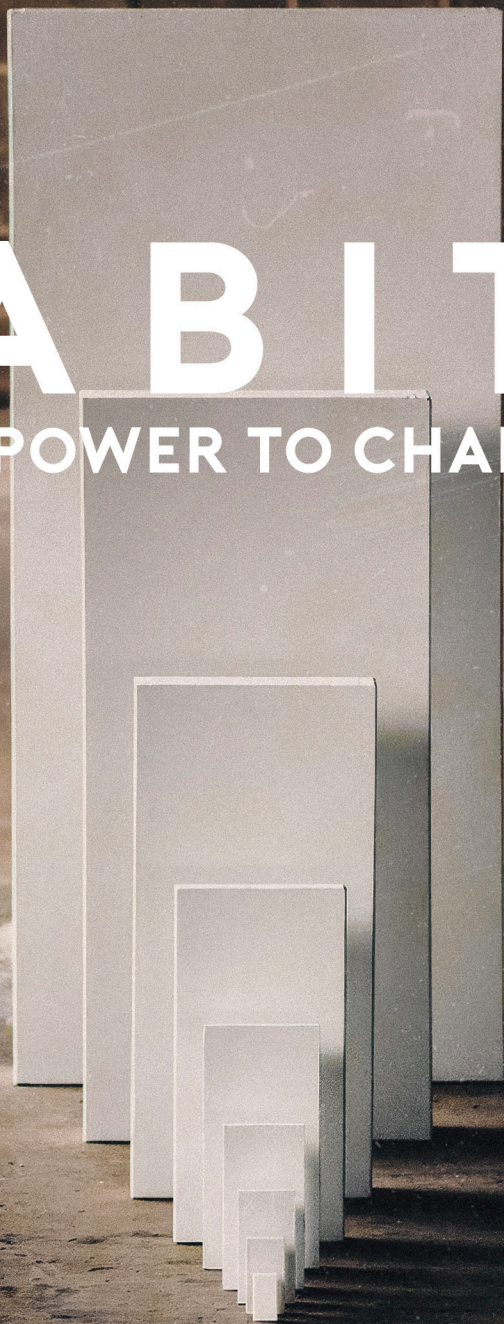


6 WEEKS

HABITS

THE POWER TO CHANGE



WE ALL HAVE THINGS THAT WE
WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE ABOUT
OURSELVES. YET, WE OFTEN FIND
OURSELVES STRUGGLING WITH THE
SAME BESETTING SINS OR NEGATIVE
HABITS. THIS SERIES IS DESIGNED
TO EQUIP YOU TO UNDERSTAND

WHERE THE POWER TO
CHANGE COMES FROM, AND
HOW YOU CAN GO FROM
BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION
(WHICH SELDOM WORKS)

TO SPIRITUAL
TRANSFORMATION.
ALL FOR THE GLORY
OF GOD.

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WHEN YOU'RE SICK OF BEING STUCK



WEEK 1 SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

What is your most annoying habit?

Big Idea:

Real change isn't behavior modification, real change is spiritual transformation.

Key Scriptures:

Romans 7:15-25

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do,

it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

"For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."

2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT

"[God] said, "My grace is all you

need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."

Zechariah 4:6

"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD Almighty."

Discussion:

1. In what ways do you feel "stuck" in your life?
2. In what ways does that impact your life negatively?
3. *Read Romans 7:15-25.* Share some ways that you can relate to Paul's discourse.
4. *Read 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 and 2 Corinthians 12:9.* Although Paul struggled with doing what he didn't want to do, and not doing what he did want to do, he came to discover God's grace at work in his life through his struggles. Have you had success doing this in the past?
5. In what ways can you do the same in the areas you'd currently like to change, finding His grace even in the struggles?
6. *Read Zechariah 4:6.* In what ways have you tried to get "unstuck" in your own power?

7. What are some specific areas where you could call on God's Spirit to give you the power to you need to change?
8. Are you trying to meet a need or relieve a hurt without God's grace and power?
9. What would it look like to take a step toward His grace this week?

Wrapping It Up:

Remember that the grace that saves you is also the grace that changes you. Pray for one another to tap into the power of God's grace given through His Spirit.

