MAKING GOOD HABITS
BREAKING BAD HABITS

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TN206
MAKING GOOD HABITS, BREAKING BAD HABITS
Habitually Putting God First

I. Habits

A. A usual manner of behavior, or a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition

1. A riding habit is an outfit of clothing often or usually worn by those who ride horses.

2. A nun’s habit is an outfit of clothing always or usually worn by a Catholic woman who has committed herself officially and completely to God.

B. Genesis 17:1-3 – God told Abram to (habitually) walk and live before Him.

1. Abram fell on his face as a way of saying, “I am willing, but I cannot do it without you.”

   a. God was asking to be first in everything!

   b. He wanted Abram to live before Him and do all things with the thought in mind of pleasing Him.

2. Abram had to form new habits if he was to accomplish the will of God.

   Abram was accustomed to living for himself so this new way of living would be a big change.
C. Most of your life you do the same things you did yesterday, the day before that, and even the month prior to that. It is estimated that out of every 11,000 signals we receive from our senses, only forty of them are consciously processed.

1. That means that most of what we do is done out of habit.

2. We can break up with old habits.

3. We can make new habits.

   We can make natural habits and spiritual habits.

4. Romans 12:2 – To enjoy what Christ died to give us, we must totally renew our mind and attitude. To say it another way, we must break old destructive habits and form new ones.

   a. We learn to think like God thinks.

   b. We learn to say what He says.

   c. We learn to choose what He wants over what we want (in the flesh).

II. Habitually Studying The Word Of God

A. Psalm 1:2 – David formed the habit of studying.

B. II Timothy 3:16 – Every scripture brings conviction and correction.

   1. Hebrews 5:11-14 – The Word of God has the ability to change us, but we must be able to receive conviction and correction without condemnation.

   2. We must be skilled in the doctrine of righteousness!

   3. If we don’t know who we are “in Christ,” we cannot receive correction without condemnation; and therefore, we cannot grow.
C. **Hebrews 4:12** – The Word of God divides soul and spirit. It digs deep and divides right from wrong. It confronts us and requires us to make choices.

D. **II Corinthians 3:18** – As we continue in the Word of God we see ourselves as we truly are and we change, but it comes from the Lord and not from works of the flesh.

1. God wants us to:
   a. Agree with Him.
   b. Not blame something or someone else
   c. Take responsibility for our actions
   d. Humble ourselves and ask for His help

E. **Mark 4:24** – The measure of thought and study that you give to the truth that you hear is the measure of virtue and knowledge that will come to you.

F. **II Timothy 2:15** – Study to show yourself approved by God. Become a Christian who doesn’t need to be ashamed, and who accurately understands God’s Word.

G. I don’t think that very many Christians really study!

1. Someone I know was leading a small group at her church and twelve people committed to come. By the third week only two showed up, and that seemed to be the case with most of the groups.

2. We must ask ourselves if God is really first in our lives.

3. We need to develop a habit of studying.

III. **Seeking God**

A. **Seek** (defined) – Crave, pursue and go after with all your might. To require as a vital necessity in life.
1. Seek by thinking about.
2. Seek by desiring.
3. Seek by talking about.
4. To require – to be unwilling to do without
5. The person who is seeking God takes time and studies, and educates himself concerning the things of God.
6. Recently, I decided I wanted an angel food cake with icing. I heard about a certain bakery that had a good one; so I started thinking about it, I desired it, and I started talking about getting it. I was unwilling to do without it. I asked my son-in-law to take me to get it. The bridge was out on the road that took us there, but I was more than willing to go out of my way. The detour meant nothing to me because I wanted the cake! I was determined to have the cake. I bought it, stored it at my daughter's house so the icing would not melt while we went to lunch, and then came back and picked it up. I carefully took it home so I did not mess up the icing. After eating half a piece, I decided I didn’t even like it because the icing tasted greasy!
7. Can we at least seek God with the same zeal with which we seek a piece of cake?

B. Jeremiah 2:13 – People forsake God and try to make things happen themselves.

1. The fear of God is not in most people.
2. Proverbs 1:7 – The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge. We don’t even begin to know anything until we have reverential fear of God.

