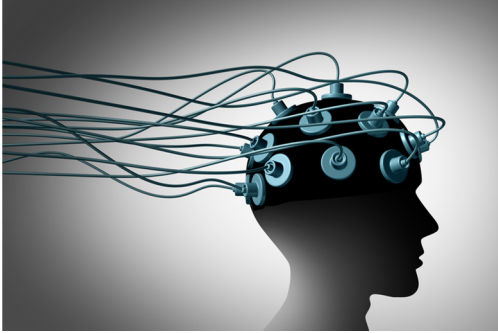




SHOULD MY HABITS BE KEPT OR BROKEN?

Galatians 1:13: (NASB) *For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.*



It is another new year and that means another opportunity to start some things that are new, different and good for us. It also means we consider stopping or at least reducing those things in life that are not so good for us. It all sounds so easy, except for one little detail that can be expressed in one little word - habits. Breaking old and establishing new habits is one of the hardest challenges most individuals face. This is difficult because, by definition, making and breaking habits is making and breaking instinctive behavior. The first thing we need to do is to know what to change and why. While this is an important

beginning, the next step is to know how to change and that is where our work and focus truly begins.

Before we begin, we would like to take a moment and remember our dear friend, Tim Allen, who passed away unexpectedly on Christmas day. Tim joined us several times in our radio studio in the past, and Tim and his wife, Julianne, were here with us in our home studio several months ago. He had a voracious attitude for understanding God and His plan and sharing it with others. That is the legacy of his life. We will miss him. Our prayers are with Julianne.



The linking of habits we will be discussing is from John Maxwell, leadership teacher and author.



We all have habitual **THINKING**, **BELIEFS** and **EXPECTATIONS**. Our **ATTITUDES** are driven by habit as well as our **BEHAVIORS**. This means our **PERFORMANCE** in all areas of life is connected to our habits, so our lives are habit driven. We want to be open to examining each area of our lives for habits that need to be broken, habits that need to be established and habits that need to be kept.

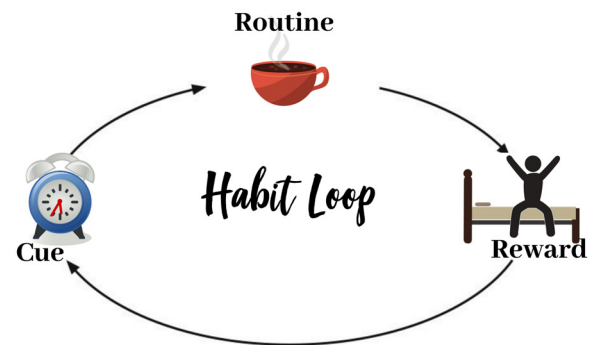


Three stages of habits, *How to ACTUALLY Break Your Bad Habits*, Thomas Frank

- You have the ability to break those bad habits as long as you take the challenge seriously. As Aristotle said over 2000 years ago (with some admittedly weird grammar in the English translation), "What it lies in our power to do, it lies in our power not to do." But before we dive into the actual tactics and strategies here, it's useful to ask the question, "What exactly is a bad habit?" Well, in Charles Duhigg's book, The Power of Habit, he defines a habit in general as an ingrained pattern of behavior that has three stages. There is the cue, whatever*

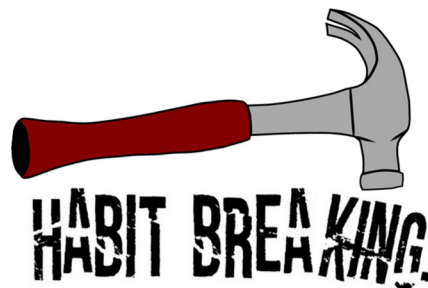


triggers the habit in your mind. The routine, the pattern of behavior of the actions that you take to get the reward, the final part. He also mentions that once a habit becomes truly, deeply rooted and ingrained, you've gone through it several times, a fourth component also comes into the equation, and that's craving. When the cue is triggered in your mind, there is an intense craving for that reward. It's important to understand this. Every habit has a reward, otherwise you wouldn't do it.



Every habit has a reward. There is a cue that starts it. There is a routine that builds it and then we get the reward. Then we develop the craving that makes us go back to it over and over again, getting stuck in a rut.

My habitual **THOUGHTS** - habits to break or habits to make? Are they habits that should be broken or enhanced?



