

CCC HOW TO BREAK A BAD HABIT Part 4

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For the last four weeks I have been saying that we all have bad habits. I know I do... and I know you do to... Some of our bad habits are obvious. Some of our bad habits are kind of hidden. But 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. They'll say things like, "Shape –

up, Get it together, Take control of your life and that is all good and true but the real truth for the most of us is I can't control today, much less my entire life. Saying to me that I have to take control of my 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 and the energy to stop and we don't have the power and energy either to stop our bad habits.

So we are in series called, "How to Break a Bad Habits." Four weeks ago we started looking at what God's Word, the Bible says to us about "How to break a bad habit." And His Word gives us nine steps and I put those 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.

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.

A - ASK CHRIST TO TAKE CONTROL OF MY

LIFE. You can't change your bad habits on your own.

You need a power outside yourself. You need a greater

power to change the things you can't change. And 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.

He needs to become your Lord. 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. What God's word is telling us here is you need to avoid the situations where you are tempted.

F - FOCUS ON SOMETHING BETTER

If you want to overcome a bad habit you've got to focus on something better. Proverbs 4:23 *"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.

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, they just don't 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. Gang that's just not... Your character does influence everything you do. What I do privately does influence me publicly. Last week I said, 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 That's silly! Your bad habits and my bad habits do affect my public life... and not only do they affect 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.*" God is 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 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 that God walks to us about.

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

You get Grace by being humble.

Why should you go back to the people that you've hurt with your habits and ask them to forgive you? Why? Because a clear conscious is absolutely essential for lasting change in your life. 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've got to take this step and say, "God, I admit it," and then you go to the people and say, "I admit it."

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 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. Why, because will power runs out.

Phase four is pride. That's where you start thinking, "I've got this thing licked now. I knew I could do it. You start thinking, 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 are heading for a 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 again 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, let alone someone else. 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 we were going to talk about today...

E - ENLIST SUPPORT

God never met for you to go through this life on your own. You get some outside help who can encourage you, who

can spur you on, who can keep you motivated, keep you accountable. That's why God gave us this church. That's what Calvary is all about. If you're going to be what God meant for you to be in life, you cannot do it alone because God did not design you to be a Lone Ranger. He meant for you to have support. The Bible says this in Ecclesiastes 4 *"Two are better off than one, because together if the one falls down the other can help him up. If someone is alone and falls, there's no one to help him."* You have to have support. Listen carefully, that's why you keep falling in that same cycle, over and over, because you're trying to do it on your own.

At Calvary, we have a lot of opportunities to give you the support you need... I want to encourage you. Stop being a spectator and become a participator. Stop being a consumer and start being a contributor. Stop being an

attender and become a member. Join the church family. Get committed to Christ and His church. The way we do that here at Calvary now is the class I teach -- CLASS 101. I encourage you, if you've been receiving spiritual food here at Calvary and you're not a member, what are you waiting on? Then after that we have plenty of small groups. I'm going to keep harping on this one until everyone in the church family is in a small group! You were created, You were meant to have people around you who, in a crisis, can hold you up. If you have a specific area you need to work on, we have a ministry called Celebrate Recovery and it covers numerous kinds of issues. Many people think Celebrate Recovery is only people who have problems --- alcohol or drugs. Only about one third of the people in Celebrate Recovery are there for chemical dependence. Two-thirds of the people come for other

kinds of recovery -- recovery from resentment, recovery from worry, recovery from conflict in a relationship, recovery from memories I can't let go of, recovery from heartaches, grief... If you're serious about changing, you need this support.

James 5:16 *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."* Does anybody like this verse? If I were God I wouldn't have put this verse in the Bible. Why, Because It's too hard. But I'm not God and your not God, I guess therefore I'm going to obey it. Because God is God and I'm not. That's what it means to be a true Christian. It means when God says something in His word, if I understand or if I don't, if it makes sense to me as a human or if it doesn't make sense, I'm going to do it. Why? Because God knows more than I do, God knows what is best for me. God Word, the Bible is not a book

where you read it and go, HmMMM, well "God says this but I know better I don't need to do that part or you think I'm going to do this other thing because I know what will make me happy." The true Christian says, "I don't care what it says, if God says it, I'm going to do it. I'm going to obey it because He's God and I'm not."

