



COVENANT CHURCH

Déjà Vu – Breaking the Cycle, Part 3

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Main Idea – God’s vision for your life should start to become clear once you’ve developed a plan that demonstrates a true desire to change for the better. Part of your plan should include surrounding yourself with good people.

The cycle is broken through Jesus

- If you have been thinking about breaking a bad cycle in your life, it is possible to do so through Jesus.
- You will need a plan to break the cycle. Bad habits and practices do not automatically go away on their own.
- Simply envisioning yourself as a better person - or imagining a better circumstance - will not change anything.
- A vision without a plan is just a hope.
- The disabled man in the story below was in a cycle of futility. Apparently, his life didn’t matter to anyone. He was perceived as a social outcast.
- **John 5:1-5 – Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie – the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. (NIV)**

You must sincerely desire a change in your circumstances

- Upon seeing the man, Jesus asked the man about his true desires.
- **John 5:6 - When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” (NIV)**
- This was a perceptive question by Jesus because it is possible the man did not truly desire healing.
- Perhaps he was using his infirmity for personal gain. Or, maybe he had become comfortable in his disabled condition.
- In order to change you must sincerely determine to change your habits. Habits that may need changing might include:
 - Comfort habits – such as alcohol or narcotics or comfort food
 - Work habits – lack of initiative or little sense of responsibility

- Spending habits – poor budgeting
- Dietary habits – unhealthy meals
- Relationship habits – becoming close to people who will not be profitable to your happiness or well-being
- You won't get well if you keep doing the same things over and over.
- If you want to get better, establish consistent, healthy habits.

Become extraordinary

- Extraordinary people consistently make good decisions.
- Extraordinary people do consistently what ordinary people do occasionally.
- The difference is that extraordinary people have made a habit of good decision-making.
- Jesus will give you the strength and determination to establish right habits if you take advantage of His power. He is standing right in front of you, willing to give you that ability. **John 5:7-9 – “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath (NIV)**

A Godly community

- Whom you spend time with will influence your habits.
- Things such as money management, personal eating habits, and proper values will be established and reinforced by those you have in your circle of friends.
- The right kind of friends will keep you accountable to the behavior necessary to establish good habits. **James 5:16 – Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (NIV)**
- Confessing to God will bring you forgiveness. Confessing to your good friends will make you whole.

Accountability is the key

- Admit when you have a problem.
- Have a vision of a better place.
- Develop a plan to get there.
- The Holy Spirit - fueled with constant prayer - will give you: the determination to break your bad cycle, the ability to see the vision God has for you, and the strength to carry out the plan.

Reflective Questions for Déjà Vu – Breaking the Cycle, Part 3

1. The invalid man in the John 5 story is often perceived as an innocent victim. Ryan Leak suggested part of the man's problem may actually have been his own lack of a true desire to change his circumstances. What do you think of that idea? How might such an idea change the moral of the story?
2. Think of something about your life right now with which you are not happy. How badly do you really want to change that thing? Do you want to change it enough so that you will permanently change some current habits?
3. What might it look like to have a support group of good people who will keep you accountable to the necessary habits that bring about change? Who will be in that group? What is the first step you can take right now to begin an association with such a group of friends? Might a Covenant Small Group be the answer?