**WHAT BELIEF IS MY
THINKING IN THIS
PARTICULAR AREA OF MY
LIFE ENHANCING?**

Thinking is the base and always leads to belief.

Does my thinking contribute to believing in myself as a called-out follower of Christ? If our thinking is not enhancing that, it is habitual thinking that needs to be reorganized and removed.

Romans 12:3: (NASB) *For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment...*

Thinking that encourages my ego is not thinking that encourages my Christian growth. Thinking too lowly of ourselves is the same problem as thinking too highly of ourselves. We should not be thinking too much about ourselves.



I was thinking about goal setting. Each year in Christ I see more things I need to work or improve upon.

It is not because we are getting worse; it is because we are growing up in Christ. We are able to see and absorb more. We are able to work on the deeper things we were not able to handle before.

HABIT MAKING:



*"When you change your thinking,
you change your beliefs."*

We will trace Saul's (Apostle Paul before he became an apostle) pre-conversion life and trace who he was and his conversion and use it as a template for us to manage our own habits.

Acts 26:4-5,9-11: (NASB) ⁴So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem ... ⁵that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion. ⁹So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

Saul was single focused and thought more about protecting traditions rather than protecting the word of God.

Saul was bent on serving God, but he did NOT think about and therefore believe in true godliness:

Acts 26:12-15: (NASB) ¹²While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. ¹⁴And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. ¹⁵And I said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

Saul's thinking was challenged - this was the fundamental beginning of the process that would change him.

For us to change a habit, we need to fundamentally look at our thinking and decide if the habit is worth keeping or if it needs changing or adjusting.



**Habitual thinking
is the first place to identify and
weed out bad habits.**



Habits always start with thinking. That is no surprise because everything in life starts with thinking.



Thinking produces belief. What is triggered when we begin to entertain new and better beliefs?

What is tricky about this “habit thing” is our thinking happens both consciously and subconsciously. As we change BOTH levels of thinking, beliefs can follow. We need to be careful because new beliefs are fragile, and we need to guide and nourish them to an appropriate end.

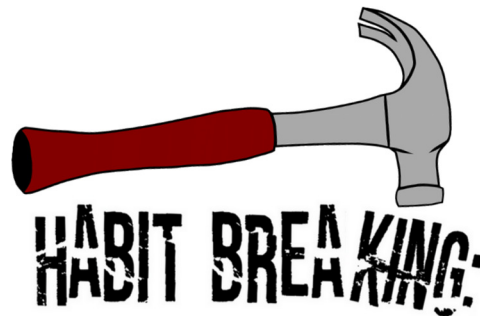


Anything new is fragile and needs extra care.
A new habit is like a thread; it can be easily broken.

We know how quickly New Year’s resolutions fade away when they are not worked on and nurtured. We also need to look at the necessity of the new habit with intensity.

Chains of habit are too light to be felt until they are too heavy to be broken.
— Warren Buffett

My habitual **BELIEFS** - habits to break or habits to make?



**WHAT TRUE EXPECTATION
IS MY BELIEF IN THIS AREA
OF LIFE REVEALING?**

Do my present beliefs instill an expectation of being faithful daily to my call or do they draw me from it?

James 4:2-3: (NASB) ²You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

James is saying their belief system was not feeding their spirituality.

When our thinking and beliefs are mired in what we want, our expectations cannot grow spiritually. Often our beliefs are self-esteem-driven rather than being driven by esteeming Christ.



Need compelling reasons, How to ACTUALLY Break Your Bad Habits,
Thomas Frank

- So, essentially, a bad habit is really any habit that stands in opposition to your long-term goals, be it living a healthy life, or maintaining good relationships, or earning straight A's. And the reason that these bad habits stick around for so long is because they are ingrained, but almost always, they're habits that lead to short-term rewards. Your brain is hardwired to care a lot more about the short-term than your long-term goals, even though logically you know those long-term goals are more important. So, essentially, you're acting against your own self-interests. In fact, there's a term that originates in ancient Greece for



this called “akrasia.” And if you want to be able to beat that akrasia, if you want to be able to beat that short-term focused programming deep inside your brain, you need to have a clear, well-defined and compelling reason for breaking that bad habit. In one of his private journals Bruce Lee once wrote, “I realize the dominating thoughts of my mind will eventually reproduce themselves in outward, physical action and gradually transform themselves into physical reality. Therefore, I will concentrate my thoughts for 30 minutes daily upon the task of thinking of the person I intend to become, thereby creating in my mind a clear mental picture.”