God says to, "*confess your sins to each other.*" I don't like that at all. But notice the rest of the verse, "*Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*" Let me ask you a question... do you like the healing part. I like the physical healing. I want to be physically healed. I want to be emotionally healed. I want healing in my relationships. I want healing in my spirit. I want healing socially. God says if you want the second part, you do the first part.

I know many of you have a bad habit and you need to deal with it. I know you're saying you're going to change, your going to ask God for help, but you want to skip this step. "I'm not going to tell anybody about it. It's just going to be me and God. God and I will work it all out because I don't need anybody else to break this habit." As your pastor who cares about you, as your pastor who loves and appreciates you, I want to say this to you in love, "Good luck! It ain't going to happen. You're not going to break free." God designed us to need each other. He didn't put this verse in the Bible by accident. One of the reasons why you can't get over your problem is your pride. The very fact that you're not willing to tell anybody in a confidential way means that as long as you're holding on to it "*God gives grace to the humble*" He doesn't give it to the prideful. You have to come saying, I admit it. You need to

find a Christian counselor or a pastor or a good Christian friend who will love you unconditionally with non judgmental love and you spill your guts. Revealing your feelings is the beginning of healing.

There are 175 – 200 people who will be at Calvary this weekend within our four services and this I will guarantee you that every sin known to man -- you name it, it's here or will be here before the day is over. What I am trying to say is we've all blown it! There are some people here this morning that are struggling with homosexuality and it's killing them on the inside and they've never told anybody and it hurts. There are people sitting here right now who are dealing with infidelity. You bump from one relationship to the next and you can't stop. You're addicted to sex. But you're so ashamed that you've never talked to anybody about it. There are some people here who cannot

stop reading pornography -- on the Internet, on TV, wherever. There are people here who are compulsive gamblers and you keep having major money problems because you can't stop. There are people here who have anger and they say things when they're mad that they wouldn't want anybody in this church to ever hear. There are people who are compulsive with worry. Or they habitually lie, we have people here who cannot stop stealing things and those people are here today -- these are Christian people that I just described—

If I just described you... Let me say this to you... Welcome to Calvary, you've come to the right spot. Calvary is the place for people who want to grow, people who want to change. See if you think you're perfect chances are Calvary is not the place for you. Calvary is a

place for sinners. Calvary is a place for people who've blown it, know it, and admit it. And they're honest.

Calvary is a place of hope. His name is Jesus Christ. And there's help for each of us. There's a family around you. But you have to be honest first. My goal is that Calvary will be that kind of place, where people can be honest about the hang ups in their life and nobody's shocked. If you want to see problems, go read 1st and 2nd Corinthians. You'll see them all.

My prayer is that Calvary will become a place like this verse in James 5:16 *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*

Here's what you've got to decide: Am I going to pretend I've got it all together? or Am I going to admit that I don't have it all together so I can get it all together? As

long as you pretend you've got it together, you're never going to get it all together.

Pete sharing here:

E - EXTEND MYSELF TO OTHERS

1 Corinthians 1:4 *"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."* God never wastes a hurt. He wants to take your greatest weakness, your greatest area of failure and He wants to heal you and turn it into your ministry to help other people. Who can better help somebody who's going through the pain of divorce than somebody who went through the pain of divorce? Who can better help somebody who's addicted, than somebody who's been set free from addiction? Who

can better help those issues I've said -- pornography, homosexuality, infidelity -- than somebody who's caught in that trap? God wants to heal you and then God wants to use you. And nothing feels greater than that.

I have always told people don't leave the Calvary ministry that helped you... either start your own here at Calvary or help out with others coming in the one that God used to help you. That is the only thing I ever ask of you... Galatians 6:1-2 *"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."* This says we're to carry each other's burdens. If you know somebody in your life, in your family, a friend, somebody you care about, and they're messing up their life with bad decisions, stupid decisions, or bad habits, you must care

enough to confront them in love. You must care enough to confront them in love. You cannot say, "It's none of my business... That's their private life... I've just got to take care of myself..." If you care, if you want to be like Jesus, you must say, "I love you enough that I am not going to let you mess up your life and just stand by and watch you blow it from a bad habit that's killing you, from stupid decisions."

I urge you in the name of Jesus Christ, speak the truth in love, live the truth in love, and share it with other people. 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. You haven't tried these nine steps. And you haven't done every one of them. Let's close with God's promise.

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, take these steps. It starts with a decision.

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

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

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.

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

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)