C. Deuteronomy 30:8-19 – These scriptures make God’s plan extremely plain. Do what He says and be blessed and if you don’t, you will be cursed.
1. It is time for each of us to make a decision.

2. If we decide in favor of God and His ways, then we must begin immediately forming new habits.

IV. The Blessing And The Curse

A. The blessing means provision and prosperity in every area of life.

1. Spiritually, mentally, socially, financially and physically.

B. The curse means lack in every area.

1. Lack of provision

Always in need, financial stress is common, confusion abounds, can’t maintain good relationships, worry most of the time, etc.

2. Lack of joy

Depression, discouragement, discontentment and a general inability to enjoy life

3. Lack of peace

People live in strife, turmoil, worry, anxiety, cares, etc.

4. Relationship problems

Having a problem with somebody most of the time is very draining.

5. Condemnation

Feeling bad about yourself, feeling guilty, insecure, low self-esteem and feeling worthless. Feeling like a failure most of the time. Ashamed, and in general, not respecting yourself.
C. If we don’t discipline ourselves to break up with old habits and make new ones, we will get consequences.

D. A practical example that we all deal with:

1. Anger

   **Ephesians 4:26-27** – If we have a habit of staying angry, we open a door for the devil; but we can form a habit of dropping it, letting it go, getting over it, forgiving, believing the best of people and realizing we also make mistakes.

2. Have a habit of forgiving quickly!!
Habitually Trusting God

I. Learn To Follow Your Heart.

A. **Proverbs 16:25** – There is a way that seems right to man and appears straight, but at the end of it there is death.

1. How can we know if what we think and feel is right?
2. Learn to follow your heart (spirit), not your head or emotions or self-will.
3. If you don’t know the Word of God, you will never know the will of God.

B. **Proverbs 3:5-7** – Acknowledge God in all your ways and He will give you direction.

1. Don’t lean toward your own understanding (mind, emotions).
2. Trust God with all your heart and mind, and **don't get too mental about things.**
   a. Form a habit of checking with your heart.
   b. Do a peace-check!

C. **Colossians 3:15** – Let peace rule as an umpire and make all the final decisions.

D. **Romans 8:4** – We must move in the ways of the Spirit and not follow the flesh.

1. **Romans 6:1-4** – We died to sin when Christ died, and we are habitually living and behaving in newness of life.

   We die to the old way of thinking, talking, being and doing.
E. Romans 8:13 – If we let the Holy Spirit dictate our way of living, then we will have to *habitually* put to death the evil deeds prompted by the body.

1. Recently, I was told that something I said bothered another person. I immediately thought, “Well, you shouldn’t be so sensitive.” I got a bit defensive; but as soon as I let my flesh calm down, I DECIDED that I was not going to spend the day being bothered by it. So, I emailed the person and took full responsibility for my actions. I asked for forgiveness, and although it was challenging, I made no excuses. As soon as I pressed Send, I had my peace back.

2. I knew that the Holy Spirit would have me take the high road and humble myself in order to keep peace. I knew that my apology would not only give me peace, but that it would also totally satisfy the other individual. I didn’t want her to have a miserable day either.

   I could have chosen the flesh and told her that she needed to believe the best and not even mention it. I could have remembered all the things she has said to me that I let go. I could have told three or four people about it. I had the option to walk in the flesh all day, but I have formed a habit of living in peace.


4. Dying to self, or putting the flesh to death, does not mean that we always feel good and godly. We often feel all the wrong things, but make better choices based on the new information we have because we are new creatures living under a new covenant.

5. Every time we make a good choice, it helps us form a new habit; and after a while, it becomes something we do without giving it much thought.
II. Trusting God Is Our Priority.

A. **Galatians 2:20** – Paul came to a point where all he had was trust in God. He lived by faith!

B. **Humanism** (defined) – A doctrine, attitude or way of life centered on human values. A philosophy that usually rejects the supernatural (God) and stresses the human’s ability to reason things out on their own.

   1. Humanism occurs when people or a nation attempt to live without God. **Humanism is a desire to control everything but yourself.**

      The Bible says that a self-confident man is a fool!