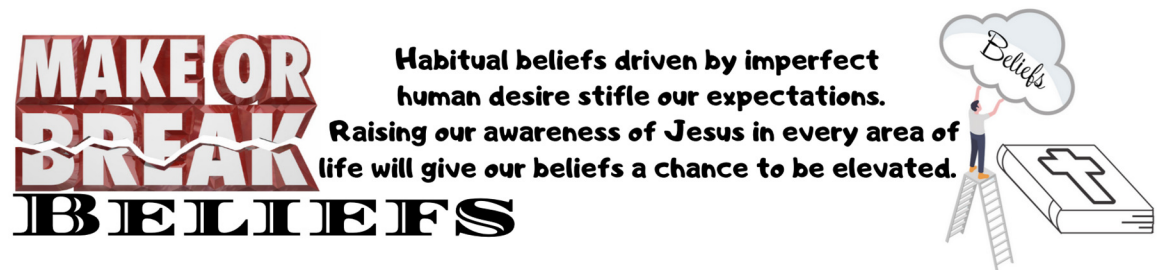
A clear mental picture and compelling reasons are important for a developing Christian.



Jesus continues to tell Saul what his true purpose in life will be. Jesus is changing Saul’s beliefs:

Acts 26:16-18: (NASB) ¹⁶But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; (Jesus is showing Saul that he will be taught new beliefs) ¹⁷rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, ¹⁸to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in me.

Jesus is showing Saul the gross errors of his thinking, beliefs and actions. He is changing Saul’s paradigm.



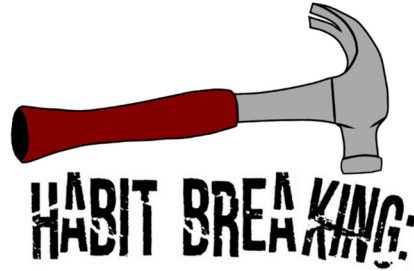
“cqbiblepodcast”



Comment on habits from a Facebook contributor: One thing is to just promise to do it for five minutes, then, usually momentum happens. Starting is the hardest part. Additionally, do the hard thing first while you have the energy. Thirdly, begin positively. Make your bed every day and keep your room clean; this way you have one thing you started off with what was a success and easy.

Belief brings expectation.

My habitual EXPECTATIONS - habits to break or habits to make?



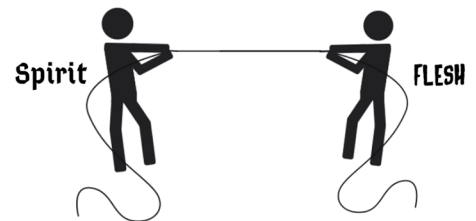
**WHAT ATTITUDE DO I DISPLAY
BASED ON MY CURRENT EXPECTATIONS
IN THIS AREA OF LIFE?**

Our expectations will bring some type of attitude. We need to honestly ask ourselves, “What attitude are my expectations bringing me?”

Especially in today’s world, people are restless. Godly contentment comes through **EXPECTATION**, which comes from **BELIEF**, which comes from **THINKING**. If we do not like the habit of our expectation, we need to think about what we believe and the thoughts which brought us there, and then we can work on changing our expectation.

Do my expectations breed an attitude of godly contentment or earthly restlessness?

Acts 8:18-21: (NASB) ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit. ²⁰But Peter said to him, May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.



Simon was a magician who became enthralled with Christianity and was a follower, to a degree. He offered to pay the apostles for the ability to have the gifts of the Spirit. Simon’s expectations of the gifts of Spirit were wrong and Peter told him his *heart was not right before God*. His habit of expectation needed to be changed.

Being a Christian is not natural. Because we are so ingrained in our earthly thinking and beliefs, our expectations instinctively follow, even if we are being shown a higher way. They will continue to follow until we replace them with godly thinking and beliefs.

We cannot separate our expectations from our beliefs, so we must be clear on what drives us.

**We already see how easy it is to have wrong expectations.
How do we right the expectation ship?**

Expectations can be tricky. When faced with an unusual or new experience, we consciously think about and weigh what to expect. However, the habitual circumstances of daily life do not usually rise up into our conscious thought process; they simply appear and wait to be fulfilled.



