

UPHILL HABITS

new direction for a new year

Part 1

Big Idea

In this message, Pastor Gavin introduces the concept of "uphill habits." We may have "uphill hopes," but we are often caught in "downhill habits." We need to understand that we form habits, and then our habits form us. Real change is hard to come by, so it's important for us to create good habits that will help facilitate change in our lives. Good habits are "uphill" because while they are doable, they require intentionality, effort, and work. In order to develop good habits, we must first have hope for the future and then repent - change direction - from our old, unhealthy habits. We can form uphill habits by fixing our attention on God, getting rid of our excuses, and turning "when" into "now." Forming great habits must begin with the most important: putting God first. In order to put God first, we need to give Him the first of everything - the first of our year, through weekly services; the first of our month, through our scheduling and budgeting; the first of our week, through worshipping and resting on Sundays; and the first of each day, with the Word, worship, and prayer. We are what we repeatedly do. When we put God first in everything, we can expect God to bless the rest of our lives.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a future.'" - Jeremiah 29:11

Discussion Questions

- Talk about why it is so important to put God as the first priority in our lives. Share what you are doing - or planning to do - to place God first in your year, month, week, and day. How is fasting a part of putting God first?
- Discuss the "first fifteen" approach to giving God the first of each day through five minutes in the Word, five minutes of worship, and five minutes of prayer. Talk about how this can make a difference in the rest of your day.
- Think about how you have been spending your Sabbath. Is it a day of worship and rest alone, or do other things slip in? Brainstorm ways to make the Sabbath, typically Sunday, a day that is totally dedicated to worshipping God, rest, and restoration.
- What is something new or a change that you want for your life this year? It might be in a relationship, at work, financially, or spiritually. Share any old "downhill habits" that you need to shed and identify some good "uphill habits" to replace them with. How will a God-first focus help you accomplish these changes?

Prayer Focus

Ask God to show you "downhill habits" in your life from which you need to repent and change direction. Ask Him to guide you and help you replace the old with new "uphill habits."

Next Steps

Commit or recommit to putting God first in everything. Make prayer and worship your first priority each day. Be sure to include the Word as you spend time with God.