

CCC HOW TO BREAK A BAD HABIT Part 1

Everyone of us have bad habits. I've got a lot of them. You've got some, too. Some of our bad habits are obvious. Some of them are kind of hidden. It doesn't matter. Either way they 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? One of the things is go over to book Store and look at all the self help books because there are thousands of books out there that will help you overcome bad habits or when going thru the store you will see a magazine that is talking about “**HOW TO BREAK A CERTAIN BAD HABIT.**” All of them will tell you some things to do but they don't have the power, they don't have the energy to bring about genuine, lasting change. You've read some of

these books. I have, too. They'll say things like, "Take control of your life." Right! I can't control today, much less my entire life. Telling a person to, "Shape up! Get rid of all your bad habits. Take control of your life" 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.

For the next few Sunday's we're going to look at God's way. What God's Word, the Bible says about "How to break a bad habit." We are going to look at Nine steps. I put these nine steps in an acrostic so you'll remember them. They spell our BREAK FREE.

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."* In other words, don't start next month; don't

start next week, don't start tomorrow. That scripture is telling us Start today. Every day that you procrastinate on changing a bad habit it gets more deeply ingrained. Every day you put off changing the things you know should be changed in your life, they become more habitual. They become stronger with delay. God says, "Don't wait! Don't put it off. Do it today."

Ecclesiastes 11:4 (Living Bible) *"If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never get anything done!"* 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" is "none of these days". Do it now.

Think of a habit you'd like to change. We're going to start now, today.... Don't be afraid just take this step... Think of a habit you'd like to change

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." It's human nature that we love to blame everybody else for all the problems in our lives, all of our unhappiness. Our favorite phrase in America today is, "It's not my fault." We like to excuse and accuse. We excuse ourselves from all of our faults, our failures, our flops, and flubs and we love to accuse everybody else and point out their irregularities, point out their sins, point out their malfunctions, their dysfunction and on and on. We accuse and excuse. It's human nature. We hide our sins, we hide

our faults and then we hurl little bombs at everybody else.
Verbal bombs. Hiding and hurling.

The most bizarre, the most insane thing is when we blame God for our problems. We talked about this last week... God lets us have a free will and then we make all kinds of stupid decisions and we get ourselves into a mess. And when we get into a mess we say, "Why did You do this, God. Why did you allow this to happen?" We blame Him for problems we bring on ourselves. God says, "You're the one who did it. I gave you the free will and your decision was to do that. You're reaping the results."

This is not a new problem. Notice what the Bible says: Proverbs 19:3 *"Some people ruin themselves by their own stupid actions and then they blame the Lord."* This was true of Adam. Remember the devil tempted Eve and she ate of the fruit and then she gave it to Adam. God

came to Adam and said, "What's going on?" God knew exactly what was going on. He just wanted Adam to admit what was going on. Adam, when he sinned, took it just like a man. He blamed his wife. In Genesis, he said, *"The woman you gave me."* "It's your fault, God. I didn't ask for this woman. You gave her to me. If she wasn't in my life, of course I would have been perfect."

Let me ask you a question? Who do you blame for your unhappiness? Your kids? Your spouse? A former spouse? Or are you blaming God for your problems? Maybe we even use the devil? -- "the devil made me do it!" -- your boss, society, the government, the environment.

If you want to break free of bad habits, if you want to be the kind of person God wants you to be, if you really want to change your life – if you really want lasting change -- you must begin today and you must accept

responsibility. You must refuse to blame other people.

"Blame" is spelled B - LAME.

E - EXAMINE MY LIFE

After I assume personal responsibility, I take personal inventory. I do an internal audit. I take an honest appraisal of myself. This is the principle we find in the book of 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, 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? ... How long have I had these problems in my life? ... Where am I vulnerable? ... Where am I coasting?" Anytime you're coasting you're headed downhill. You need to look at yourself and take a frank evaluation of your faults, failures and temptations. If you're going to change

anything in your life, you've got to stop pretending.

You've got to stop faking it, wearing a mask. 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.

Notice what the Bible says in Psalm 32. David says, *"My dishonesty made me miserable and it filled my days with frustration until I finally admitted my sins and I stopped trying to hide them and God forgave me and now all my sin is gone."* This step -- examining my life -- is not a once in a lifetime, once for all shot. Healthy people repeat this over and over. They are constantly taking their spiritual pulse. They are constantly examining their lifestyle. The Bible says *"Ponder the path of your feet."* They are constantly saying, "What am I doing with my life? Where am I headed? What is the direction of my

feet?" And you do it on a regular basis. Healthy people do this. Constantly I'm asking myself, "Where am I vulnerable? As a pastor of Calvary church, where am I vulnerable? What are my weaknesses? What could trip me up and cause me to miss God's will for my life?"

I have a file in my filing cabinet and on my computer called my "Warnings" file. Every time I read an article in the paper, a magazine, about how a Christian leader, particularly, stumbled and fell -- any leader for that matter -- I will clip out that article or if on the internet I put in my file. I put it in my Warnings file. About once every two months, I take the Warnings file and read through it to scare myself to death. I say, "Don't think it couldn't happen to you!"