Two weeks ago, we discussed decision-making and learned about heuristics (mental shortcuts that are not necessarily good). When we get into the habitual daily circumstances of our lives, we have to battle that instinctive thinking, as well as our conscious thinking.

For more on decision-making and heuristics, please search our archives for Ep.1104: How Do I Know My Decisions Are Right?

Each year one vicious habit discarded, in time might make the worst of us good.
— Benjamin Franklin.

We cannot change all at once. We need to work on our habits piece by piece and establish beliefs and expectations.

My habitual EXPECTATIONS - habits to break or habits to make? Continued...



Our attitude is built upon our expectations.

The aftermath of Saul's encounter with Jesus:

Acts 9:8-9: (NASB) ⁸Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. ⁹And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

There is nothing like an unexpected and dramatic spiritual encounter followed by complete darkness and fasting for days to get you to rethink your beliefs and reconsider your expectations for your journey! There is no better way to change your attitude than by absorbing new and valuable truth.

Meanwhile, the whole rethinking about habitual responses is happening elsewhere with Ananias:

Acts 9:10-16: (NASB) ¹⁰Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here I am, Lord. ¹¹And the Lord said to him, Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, ¹²and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight. (Ananias is given a vision of Jesus which specifies a very specific task to accomplish.) ¹³But Ananias answered, (HIS THINKING) Lord, I have heard from many about this man, (HIS BELIEF) how much harm he did to your saints at Jerusalem; (HIS EXPECTATION) ¹⁴and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.

Ananias' habit is GOOD. But Jesus tells him NEW information to form a NEW perspective:

¹⁵But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶for I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake.



Jesus' answer helps Ananias to focus on **NEW THINKING**, **NEW BELIEF** and **NEW EXPECTATIONS**. There is no better way to change your **ATTITUDE** than by absorbing new and valuable truth.



Habitual expectations need to be challenged to be sure they are in line with the highest truth we can access. Always weigh your thinking and beliefs first.

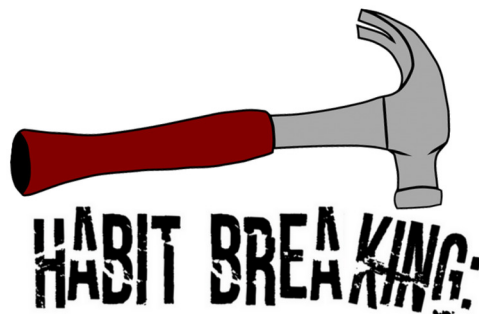


 Use a picture, *How to ACTUALLY Break Your Bad Habits*, Thomas Frank

- You can also create a real physical reminder of why you're trying to break that habit as well. And that's actually what I did. Out of all the reasons I had for stopping my addiction to energy drinks, the main one was my face because for most of high school and for a lot of college I had horrible acne. My complexion was basically the dark side of the moon and it wrecked my self-confidence. And it was bad enough that I would wake up pretty much every day with blood stains on my pillowcase and my sheets. So, I really wanted to fix this problem and I'd spend hours researching online trying to find remedies and fixes and trying to figure out what the causes were. But eventually I realized what I had basically known all along, which is that sugar - especially sugary energy drinks and soda - were a huge cause of breakouts. So, one day I decided to crystallize this reason in physical form and actually went into Photoshop. I took a picture of myself and I used the clone tool to create a photoshopped version of that picture. Basically, an idealized version of what I want to look like someday. I put that on my phone and every time I would get a craving to go buy a Monster or buy Red Bull, I would look at that picture, and I knew if I gave into that craving I was pushing that reality further and further into the future.

He put a picture in front of him to help him choose which reality he wanted. As a Christian, that is a great tool to help us change our habits.

My habitual **ATTITUDES** - habits to break or habits to make?



**WHAT BEHAVIOR DO I DISPLAY
BASED ON MY CURRENT ATTITUDE
IN THIS AREA OF LIFE?**



If we find ourselves looking back over the past year and start making a list of what others need to work on, then we are in big trouble!

Does my attitude produce a behavior that lifts others up or one that brings others down?

Galatians 2:11-12: (NASB) ¹¹*But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.*

This is an example of an attitude being displayed that was damaging to others because it did lead to behavior. The Apostle Paul saw the behavior of Apostle Peter and let him know he was not representing Christ appropriately.

