

Life Group Notes 1/9/2022
Pastor Mark Habits Week 1

(This is written to give you good things to enjoy, because look again at what Paul told Timothy (1 Tim 6:17-18)! I think he was thinking of us at the time: **17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be conceited and not to put their hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in God, WHO RICHLY PROVIDES ALL THINGS TO ENJOY. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share...**) The following ice breaker is just a starter for your group. The message comes after the second bar. Please enjoy!)

CROWD BREAKER: What is the best news you heard this week? What's the best surprise you had over the break?

Name a habit you're glad you have. Can you name one you'd like to be rid of?—The scribe

Note: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP. The purpose is to unite, not divide; to fearlessly proclaim the freedom the gospel brings. Any part of these notes might be appropriate as a crowd breaker for your own group. The goal is to create memories from Sunday that will serve for a long time. BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study. This study is also a great devotion, taken slowly through the week.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions raised by Pastor Mark's message from this Sunday. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.**

Mark says, 93% of people who set goals do not accomplish them because they put their attention on the wrong thing.

The purpose of these messages is not just to help you accomplish your goals, but as things are getting darker and as the confusion increases, it is a time for us to be very sober and awake. **Can you describe the difference between being spiritually awake and "wokeness?" Why is the latter so dangerous? Why is it so important to be spiritually awake today in this light? Speaking of "knowing the times and the seasons," what can be said about this season we are in?**

Do you think it is that spiritual fitness and physical fitness are related? Why? Or why not? (Note to facilitator: Be sure to keep this light. Do not let this go into shaming or debate. Look for insights and fresh ideas.)

Look up Ephesians 5:8-20 **8**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, **9**for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. **10**Test and prove what pleases the Lord. **Mark says, "We need a lot of discernment as to what is going on in the world today. Why do you think we need more than in the past? How much deception is driving today's conversations? How do we "walk as children of light"? Where do we get our ideas from that makes us very different, in fact "light"?"**

11Have no fellowship with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but expose them. **How important is it that the Truth be spoken? Why?** **12**For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. **How often are things that are shameful mentioned around you in a week? What do you do?** **13**But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that is illuminated becomes a light itself. **Why does it help when things become visible?** **14**So it is said:

“Wake up, O sleeper,
rise up from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

Look up Matthew 25:1-13, the parable of the 10 virgins. **1**“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. **2**Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. **3**The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take along any extra oil. **4**But the wise ones took oil in flasks along with their lamps. **5**When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

6At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

7Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. **8**The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

9‘No,’ said the wise ones, ‘or there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

10But while they were on their way to buy it, the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut.

11Later the other virgins arrived and said, ‘Lord, lord, open the door for us!’

12But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’

13Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. **What did the 10 virgins all have in common? Is it significant that they all fell drowsy and all slept? Is it OK to sleep? What did the wise virgins do first? How does this relate to what Paul is saying?**

What does the oil have to do with light? Thinking about what Paul says to the Ephesians, how do you get oil?

Ephesians 5: **15** Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, **16** redeeming the time, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. And do not be drunk with wine, wherein is excess/debauchery/foolishness/reckless indiscretion (Greek: *asotia*—unsavedness), but instead be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord, **20** always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Have you ever known anyone like this, who does all this? What would the impact be of one who behaves in this way? How would it feel to hang around someone like this?**

Mark says, "Successful people do consistently what other people do occasionally." **How does that work? How does life group help here? How has it helped you? Take time to share. What habits have you developed that have helped you? Given you hope?**

How has COVID interfered, and made things difficult? What would help you?

Jesus rose before dawn to spend time with the Father. **Why?** Paul would go to the synagogue in a new area before doing anything else. **Why?** Mark quotes an author who says, "Our habits will make us or break us. We become what we repeatedly do." **How does this work?**

Look up Romans 7. **15** I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do. But what I hate, I do. **16** And if I do what I do not want to do, I admit that the law is good. **17** In that case, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh; for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. **19** For I do not do the good I want to do. Instead, I keep on doing the evil I do not want to do. **20** And if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

21 So this is the principle I have discovered: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. **22** For in my inner being I delight in God's law. **23** But I see another law at work in my body, warring against the law of my mind and holding me captive to the law of sin that dwells within me.

24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? **25** Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! **Does this echo with you in any way? How could Paul be struggling in this way? How will good habits help displace bad habits? How can Paul find himself thanking God at the end of this confession? (Remember Romans 8.)**

Mark talks about the "three reasons we do not succeed."