   2. They want to do what they want to do, and do it their own way.

      It will not work because Jesus said, “Apart from Me you can do nothing.” (See **John 15:5**)

C. Let’s take a look at what happens when this path of humanism is chosen:

   1. Although the founders of America had the full intent to create a society where God’s Word ruled supreme, in 1947 a new agenda gripped the court. The idea was to separate God and religious principles from the government (separation of church and state – Everson vs. Board of Education). Judge Hugo Black ruled in favor of Everson; and since that time, we have seen a steady decline in the morals of our civilization. Now we are beginning to see that the moral decay of the heart of the nation is reaching the systems we depend on. So many people are out of work that government unemployment is not enough; and those dependent on Social Security are in danger of having no benefits by the time they reach retirement age.

   2. I wonder how things would be if we had “God-Security” instead of “Social Security.”
3. Since the court ruled in 1962 that students could not pray publicly in school, the Bible could not be read, and the Ten Commandments could no longer be publicly displayed, our quality of education has declined to the point of being pathetic. The government seems to lack funds to run the schools properly even though we are taxed for the purpose of education. The biggest problem in schools prior to 1962, when these rulings were passed, was kids shooting spit-wads; now it is children with guns, bombs, pornography, drugs, alcohol, etc.

4. By stripping away our tradition of faith and allegiance to God as a nation, we have invited evil into our schools and nation. It should not be difficult to see what is wrong in America.

5. America became the greatest nation that ever existed, and she did it in 200 years. She was great because she was righteous and unless she returns to righteousness, she will continue to decline.

6. The humanists prefer sin to righteousness. They don’t want a God who tells them what to do. They want to trust themselves and human systems, but they may not know that God is offended!

7. We still have “In God We Trust” on our money, but what we really trust is the bank, being able to get credit, and to file bankruptcy if we live without discipline and principle. We trust Social Security, welfare, unemployment, food stamps, federal aid and state aid. We need to get back to habitually trusting God.

D. This is just my opinion, but I think it is pretty much useless to vote for anybody to be in public office that does not put their trust in God. I don’t see how they can make any kind of decent decisions because the beginning of knowledge and wisdom is the fear of God.

1. God is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning of all things and He is the End, He is the First and the Last. He is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-seeing, and He sits in the heavens and laughs at His enemies!
2. If you have not read the end of The Book of all Books, I will tell you how it ends – GOD WINS!

3. Romans 11:36 – For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. [For all things originate with Him and come from Him; all things live through Him, and all things center in and tend to consummate and to end in Him.] To Him be glory.

4. If you are a person who says, “I don’t believe that,” then I urge you to open your heart and read II Peter 3:10-13.

III. Trust Eliminates Many Bad And Destructive Habits.

A. Worry means I’m trusting myself to solve the problem.

1. Is it possible to form a habit of not worrying? I believe it is. We only worry because we think we can do something about our problems so as soon as we realize we can’t, then we can stop worrying.

2. Philippians 4:6-7 – Don’t fret or have any anxiety about anything; pray, and God’s peace will be yours.

B. Reasoning means I am trusting myself to find a solution.

1. I Corinthians 2:2 – Paul formed a habit of not reasoning. He said he was determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified.

2. Mark 8:14-21 – Jesus chastised the disciples for reasoning instead of believing.

C. Fear, agitation, intimidation and emotional upset means that I have set my will against my circumstance and am refusing to be happy until it is over.

1. John 14:27 – Stop it!!
2. For years, my first habitual reaction to anything I did not like or want was to get upset and start saying ridiculous things.

3. Now my habit is to pray, remind myself that I can’t do anything about it anyway, and then relinquish it to God.

D. What you do over and over becomes a habit.

1. When trying to form a new habit, you can do something that will remind you to do the right thing. When I find myself starting to worry I often say out loud, “Joyce, this is not going to do any good.”

E. Trusting God allows us to enter His rest!

F. **Philippians 3:3** – Put no confidence in the flesh (not your own flesh or anyone else’s).

   1. Trust God before the doctor, the dentist, the government, your friends, yourself, the bank, your education or anything else.