Attitudes can be powerfully positive as well as powerfully poisonous.

**A bad attitude usually leads to bad behavior.
How do we avoid such a crash and burn trajectory?**

Attitude is a revealer. Thinking, belief and expectation are largely internal functions of habit. We can develop these things for good or ill without too much exposure. However, when we get to our attitude and our behavior, they are there for the world to see. *What happens in our minds is revealed in our lives!*

Until you have formed the habit of looking for the good instead of the bad there is in others, you will be neither successful nor happy. — Napoleon Hill

My habitual **ATTITUDES** - habits to break or habits to make? Continued...



My 12-year old grandson is at the age where sometimes life is great and sometimes it is not so great. We went to his house over the holidays, and he was in a very mopey mood. Nothing was good. I made it my business to change his attitude. I got a lot of eye-rolling, but it worked. We had such a great day because he changed his attitude, which leads to changed behavior.

Here the stories of Saul, the new convert, and Ananias the disciple converge.

Both have had a serious attitude adjustment based on their thinking, beliefs and expectations being enlightened:

Acts 9:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷*So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.*

Ananias walks in faith and boldly stands for Jesus! **THIS WAS A DEFINING MOMENT** for both of them, as they obviously accept each other as brothers.



¹⁸And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;

Saul did NOT procrastinate - he is healed and then baptized. In his heart he had been serving God, but in his actions, he had been doing Satan's work. Here was a new behavior.

Saul becomes Paul and later uses his experience as a teaching tool - he is not afraid of his horrific mistakes in the past. Notice the attitude here:

1 Corinthians 15:8-11: (NASB) ⁸and last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me also. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Paul's recounting of his conversion shows the behavior built from his humble attitude. *I persecuted the church of God - he tried to humiliate them and make their beliefs crumble, to have them deny what they stood for. Now his attitude is, I am the least of the apostles and it is all about the grace of God.*

MAKE OR BREAK ATTITUDES Habitual attitudes need constant monitoring, because our attitudes in each aspect of our lives reveal where our heart truly lives in each and every part of our experience.



We show our attitude to everyone. With work, family and friends, are we God-honoring or would our attitude be different if Jesus were in the room? If we would not do it if Jesus were here, we need to rethink our attitude. To change it, we need to change our expectation, belief and thinking.



Last week, a dear friend said she was moving. We had a comfortable habit of sharing many thoughts. However, two days later I was asked to contribute research for Christian Questions. This assignment won't replace the comfort of my friend's presence but refocuses my attention on God's presence.

A void was filled, and she can praise God. We want to fill the voids in our lives with what is filled with peace, contentment and hope.

Replacement routine, How to ACTUALLY Break Your Bad Habits, Thomas Frank

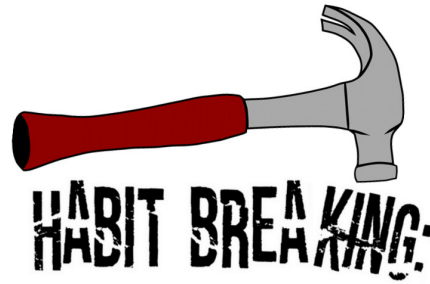
- *That's actually the second tip here. If you can find a different routine that replaces the reward with something similar, then you can replace the habit with something more productive. And this is actually something Charles Duhigg talks about in The Power of Habit. Now for me, I replaced my energy drink addiction and my soda addiction in part with sparkling drinks - La Croix, Topo Chico, San Pellegrino, because I realized it wasn't necessarily the taste of the drinks that I was addicted to, it wasn't even necessarily the caffeine, it was just the novelty of having that cool can on the desk and having some good-tasting drink while I did my boring homework. So, I asked myself is there something else where I can get a similar if not exact same benefit? And when my*



girlfriend actually introduced me to La Croix which is like a lemon-flavored one, I was like, this doesn't taste the same, but it's carbonated, it's in a can, it's got a bit of novelty to it, so it kind of replaced soda in that habit.

Stopping an action, behavior, thought or attitude creates a void. If not replaced with something else, the void drags us back to what was before. Replacing is important!

My habitual **BEHAVIOR** - is it made up of habits to break or habits to make?



**WHAT KIND OF PERFORMANCE
RESULTS FROM MY BEHAVIOR IN
THIS SPECIFIC AREA OF LIFE?**

Behavior directly correlates to performance. What performance does my behavior bring?

