

### CCC HOW TO BREAK A BAD HABIT Part 3

For the last few weeks I have been saying that we all have bad habits. I know I do... and you've a belly button you do to... In other words if you are a human being you've got bad habits too. Some of our bad habits are obvious. Some of our bad habits are kind of hidden. But either way it doesn't matter. Either way hidden or obvious our bad habits mess up our lives and keep us from being all that God wants us to be.

What do you do when you want to break a bad habit? We'll one thing you can do is to go to the bookstore and go look at the books in the self help section and they will focus you were you need to be but that's all they can do... why, because they don't have the power, they don't have the energy that you need to bring about genuine and lasting change in your life. I read some of them... They'll

say things like, "Shape –up, Get it together, Take control of your life and that is all good but the real truth for the most of us is I can't control today, much less my entire life. Now listen saying those things to me is like saying to a guy who's fallen off a skyscraper, "Stop falling!" He'd love to stop falling, but he doesn't have the power to stop and we don't have the power either to stop our bad habits.

So we are in series called, “How to Break a Bad Habits.” Three weeks ago we started looking at what God’s Word, the Bible says about "How to break a bad habit." I put these nine steps in an acrostic so you'll remember them. They spell out BREAK FREE. I want to start by doing a short review of the last two weeks. The first letter we look at in wanting to break free of a bad habit is:

**B - BEGIN TODAY** Don't put it off. Proverbs 27:1 says *"Never boast about tomorrow. You don't know what will happen between now and then."*

Ecclesiastes 11:4 (Living Bible) *"If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never get anything done!"* In other words, don't start next month; don't start next week, don't start tomorrow. God says, "Don't wait! Don't put it off. Do it today." There's never a better time than now. You quit saying, "One of these days I'm going to get my act together... One of these days I'm going to get right with God ... One of these days I'm going to do what I know is the right thing to do..." "One of these days" becomes "none of these days". God says trust me and start today.

The second letter in wanting to break free of a bad habit is:

**R - REFUSE TO BLAME OTHERS** You'll never break out of any bad habit until you accept responsibility

personally and you say, "This is my problem." You must refuse to blame other people.

### **E - EXAMINE MY LIFE**

After I assume personal responsibility, I take personal inventory. I take an honest appraisal of myself.

Lamentations 3:40 *"Let us examine our ways and test them and return to the Lord."* Circle "examine" and "test". God says, on a regular basis, you and I need to do some personal inventory. I need to ask myself questions like, "Where am I most tempted? Where am I likely to fall? ... What are my weaknesses? ... You've got to stop faking it, you got to stop living the double life. You've got to stop covering up your faults because hiding a hurt and hiding a habit intensifies the pain and only causes it to grow deeper.

### **A - ASK CHRIST TO TAKE CONTROL OF MY**

**LIFE**. Many people will tell me, "I'd love to change. But

I can't. I've read the books. I've prayed. I've cried. But I just can't change." I understand that and I know you can't and guess what you will never be able to change. You can't on your own. You need a power outside yourself. You need a greater power to change the things you can't change. That's why you need Jesus and I'm not just talking about being a Christian. I'm not saying, you need Jesus not just for salvation, but you need Christ every second of every minute of every hour of every day if you're going to change and be the person God meant for you to be. He needs to be in control.

The Bible says if you want to break free, if you want to change your life, you've got to give yourself completely to Jesus Christ. That means I've humbly said, "God, I admit it. I've blown it. You're God and I'm not. And I need Your

help. I submit myself to do what You want to do. I want You to be the Lord of my life, Jesus."

So what does it mean for Christ to be Lord? Lord is just the old fashioned term for "the big boss... number one... the guy in charge... When you say, "Jesus, I want You to be Lord of my life," what you're doing is putting a sign over yourself that says to everyone, "Under new management." I think that's the best definition of Christian -- Under new management. All of a sudden, I'm not calling the shots -- He's calling the shots. Jesus Christ doesn't want to be just a part of your life, He wants to be the guy in control, the big boss. He wants to call the shots. That's what it means to give yourself completely and when you do that, guess what happens to you? Power. Power to change your life. Power to break bad habits. Power to do the

things that you never thought you could do that you could ever change in your life up to this point begin happening.

The next letter in Break Free of bad habits is:

### **K - KEEP AWAY FROM TEMPTATION**

Romans 13:14 says. *"Don't give any chance to the flesh to have its fling."* If you want to stop drinking, you don't

stock your house with alcohol. The secret to overcoming temptation is to have a plan and to plan ahead to keep away

from temptation, if you don't have a plan then your

planning to fail. What God's word is telling us here is you

need to avoid the situations where you are tempted. If you

don't want to get stung you stay away from the bees. If you

hang around the barber shop long enough, you're going to

get a hair cut." That's our review now I want to get into

the FREE today. The F in FREE is:

### **F - FOCUS ON SOMETHING BETTER**

If you want to overcome a bad habit you've got to focus on something better. Proverbs 4:23 (Good News) *"Be careful how you think. Your life is shaped by your thoughts."* The spiritual battle for temptation is fought in your mind.