1. We focus on the “what?” but we do not focus on the “how?” **Explain.** Mark says what you focus on is the very thing you do. **(Look back at what Paul said in this light. Does this explain anything?)**

Goals do not determine success. Systems determine success. **Explain.** **(Think of Mark’s example of reading the Bible. What steps would make that goal work?** He says, “When you get up in the morning, you put your Bible on your pillow. So, when you go to bed, your Bible is there, what are you going to do?” **(Answer the question? Does this work?)** **Share a system you have found that works for you, helping you read the Bible consistently.**

James Clear said, “You don’t rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.” **How does that work? What did we learn of Daniel’s systems in our study of Daniel? What did he do consistently and daily?**

2. We don’t progress fast enough. **How does this work? How frustrating is it after a fresh week of exercise that we gained two pounds? What’s your reaction? Think of Mark’s example of the coffee savings. What incentive would help you invest your daily cup in a system that will bring you \$500 thousand in the end? What holds us back?**

Why do small and good decisions matter? How does sporadic, inconsistent attendance predict a lost good habit? Mark says, “A small decision I’m making is compounding in some place. It’s having an impact.” **Explain.** Small bad decisions rarely wreck one’s life at once. They accumulate helplessness and failure over time. **Explain. Explain the parable of the frog in the pot. How much effort goes into a successful marriage? Look up Galatians 6:9 ⁹ Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Why do you think Paul says, “in due time” and not “immediately”? What does this verse say of habits? What do we risk losing if we do give up?**

3. When we begin to distort our identity, it sabotages our success. Mark says, “The enemy wants to tell you what you are not. He wants to connect you to your failures, and make you believe that’s what you are. You are not your failures. You have failed, but you are not your failures.” **Explain. (Talk about David: Which stands out more, David’s songs (psalms) or his failure with Bathsheba? Do you talk about David and Bathsheba more? Or of David and Goliath? Was David a failure or a hero? Why? What does God say of David?)** Mark points out that Moses said, “I’m not a good speaker. I cannot do this.” Gideon says, “I am the least of the least tribe of Israel.” **What did God say? How did He use them? Whose opinion matters most? What does God say of you? Do you know?** Mark speaks of two minutes a day, just to allow God to speak to you. **How will that help? What is the cost of two minutes a day?**

What do you think would change if we derived our information daily from the Bible rather than from the daily news report?

Mark wants to move from the “do” to the “who.” He says, “We have focused on the ‘do nots’.” **How has that helped?** He wants to focus on what God says of you, and of who you are in His eyes. **How do you learn this? Where does this knowledge come from? How do you get from “I want to be a godly husband/wife” to “That’s who I am”? What tools do you need to make the goal the reality? Share what tools you’ve found.**

Paul says (Romans 6), “We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless.” **How entirely powerless is the body of sin? How important is it for us to KNOW this, despite what we see or have done?** Paul says, “You are no longer a slave to sin, but you have become slaves of righteousness.” **What is the hope promised here concerning past habits? Concerning new habits? How will the habits differ? How will the pleasure differ in each?**

Mark says, “Identity shapes our actions, and a healthy identity creates healthy habits. And positive habits reinforce a healthy identity.” **Explain. So, who do you want to become? Think of the habits you have in your life. Can you explain?**

Mark describes vision boards...where you clip pictures that remind you of promises you’ve received, and of what you want to become. **How would that help? How would that change your attitude, instead of moving from your last worst mistake to your next bad mistake? Think of this: When God told childless Abraham to count the stars of heaven, because that’s how big his family would be, how do you think the night sky affected Abraham from that day on?**

What do you want to be known as? What are you about to become? Mark says, “When we don’t know who we are, we become what the next person tells us we need to be.” We cannot ask in faith. James describes this as, “...double minded...driven by the wind, unstable in all his ways.” **Is this a problem? Why does knowing who we are solve this problem?** Mark says, “No single action solves this. The solution is produced consistently...over time. The multitude of actions begin to do the work.” **Why? And why is the word “begin” appropriate here?** As he said, “Successful people do continually what other people do occasionally.” **Mark has said this twice today. How does this encourage you to think, “It’s not time to give up?” What is in the word, “continually?”**

Mark says, “Spiritual health is related to financial health is related to physical health.” Do you agree? He says, “Spiritual health first.” Why? Look up 1 Timothy 4:8 and say how that fits. [8For physical exercise is of limited value, but godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for the present life and for the one to come.](#)