again, but I didn't buy anything. Instead, I just talked to friends for about ten minutes. What I figured out pretty quickly was it had nothing to do with cookies. It had to do with socializing!*

The Habit Development Process: Desire - Assessment - Lock up the past habitual behavior - Unlock the new opportunities of new behavior

First spiritual habit: Desire - centralize Jesus in your life! Isaiah 42:1-3

Second spiritual habit: Assessment - bring your bruised and broken life before Him in all humility! 1 John 1:9



True change, *David's Dark Secret, CBN.com*

- I knew that I was hurting her and I knew that I was offending God. And yet, I just didn't know what to do. But yet there was something inside of me that just craved it. I never had an affair, but honestly, I was cheating.*
- When they joined a local church, David wanted to get involved.*
- I remember telling Valerie one day, I think I am supposed to be a minister. Of course she said I was crazy! But it stirs old feelings of that call. So we started to be more active in our church.*
- But David said one day God convicted him about his sin.*
- There was a stench; there was smell that I hadn't smelled before. And I was like, what's going on? This is strange. God spoke to my heart and said, this is a stench to Me, it's disgusting.*

The price to pay for his habit became bigger than the habit itself. We need to continually keep control of our bad habits.

Third spiritual habit: Lock up the past habitual behavior - present yourself as His child!

Romans 12:1-2: We replace what we want with what God wants in everything we do. **Fourth**

spiritual habit: Unlock the new opportunities of new behavior - replace the old with new promise and hope! 1 Corinthians 10:13: We have to recognize how God will provide the way of escape. Our deliverance can come through various ways both big and small. **And now...stay there!!!** Psalms 1:2 Galatians 6:9 **Here is what great habits are made of:** Galatians 5:22-25: God wants us to be better than who we are today. Through prayer and hard work, we can be better. Base your habits in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control.

So do our bad habits control us?

*For Jonathan and Rick (and Kathy!) and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!*