Do I accomplish the tasks of life with a godly zeal, or do I trudge through them because I am not focused or engaged?

We can control our actions and reactions. I want to make them count and not be frivolous. I want to honor the Lord.

We have an initial reaction when something hard is placed before us. I sometimes find my initial reaction is not all that great. We have to get our head around this being a long experience and not just an event. During the decision-making process, we ask ourselves how we want to behave for this ongoing issue. It comes down to setting our attitude based on our expectation, which is based on our belief, which is based on our thinking. We see the new experience with the perspective of something God has given to us, and we are thankful for it. When we will deal with it as a part of our life and not an invasion of our life, things can change.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25: (NASB) ²⁴Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

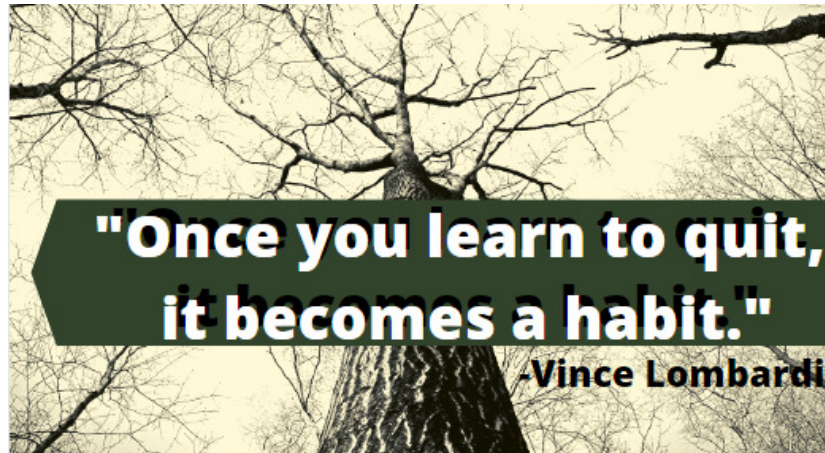
Athletes have talent, but winners have an incredible work ethic. Behavior gone bad is a direct result of a lack of discipline. This lack begins in our thinking, beliefs, expectations and attitudes. We end up with behavior that everyone around us sees. This is the beginning of our witnessing to Christ.

We are now getting down to a complete picture. Habits have deep roots! Do we uproot or cultivate?



We are finishing the internal and external workings of habit formation. What is the final piece?

ATTITUDE and **BEHAVIOR** are the beginning of the world around us knowing how our habits look in life. They are the present, in-the-moment external results of our **THINKING**, **BELIEF** and **EXPECTATIONS**. The next step in the public proclamation of our habits is the lasting results of our **PERFORMANCE**.



Quitting is a learned behavior, just like focus and discipline.

My habitual **BEHAVIOR** - do I have habits to break or habits to make?



Saul now begins to behave like a truly dedicated servant of God, but now as an enlightened Christian.

We see his immediate behavioral changes:

Acts 9:19-22: (NASB) ¹⁹and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, ²⁰and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, he is the Son of God.

Saul went to work! Think about the reaction of the other disciples when Ananias brought him in. They had to have heard about the visions and knew only Jesus could turn such a heart around. Maybe there was some suspicion among them, thinking this could be a trap of Saul getting on the inside.

²¹All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests? ²²But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.



Days ago, he was out to destroy them. Now he is proving with Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah. What an amazing turnaround!

A change of behavior is good, but it is only a start. The true proof of a changed life and of living by new habits comes over time. This is observed in our performance.

MAKE OR BREAK BEHAVIOR

Habitual behavior, whether godly or not, is a witness to just how much the power of God is at work in our lives. What does God's power in your life look like to others?