   2. Trust God first! Keep God first!
The Law Of First Things

I. Keeping God First

A. **I John 5:21** – God expects us to keep Him first in all things and if we don’t, nothing else works right.

1. The danger of not keeping God first is always lurking near, and we must guard against the temptation.

   The devil works through busyness, distractions, inability to concentrate, strife, fleshly desires and many other things.

2. Many things in our society are moving toward people no longer needing to think. We have automated everything – even Monopoly is computerized! My grandson told me that since everyone uses computers now, they no longer have to know how to write anything in cursive beyond their name, and that correct spelling is not necessary because our computers have a spell-check device.

   a. If children are not taught to think then how can they learn to meditate on God’s Word, which is vital to genuine knowledge?

   b. Will we get to the place where no one thinks for themselves? Does the computer have all the right answers?

3. Concentration ability is being lowered at an alarming rate. Our fast-paced lifestyles, and the millions of images that we are confronted with, are reducing our ability to concentrate on anything for very long.

B. The Book of Revelation – I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I am the First and the Last.
1. He is the first and the last, and all the stuff in between should be used to prepare us to meet Him when all this is over.

2. We are all going to be dead a long, long time and I want to be in the right place.

3. “All men die, but not all men live well!” (Mel Gibson in *Braveheart*)

C. God required the firstborn male to be dedicated to Him. He required that the first fruit of the Israelite’s crops be dedicated to Him.

1. **Genesis 4:3-7** – Cain brought God an offering of SOME of his produce. Abel brought the firstborn of his flock.
   a. God respected Abel and his offering, but despised Cain’s offering.
   b. Cain became angry and jealous of Abel. It is very common for those who do wrong and get wrong results to be jealous of those who do right and are blessed.

D. **Malachi 3:8-12** – Giving some of our money as an offering is not enough. God requires the tithe, which is the first ten percent of all of our increase.

1. God does not need our money. He is testing us to see if we trust Him and are willing to be obedient to what He commands.

2. When we give God the first portion of a thing, then not only that portion, but the remainder, is blessed. It is the “law of first things!”

E. **I Kings 17:10-14** – During a famine, Elijah told a poor widow woman who was facing starvation to give him some of what she had first; and from that day forward, she had plenty.
II. Keeping The “Law Of First Things” Requires Discipline And Good Habits.

A. **Matthew 5:23-24** – If you have anything against anyone, *first* go make peace with them and then offer your gift to God.

B. **Luke 14:28-30** – Before you begin any project, first consider seriously all the implications to see if you have what it takes to finish it.

1. Do you have the money?
2. Do you have the time to put into the project?
3. Do you have the energy to put into the project?
4. If you need others to be involved, are they informed and committed?
5. Have you seriously thought about what you will need to invest in order to eventually have a finished project?

C. **Matthew 7:1-5** – Before finding fault with others, we should first examine and deal with ourselves.

1. If we obeyed this one “law of first things,” it would save us a lot of agony.

D. The law of sowing and reaping is actually the “law of first things.”

1. **Matthew 7:12** – Whatever you desire that men would do for you, do it for them.

2. **Galatians 6:7** – The law of sowing and reaping cannot be avoided. We will reap as we have sown!!

   a. If you want something, then first give some away.

   b. Mercy, forgiveness, kindness, smiles, money, understanding, etc.
E. Put God’s will first.

1. **Luke 14:16-20** – We all have excuses for not obeying Jesus.

2. **Matthew 8:21-22** – Jesus said, “Let the dead bury their dead.”

   When God calls, don’t waste time with dead things (things that have no real life in them).

F. **Matthew 12:29** – If we expect to do anything great for God, or make spiritual progress, then we must learn to deal with the devil first.

1. David had to deal with Goliath before he could become king.

2. **I Corinthians 16:9** – Paul said a wide door of opportunity opened unto him and with it came many adversaries.

G. **Matthew 23:26-28** – First we should be concerned about our heart before God, and then our reputation with people.

1. The hidden man of the heart is the most important part of us to God.

2. Pure motives are very important. Only our works done with pure motives will survive and be rewarded.

3. Jesus made Himself of no reputation! If we are concerned about our reputation, we will be exterior people, and never pleasing to God.

III. Seek First The Kingdom Of God.

A. **Matthew 6:33** – If we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness (His way of being and doing), all things will be added to us.