Whatever captures your attention is going to capture you.

The Bible does not teach us to resist temptation. It teaches us to resisting the tempter. What I am trying to say here resisting won't work here. See, the more you resist something, the more it persists in your mind and in your life. You resist the devil, you resist the tempter. But in temptation, what you do is refocus rather than resist. If you're saying, "I don't want that piece of pie. I don't want that piece of pie. I don't want that piece of pie " every time you want a piece of pie "What are you focusing on the whole time? **The piece of pie!** This is why diets do not work for me and for that much others too. Why, because

the whole time you're on a diet, what are you really focusing on mostly? Food. When you're on a diet you think far more about food than any other time in your life. Instead you need to focus on something else.

We'll the same is true when you are tempted by other things, you don't say, "No, no..."

You have to change the mental channels. Get up. Walk around the room, walk outside, read a book, call a friend, take a shower. Do whatever you have to do to cut yourself off from the tempting source. Refocus on something else. The Bible says your life is shaped by your thoughts.

Some of you are thinking, "What's wrong with a few little thoughts? They're not harmful. You think, "It's just a harmless fantasy." Let me share something with you here.... If you believe that, "You're kidding yourself." The

Bible says your thoughts determine your life... and if you think a truth or an idea over and over and over, it's inevitably, eventually it's going to come out in your behavior. You say, "I can watch this kind of stuff. It doesn't bother me. I can think these kinds of thoughts. I can listen to this." You're kidding yourself. It's like adding little pebbles to that scale in your mind. Pretty soon it's going to tip the scale and you're going to stumble. Your thoughts determine your life. Philippians 4:8 *"Fill your mind with things that are good and deserve praise. Things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and honorable."* Fill your mind with good things. This is called, The Principle of Replacement. The Principle of Replacement is built on the concept, the idea, the truth that nature abhors a vacuum. Vacuums are not a natural state -- at least on this planet. So nature immediately seeks to fill a vacuum.

That's a principle... When you say, "My gas tank is empty." It's not really empty. It's just been replaced with air. When you run out of gas, you don't have a vacuum in there. It's not really empty. Your gas tank is either filled with gas or with air. One replaces the other. So your gas tank is never really empty. That simply is The Principle of Replacement.

That principle is the same with us... You may think, "My mind is empty" and I am sure some of you think that about me sometimes... No all joking aside. It's never really empty. It's the same principle as the gas tank; it's always filled with something. So when you say, "I'm going to stop thinking this way." It doesn't work. The whole time you're focusing on what you don't want.

The way you get rid of a bad thought is replace it with a good one. When we push the word of God in the

front, the bad idea goes out the back. Replace it. Paul tells us, "Fill your mind with good things."

This is one of the ways you grow spiritually, by reprogramming your mind with new thought patterns. Replace old ways of thinking with new ways of thinking. Put off the old man, put on the new. The Bible says in Romans 12:2 *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Focus on something better. [Tuesday Evening I want to invite you to join me here at 7.](#)

### **R - RESTORE BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS**

What does that have to do with my bad habits?

Everything. Our bad habits always affect those around us. Especially those closest to us, what I do, my habits, don't just hurt me, they hurt other people.

There's a phrase you hear a lot today in the media: "What I do in my private life, doesn't effect my public

performance." There's a spiritual, Greek word I want you to learn today that you can say when you hear that in the media. The spiritual word God gave us here is, "Hogwash!" That's not true. Your character does influence everything you do. What I do privately does influence me publicly.

Let's say you hired a tutor for your children. The tutor said, "I want you to know that privately I'm a pedophile and a molester, but that will not affect my public performance with your child." If you go to a bank and the banker told you, "Privately, my hobby is lying, cheating and stealing and gambling. But it doesn't affect my public performance as your bank." That's silly!

Your bad habits and my bad habits do... and not only effect us but they hurt the people around us. We cause grief

to others and we cause guilt to ourselves. Anything that's out of control in your life is hurting other people.

Romans 12:18, "*As far as your responsibility goes, live at peace with everyone.*" He's saying, as far as your responsibility goes, have all the bridges restored and relationships rebuilt. Live at peace with everybody.

Usually this involves clearing up unresolved issues. It may take some time. You make a list of the people you've hurt with your bad habits -- either intentionally or unintentionally -- and you go to those people and you ask forgiveness and make amends. You ask them to help you, make restitution where possible. Maybe some of you need to go back to a former spouse and say, "I never really did admit this, but I need to admit I was a major part of this break-up and here are the reasons why. I'm sorry and I want to ask you to forgive me." That doesn't mean you're

getting back together. You may have already re-married.

But it does mean you're cleaning up the past.

Why would you do anything that difficult?

This is the most difficult step. None of us want to admit that my problem caused you pain to others. It's humbling, but that's the idea. The Bible says, "...*that God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble.*" Grace is the power to change your bad habits and you don't get grace by being proud. You get it by being humble.