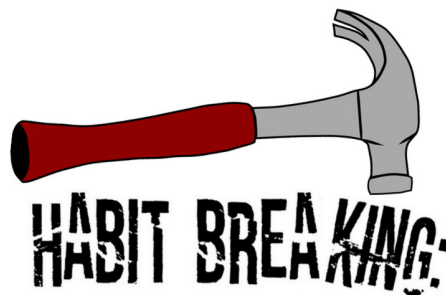


Three Odd Things Mr. Rogers Did, CNBC Make It

- He would swim a mile every day. And after he swam, he would weigh himself and he weighed 143 pounds, he said, every day of his adult life, which I didn't even know how that's possible. But with him I believe it. And to him, 143 was a kind of a private numerology that meant, one, four, three, "I love you." One letter, four, three. SNL (the sketch comedy television show, Saturday Night Live) had a famous sketch called "Mister Robinson's Neighborhood" with Eddie Murphy. Eddie Murphy actually was a big fan of Mister Rogers, and they wanted Mister Rogers to go on, but he said, "Well, that's past my bedtime. I can't go on SNL." He would get up at 5 a.m. and he would read the Bible in Hebrew or Greek most days. So, this kind of willful, almost monkish devotion to his mission was something that defined him and made him do this incredible amount of work - almost 1,000 shows, books, letters, just a tremendous output from one person, and he did it all virtually himself.
- "A beautiful day for a neighbor, would you be mine?"



My habitual **PERFORMANCE** - does it consist of habits to break or habits to make?



**WHAT DOES MY LIFE REFLECT
IN THIS PARTICULAR AREA
AS A RESULT OF MY PERFORMANCE?**



Performance is the sum total of behavior over long periods of time.
 “What have I stood for?” Performance is the epistle of our lives.



If we are stuck trying to think of what to change for the upcoming year, look at the good qualities of others and try to implement them in our lives. My wife, Jewel, is so thoughtful. She thinks of others always. My dad had four siblings and I have lots of cousins all over the world. She sent a Christmas e-card to every one of them and they all responded. I want to be more like that. I sent two encouraging texts out to friends to follow through with being thoughtful like her.

This is not a moment in Jewel's life; it is the story of her life. This is what performance is. We all fall short, but are we making progress?

Philippians 4:12-13: (NASB) ¹²I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

This showed Paul's maturity.

Striving for a new habit of consistent performance regardless of circumstances is internal. We want to break the habit of *reacting* and enhance the habit of *spiritually responding* to build a godly life performance.



The record of the Apostle Paul's life is simply summed up in his presentation to King Agrippa:

Acts 26:19-23: (NASB) ¹⁹So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but kept declaring (to all) ... that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. ²¹For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.



Paul was experiencing the same hatred from others but did not flinch.

²²So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; ²³that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of his resurrection from the dead he would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.

Unflinching life performance was his new habit!



Habit revealing tip! When we examine ourselves, let us be sure to use the “MRI tools” of God’s word and Jesus’ example, rather than the simple “x-ray tools” of human perception.

Understand layer by layer what is damaged and needs fixing.



Habitual performance is the lasting epistle of our discipleship. Performance lingers long past our physical lives. Are others inspired when they observe it?



Does our life bring others to Christ? It all starts with our thinking. Thinking provokes belief, which provokes expectation, which provokes attitude, which provokes our behavior, which provokes our performance. These are the tools to break bad habits and put Christlikeness front and center.

*So, should my habits be kept or broken?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on January 6, 2019:
Ep. 1107: Why Does Time Matter in God's Plan?



Bonus Material!

Make a habit of two things: to help; or at least to do no harm. — Hippocrates

Another look at the Apostle Paul's perspective on his changed life:

Galatians 1:13-17: (NASB) ¹³For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; ¹⁴and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. ¹⁵But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal His son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

I didn't lose my will to win; I lost my will to prepare. — Joe Montana upon retiring from the NFL

To be ready to change any habit we must realize the effort:

Habakkuk 2:2-4: (NRSV) ²Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. ³For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. ⁴Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

1. Have a clearly defined goal - *Write the vision*
2. Write it out in great detail - *make it plain on tablets*
3. Review it daily - *so that a runner may read it*
4. Take action - *do those things necessary to make progress - For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end and does not lie.*
5. Realize that failures are only steppingstones - *If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.*
6. Never, never, never give up - *the righteous live by their faith.*

If you focus on results, you will never change. If you focus on change, you will get results.
— Jack Dixon

Become committed to this action above all others:

Philippians 3:13-14: (ASV) ¹³Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Commitment stands on a unique footing in our lives. First, the offering:

Romans 12:1-2: (NASB) ¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Then, the transformation:

²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:3-15: (NASB) ³For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. ⁴For just as we have many members



in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁹so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Understand what we are to do and what we are to support:

⁹Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ¹⁰if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ¹¹or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Decide to love without reservation:

⁹Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

How much we miss when we rush through the process:

Galatians 6:8-10: (ASV) *⁸For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.*