1. We can ask God for things, but we should never SEEK them. Don’t crave, pursue, require as a vital necessity or go after things with all of your might.
B. **Romans 11:36** – All things were created by Him, exist for Him, end in Him, live through Him and center in Him.

   1. Things are not a problem unless we put them above Him.

C. Things have no life if not used for His glory.

| Prop: Have a pile of nice things and show how lifeless they are. They cannot talk, breath or stand up. They are totally lifeless and have no ability to give life. |
| 1. The coat and bracelet Danny gave me have ministered life to me because they were an expression of his love. |
| 2. When things are used properly they can minister life, but they have no life in themselves. |
| 3. Don’t spend your life seeking lifeless things. |

D. **1 John 2:15-17** – Don’t love things, because they are all passing away. Always keep God first.

E. **Matthew 22:36-37** – The first and most important commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

   1. **Exodus 20:3** – The first commandment that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai was, “YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE OR BESIDES ME.”
PERSONAL NOTES
The Value Of Spending
Time With God

I. God Is A Jealous God.

A. **James 4:4-5** – You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world] . . .
   1. He is jealous of your time and attention.

B. Don’t be a part-time Christian.
   1. **I Corinthians 6:19-20** – We are bought with a price, we are no longer our own.
   2. God is not satisfied with part of us. He wants absolute surrender!
   3. **Romans 12:1** – Dedicate all your members and faculties as a living sacrifice.
      “All” is a frightening word!

C. **Deuteronomy 4:24** – Our God is a consuming fire – a jealous God.
   1. **I Peter 5:5b** – He won’t let us succeed unless we humble ourselves and ask for His help. He opposes, frustrates and defeats us until we humble ourselves.
   2. We cannot have lasting joy in anything apart from Him; but if He is first, we can enjoy a life that is impossible to enjoy.
   3. God will deal with, and even remove, other people and things that take us away from Him.
      a. If you lean on your friends excessively, God may remove that prop from your life.
b. If you own a business that takes you away from Him, you might find that the business is not prospering.

c. If your ministry becomes more important than God Himself, you will find your opportunities drying up.

II. Spending Time With God Is Proof That He Is Important To Us.

A. If my adult children have no time for me, then I am not important to them.

B. If we are too busy to spend regular time seeking God; talking with Him and learning about Him and what He expects from us, then we cannot expect to have successful lives.

1. Philippians 3:10 – Paul was determined to know God deeply and intimately.

2. II Peter 1:3 – All of God’s promises are ours through a full, personal knowledge of Him.

3. Psalm 91:14 – God delivers those who know Him personally!

C. Satan gets frantic and mean when there is any indication that we might come to know God personally and have an intimate relationship with Him.

1. Jeanne Guyon – (Excerpts from A Short Method of Prayer by Hendrickson Christian Classics): Jeanne Guyon lived in the 1600’s and was a devoted Catholic. At age 16, she entered an arranged marriage with a man much older than herself. Her mother-in-law persecuted her continuously until it caused much emotional distress and depression for her. She had a major encounter with God and discovered that she could know Him personally, that He lived in her and that she could pray from her heart rather than from prayer books alone.
She discovered that sanctification and holiness were the result of faith, rather than our own works and effort. As she began to teach these things to people one on one, word about her doctrines spread. She wrote things down for the benefit of individuals; but through no effort of her own, they became books that were widely distributed.

Her biographer said that church-instigated harassment and persecution escalated. Her window sashes were broken, her mail intercepted…all causing her to move from city to city where her upstanding and credible reputation still spread among the laypeople.

From far and wide, friars, priests, men of the world, maids, wives, widows – all came one after another to hear what was to be said. The interest in her teachings was so great that often she was occupied from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. speaking of God. Clerics were grieved deeply that a woman was so sought after as she was.

She was imprisoned in an austere convent, a castle, under house arrest and spent four years in the Bastille (a prison known for its horrible conditions). This broke her health and she died at the age of 56. Her physical world was small, but the enemy could not stop the far-reaching influence of her teachings, which are still influencing many today.

2. I am continually amazed at how Satan fights any progress we might attempt to make in knowing God personally and intimately.