Why should you go back to the people that you've hurt with your habits and ask them to forgive you? Because a clear conscious is absolutely essential for lasting change. I'm not talking about if you want to change for three months or six months or a year. I'm talking about permanent change in your lifestyle and your life for the rest of your life. You're got to take this step. Say, "God, I

admit it," and then you go to the people and say, "I admit it."

**Testimony** : I asked Brian Post if he would share some of his testimony with us...Brian Post is a guy in our church that has had to learn this the hard way.

**Brian**: Will end with something like this... **Today, I'm part of the Celebrate Recovery Ministry and the OC Ministry...** I have taken Class 101, 201. God is using all the pain I went through for good now. In closing, I'd like to say that if you're struggling with a harmful habit whatever it is, let me encourage you to commit your entire life to Jesus Christ and get involved in a group of Christians who can help you. Don't waste another day. God's words have the steps to help you break free. And Jesus gives you the power to accomplish those steps. Don't keep living in misery. You really can be free in Christ.

**Pastor bill:** There is a law of human behavior called The Law of Diminishing Intent. You may have never heard that term. But you do know what I'm talking about. It means that as time passes, our best intentions fade. We get in a very predictable cycle of phases:

**Phase one is desperation.** I've got to change! It's the point where you become so upset with something in your life that you go "Enough is enough! I'm not living like this anymore. I'm changing. I've got the change!"  
Desperation.

**Phase two is determination.** I'm going to change! You make the decision. You sign the commitment card. You do whatever it takes. I'm going to change! You step across the line.

**Phase three is effort.** That's where you, out of sheer human will power start going, "I'm changing!" And by

sheer human will power you do start changing yourself. You start making the changes in your life and that last three months, four months, maybe a little longer. But it's not going to last forever. Will power runs out.

**Phase four is pride.** That's where you start thinking, "I've got this thing licked. It wasn't that hard. Look at what I'm doing. I'm having victory here. I've got this licked." The Bible says "*Pride comes before destruction*".

Inevitably you fall. "*Let him who stands take heed lest he fall.*" So then we start the cycle all over again. We wait until things get so bad and we say, "I have got to change" -- **Desperation.** Then **Determination** comes: "I'm going to change!" **Effort:** "I am changing." **Pride:** "Look at me! I'm doing it! I got this licked." Then you fall.

When you have done this five or six times then you start feeling ashamed. You don't even want to talk to God about

it any more. You've stumbled so many times, you're embarrassed, you're ashamed and you think, "I'm going to give up!" How do you break that cycle? That's what were going to talk about next week...

**Prayer:**

The road to freedom begins with the first step. Pray this prayer in your mind. God will hear you. "Jesus, You know how much I'd like to change some things in my life. I've got some habits that are really causing me problems. Some of them I'm really ashamed of. You know how I've tried to change in the past. I've failed repeatedly. I can't do it on my own power. I just can't change on my own. Today, Jesus Christ, I admit that I need Your help. I need You to be my savior and I ask You to be my Lord. I need the power of Your Holy Spirit to change my life. I ask this in Your name. Amen

### HOW TO BREAK A BAD HABIT Part 3

"... they are slaves of destructive habits -- for a man is a slave of anything that has conquered him." 2 Peter 2:19 (GN)

#### HOW TO B.R.E.A.K. F.R.E.E.

##### Review

##### BEGIN

"Never boast about tomorrow. You don't know what will happen between now and then." Proverbs 27:1 (GN)

"If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never get anything done!" Ecclesiastes 11:4 (LB)

##### REFUSE

"Some people ruin themselves by their own stupid actions and they blame the Lord." Proverbs 19:3 (GN)

##### EXAMINE

"Let us examine our ways and test them, and return to the Lord." Lamentations 3:40

"My dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration ... until I finally admitted my sins and stopped trying to hide them ... and God forgave me! All my guilt is gone!" Psalms 32:4-5 (LB)

##### ASK

"Don't let sin control your body any longer; don't give in to its sinful desires... But give yourself completely to God -- every part of you -- to be used for His good purposes." Romans 6:12-13 (LB)

##### KEEP AWAY

"Don't give any chances to the flesh to have its fling." Romans 13:14 (Ph)

"Plan carefully what you do ... avoid evil ... " Proverbs 24:27 (GN)

##### FOCUS

"Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts." Proverbs 4:23 (GN)

"Fill your mind with things that are good and deserve praise; things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable." Philippians 4:8 (GN)

##### RESTORE

"As far as your responsibility goes, live at peace with everyone." Romans 12:18 (Ph)

##### ENLIST

"Two are better off than one, because together ... if one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone and falls... there's no one to help him." Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (GN)

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." James 5:16

##### EXTEND

"Christ helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others in trouble, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God" 2 Corinthians 1:4 (GN)

"If a person is trapped in some sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself; you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:1-2

"God keeps His promise; He will not allow you to be tempted beyond your power to resist; at the time you are tempted He will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out." 1 Corinthians 10:13 (GN)