The Bible says, *"Let him who stands take heed lest he fall."*

If you want power in your life, you must walk with

integrity, you must walk with humility. Those two things keep you on track. The Bible says evaluate your life. Why? Think about it... Why does the bible says to do this?

The Bible says *"Our heart is deceitful and desperately wicked."* That means I can't even figure out my own motives, much less yours. You don't know why you do what you do much of the time.

When the Bible says, *"the heart is deceitful,"* that means given any situation, I am capable of any sin. Given the right situation, you are capable of any sin. The moment you say, "I'd never do that" what you're doing is setting yourself up. One of the greatest weaknesses in life is an unguarded strength.

A few years ago, a young teenage boy from Germany, flew a single propeller plane right into Red Square in Moscow. In one of the most heavily guarded military places of the

world, he flew a plane right in the middle of it. One of the greatest weaknesses is often an unguarded strength.

Examine yourself.

Sometimes it helps to have somebody else with you.

A few weeks back I asked my wife Edna-Wynne, "Let's make a list. Tell me about some of my habits that are either irritating or funny." She gave me quite a long list. As I read the list, I didn't think they were either funny or irritating. But we need that outside view. We need somebody to check up on us. Someone who will speak the truth in love to us. Someone who sees what way you're heading.

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 listened to the tapes. I've read the books. I've

gone to the seminars. I've prayed in the quiet time. I've made the public commitment. I've signed the paper. I've prayed. I've cried. But I just can't 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.

I'm not just talking about being a Christian. I'm saying, you need Jesus not just for salvation. 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.

Something is always going to control your life, one thing or another. But something is always going to control your life. You're always going to let something control you. Some of you are controlled by the desire to make money. Some of you are controlled by the desire to have

fun. Some of you are controlled by the desire to be popular or famous. We can be controlled by the expectations of others. We can be controlled by a substance. Some of you are controlled by alcohol or drugs or prescription drugs, for that matter. You may be controlled by fear. You may be controlled by worry. You may be controlled by guilt. You can be controlled by somebody else. As Bob Dylan, that great theologian, sang "You're going to have to serve somebody."

Anything that you allow to control your life that isn't God, the Bible calls that an idol. And in one of the Ten Commands, God says *no idols*. Anything that you center your life around that isn't Jesus Christ is your god.

REPEAT... For some people, their god's their hobby because their whole life revolves around their hobby. Then you wonder why you're under tension all the time. You

don't have a strong enough center to hold your life together. Anything other than God that's number one and at the center of your life is not strong enough to hold it all together.

The Bible talks very honestly about what's called the "power of sin". We don't use this phrase today very much. You don't hear very many people talking about the power of sin. Instead we talk about addictions, we talk about victims, we talk about dysfunction – we use all these psychological terms and that's okay... there isn't anything wrong with using those terms. But listen to this very carefully.... but it's the power of sin.

Peter tells us, "*They are slaves of destructive habits for a man is a slave of anything that has conquered him.*" That means every time I sin it gets a stronger grip on my life.

So how do I break free? Freedom comes from choosing Christ as your master. Romans 6 *"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."* Circle "completely".

In America, most of the time we want to give God the problem but we don't want to give Him anything else. We want to give God the situation that's hanging us up but we don't want to give Him our whole lives.

The Bible says if you want to break free, if you want to change your life, you've got to give yourself completely.

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."

We use the word "Lord" all the time -- Make Jesus the Lord of your life... Jesus is Lord ... Lord Jesus. What does it mean to be Lord. We don't understand this term because, in America, we live in a democracy, not a kingdom. We do not live in a feudal system where you have kings and queens, lords and ladies, vassals and counts and serfs and knights. What we have are presidents and things like that.

So what does it mean to be Lord? Lord is just the old fashioned term for "the big boss... number one... the guy in charge... the CEO, the chairman of the board..." 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, "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 a part of your life, He wants to be the CEO, the chairman of the board. He wants to call the shots. He doesn't just want to be resident in your life, He wants to be president of your life. That's what it means to give yourself completely.

When I do that, what happens? Power. Power to change your life. Power to break bad habits. Power to do the things that you never thought you could ever change in your life up to this point.

I love the Phillips paraphrase of Romans 13:14: *"Don't give any chance to the flesh to have its fling."*

This is the next step. If you want to get the power of God in your life... but it will have to wait till next week.

I want to end this message by saying this to you...

Some of you are thinking, "It's hopeless. I've tried it all. I've listened to tapes. I've been to the seminars, made the decisions, prayed. I'm just never going to change." You're wrong. Keep coming back for next few Sunday's and hear the full 9 steps... Let's close with God's promise from God today. It comes from:

1 Corinthians 10:13 *"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 to you the strength to endure it and so provide you with a way out."* God says "I will never allow more on you than I put in you to bear it up." If you want to be free, start these steps. It starts with a decision.

Praise Team to come forward

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

"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)*

Message notes

HOW TO BREAK A BAD HABIT

"... 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.

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 _____