THE DEVIL WILL DO ALL THAT HE CAN TO PREVENT YOU FROM SPENDING TIME WITH GOD.

3. He will make you feel sleepy, lazy, disinterested, bored and distracted. He will keep you busy with things that are unimportant when compared to knowing God. He will lie to you; deceive you, lead you to lean excessively on a spiritual authority – he will, in fact, do anything to keep you from knowing God!
4. The devil will lead you into religious activity rather than see you develop a deep, intimate, personal relationship with God.

III. The Practical Value Of Seeking God

A. Our joy increases.

1. Psalm 16:11

2. Psalm 4:6-8

3. John 15:11

4. God is a jealous God and He will not permit us to enjoy much apart from Him. As long as we keep Him in first place, He will allow us to enjoy a great deal – especially simple things.

5. Ecclesiastes 5:18-19 – Only God can give us the gift of enjoying our allotted part in life.
   a. Solomon realized this after wasting most of his life seeking wrong things.
   b. Ecclesiastes 12:13

B. Our peace increases.

1. John 20:19, 21, 26 – When Jesus came into their midst He always greeted them with, “Peace be unto you.”

2. Isaiah 26:3 – We are guarded and kept in perfect peace when we think about Him, lean on and rely on Him.

3. I have peace now that I have learned to go to Him daily to receive strength to walk in His ways.

   For years I wanted to walk in His ways but could not find the strength to do so. No amount of religious activity gave me the strength. I needed Him!
C. We feel complete.

1. **Colossians 2:10** – In Him we are made full and come to completion.

2. Without Him we are always searching for something and never finding what it is.

3. **John 4:32-34** – Jesus said that He had meat to eat that they did not understand.

4. **Psalm 17:15** – . . . I shall be fully satisfied, when I awake [to find myself] beholding Your form [and having sweet communion with You].

5. I looked for satisfaction in position, friends, reputation, things, and even in ministry, but could not find it apart from Him.

6. We must be absolutely certain that we are not seeking God for wrong reasons! Seek Him for Who He is, and never for what He can do for you.

D. We are strengthened in His presence.

1. Strong in faith, determination and resisting temptation – we are even strengthened physically.

2. **Isaiah 40:31** – They that wait upon the Lord renew their strength, and they run and don’t get weary.

3. **Psalm 18:29-33** – By my God I can run through a troop and leap over a wall. He is my strength and makes my feet like hinds feet.

4. **I Kings 18:46** – The hand of God came on Elijah and he ran twenty miles.

E. God’s presence protects us.
1. **Psalm 27:4-6** – We are lifted above our enemies in His presence.

2. **Psalm 23:5** – He sets a table before us in the presence of our enemies.

3. **Psalm 91:1** – Dwell in the secret place of the Most High and no foe can successfully come against you.

F. Spending time with God changes us.

1. **II Corinthians 3:17-18** – As we continue in His Word, we are changed.

2. **Isaiah 40:31** – They that wait upon the Lord shall CHANGE!

3. **Philippians 1:6** – He Who began a good work in us will complete it.

4. **Galatians 3:3** – We cannot reach perfection by depending on the flesh.

   If we won’t spend time with God, showing our dependence on the Holy Spirit, then we are depending on ourselves to do what needs to be done.

G. The benefits of spending time with God go on and on.

1. We gain confidence in His presence.

2. We find wisdom as we fellowship with Him.

3. We hear from God and receive direction.

4. Deliverance comes as we wait on Him.
   a. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.
b. Paul and Silas were in jail singing and praising, and the jail shook and the doors supernaturally opened.

IV. In Practical Terms, How Do We Spend Time With God?

A. Form a habit. Make it a part of your daily life.

B. Pray (talk to God). Don’t try to sound super spiritual or religious, just talk to Him and wait for His answer. Even if you hear nothing right away, you will find yourself being led to do the right things.

C. Read the Bible (versions you understand). Read good books on practical subjects that will help you in daily life.

1. It is also important to understand, through study or attending classes, the foundations and doctrines of your faith.

D. Start rolling scriptures over and over in your mind and speaking them out loud.

E. Slow down in life and learn to see the beauty of God in the things and people around you.

F. Take time daily to voice your gratitude for what God does for you.