

Life Group Notes 1/23/2022
Pastor Mark Habits Week 3

(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: When Grace sets out to support “Women and children and families,” what are the needs that come to mind? How can you help? Do you have testimonies from Family Promise? House of Hope?

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 proclaim fearlessly 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’s first words: **“Small disciplines create big results.” Do you have a testimony? How does that work? Answer Mark’s opening questions: “Did you carefully plan your finances to enable you to live paycheck to paycheck?” “Did you plan on being overweight and be in poor health, and discipline yourself to reach that goal?”** Mark says, “We rarely end up in the wrong place because of a single poor decision?” **Is that true? How did habits along the way contribute to the success or failure? Where did that habit begin?**

Look up Judges 16:1 One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute and went in to spend the night with her. **What does it take to make a decision like that?**

Weeks in review: Week 1: Focus on the who. Who do you want to become? This leads to “What do you need to do? What habits do you stop? What habits do you form?”

Week 2: How do you make good habits. What am I going to start? Make it easy. Make it obvious.

This week: How do you get rid of a bad habit. **Look up James 1:21** ²¹ **Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and every expression of evil, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save your souls.** (Scribe's note: Mark quoted the Good News Translation: "So get rid of every filthy habit and all wicked conduct. Submit to God and accept the word that he plants in your hearts, which is able to save you.") **Why does James make it sound so easy? Is it easy? What is the first step needed to make this happen?**

Answer this: What habits (moral filth, wicked conduct and expressions of evil) come to mind, in this day? How have they become so readily available? Why is today worse than yesterday? A decade ago? ...than the days of your youth? What has changed to make things worse?

What can you do to make them less available? Discuss possible steps? Are these steps easy?

Pastor Mark says, "Good habits and bad habits work the opposite way. A good habit is hard at first, but the benefits are rich in the end." (He uses the example of the early morning run...difficult to begin, but **what are the benefits from a year of effort? Can they be undone? How easy is it to break this habit?**) He says the opposite is true of the bad habit. Easy to begin...and the problems arrive in the end. **Why is the bad habit far more difficult to undo? Which habit is easier to break?** Habits have trigger, action and a result.

Step 1 is to admit to the habit. **Discuss this statement: "You cannot defeat what you cannot define." Gossips, discuss this statement: "Christians never gossip. They only share prayer requests." How does that describe a habit?**

Have you ever lost your phone and have your day stop until you found it again? Do you have a story to share? Have you ever defeated a habit or addiction? How long has it been? Do you remember the steps you took? Can you share?

Mark says, "To break a bad habit, you have to make it really difficult to do. A good habit you want to make it as easy as possible to do." **Look at Mark's "half a donut" example...while the second half sits on the counter, looking like the better half. Why is it not a good idea to leave that second half on the counter?** He says, "Habits are based around triggers. Know your triggers." **Can you think of examples? How do you remove/disarm the triggers? Discuss Mark's ideas for disarmament:**

- **Go to bed earlier.**
- **Don't be alone at the time the trigger is calling.**
- **Find a safe, different reward when disappointment or discouragement happens.**

Suggest another.

What practical advice does this verse suggest for habit formation:

20He who walks with the wise will become wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed. **Do you have a testimony to share along these lines? Have you ever walked with the wise? Who is the wisest you've known? What made them wise? What influence did they have on you? How did their strengths outweigh any weaknesses they had?**

Look up 1 Corinthians 15:33 **Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good character." How well does this fit?**

Dave Ramsey says, "If you do not want to be broke, don't hang around broke people." **What do you think? Is this scriptural? How could the company you keep be part of those triggers? Do friends influence your choices? When you "slip, fall and fail, do your friends encourage you to do it again? Or do they pick you help and help you get back on track? When you were younger, how were your friends at this?**

If "I'm bummed out, so I deserve a Twinkie" is a trigger, what is a counter trigger that is better? Would moving the snooze alarm across the room help you get out of bed earlier?

Discuss these habit breaking steps:

1. Be very aware of what you want to change.
2. Do not try to change everything at once.
3. Understand your trigger.
4. Disrupt your action.

How does the quest for a dopamine high create the habit? How do you use that to your advantage?

Look up Zechariah 4:10... 10For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven eyes of the LORD, which scan the whole earth, will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel." **Why does the Lord rejoice at the beginning? He explains in verse 9:** **8**Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, **9**"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of Hosts has sent me to you. **What is surely going to happen when Zerubbabel takes up the plumb line, the builders tool for truing a wall? Can you complete what Paul says to the Philippians? "He who began a good work in you... (will be faithful to complete it. Philippians 1:6) Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:24: What does Paul tells the Thessalonians:** "The One who calls you is faithful, and He will also do it." **Finish this scripture, "For it is God Who is at work in you both to ... (will and to do according to His good purpose.) How do these verses encourage us, as we set our sights on our habits? What can God do for us and for those around us through a consistent good habit over time? What is preventing us from taking up the "plumb line" of Zerubbabel? How does the small beginning become a propitious start to rejoice over?**

Mark says, "The amount of time we spend watching something, for better or for worse, does the same as the company we keep." **Is this true? What damage can bingeing on a program do to your own sensitivities? Abilities? Imagination?**

Mark says, "I encourage you to guard what you are watching." **Look up Proverbs 4:23** **23Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow springs of life.** (Scribe's note: The Hebrew can be translated, "...from it come your life's boundaries." In other words, it's your heart that decides how far you will go.) **How does this fit in what Pastor Mark says? What happens to your heart when you allow perverse things to come in? Look up Matthew 6:22** The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. **How does this fit? How do you protect your eyes? What light do your eyes provide your soul? How can more light be provided?**

Is what we call entertainment today, in this century and at this time "normal?" Can you explain your answer? Do we dare ask Pastor Mark's question? "How much does the time we spend in today's news, or social media, or bingeing compare to the time we spend in the Word?"

Mark says, "If you I want to become more like Jesus, I need to spend more time with Him. I become the company I keep." **Is that a harsh word? Or a reasonable hope? Look up John 8:30-32 and 34-36.** **30**As Jesus spoke these things, many believed in Him. **31**So He said to the Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples. **32**Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

What does Jesus, the Lord, say it takes to be set free? How does "binge on" relate to "abide in" in today's terms?

34Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. **35**A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son belongs to it forever. **36**So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. **In Jesus' own terms, who is still a slave? How many habits do you need to have to be a slave? How free is the one who has been set free? What does "indeed" really mean? How encouraging is this promise, if you're struggling? What bingeing habits might be helpful to look at? What does being set free look like? Again, have you ever overcome a habit?**

Talk about this:

Pastor says, determine the who before the what. Determine the habit you want to adopt. Make it easy make it obvious. Stop the bad habits. They lead somewhere. Make it hard.

1. Every time you pray with your kids, you become a godly parent.
2. Every time you practice your instrument, you become a musician.
3. Every time you work out, you become an athlete.
4. Every time you serve Jesus in love, you become His ambassador.
5. Every time you lay aside a bad habit, you're a devil-kicking, God-honoring overcomer.

How does that work for you? "I don't have to live with regrets."