Prayer Focus:

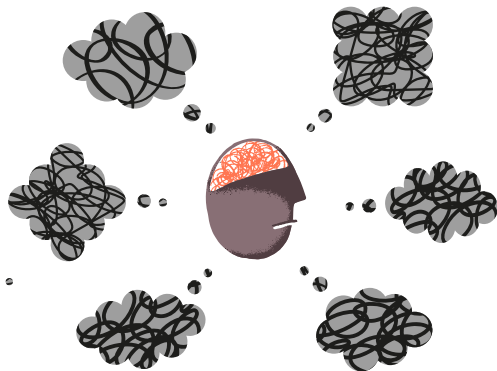
Pray for all our high school and college graduates; that they would be sent out into the world to make an impact for Christ.

Memory Verse:

"[God] said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."

2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT

STOP THE NEGATIVE SELF-TALK



WEEK 2 SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

In what areas do you most struggle with negative self-talk?

Big Idea:

If you want to change what you do, you have to change what you think.

Key Scriptures:

Proverbs 23:7 NKJV

"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he..."

Psalms 139: 13-14

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

Ephesians 4:21-24 NLT

"Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature

and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy."

2 Corinthians 10:5

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Discussion:

1. In general, do you feel most of your self-talk is negative or positive? How do you think this developed in your life?
2. Read Proverbs 23:7. How have you seen your negative thoughts or feelings about yourself influence your choices or actions?
3. Read Psalm 139:13-14. Who does God have to say about you?

4. How does your life reflect this truth, and how might living in this truth change your life?
5. Who do you want to become? Who does God want you to become? Do you notice any differences there? Share what you're thinking and feeling with your group.
6. Negative self-talk can lead to a distorted identity, negatively impacting your life in harmful ways. Those negative thoughts can contribute to destructive habits, which then reinforce your distorted identity. How have you seen that cycle play out in your own life?
7. *Read Ephesians 4:21-24.* How might this passage encourage you to decide to agree with God on your new nature, thus helping you to change your actions?
8. *Read 2 Corinthians 10:5.* You do what you do because of what you think of you. How might you begin to take every negative thought you have about yourself captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ?
9. With what biblical truths can you replace your negative thinking?

Wrapping It Up:

Consider one or two of the most common negative messages that you say to yourself.

Together as a group, help one another come up with verses from Scripture that you can memorize to combat those messages.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our Celebrate Recovery ministry and for those seeking to overcome negative thinking and habits.

Memory Verse:

"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he..." Proverbs 23:7 NKJV



HOLY HABITS

WEEK 3 SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

What are some good habits that you've been able to practice consistently? Discuss how you were able to adopt those habits and how they have impacted your life.

Big Idea:

Hope alone won't change your life. Habits will.

Key Scriptures:

Daniel 6:4-10

"At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither

corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God." So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: "May King Darius live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." So King Darius put the decree in writing. Now

when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."

Hebrews 10:25

"Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have made a habit, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

1 Timothy 4:8 NLT

"Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come."

Zechariah 4:10 NLT

"Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin..."

Discussion:

1. Read Daniel 6:4-10. The story of Daniel and his faithfulness to God can be quite encouraging. Despite being in exile away from his country and the wicked schemes of the government leaders there, Daniel would come out victorious because of the spiritual habits he had developed at a young

age. He would eventually be thrown into a lion's den, but God would deliver him, and the miraculous work of the One True God would be on display. Discuss what some of Daniel's habits were. (See Daniel 1, 4, 6)

2. Discuss what kind of habits that you would consider to be "holy habits".
3. Talk about some of your current habits. In what ways are they honoring God?
4. How have your God-honoring habits helped transform your life?
5. Read Hebrews 10:25. The writers of Hebrews was addressing a bad habit that some had developed of not gathering for community. Discuss how this might have impacted their faith.
6. Read 1 Timothy 4:8. What kind of benefits do you think Paul was talking about in this passage?
7. What kind of accountability can you adopt in your life to help you develop good spiritual habits, and eliminate bad ones?
8. Read Zechariah 4:10. Never underestimate how God can start something big through one small holy habit. What's one habit you will commit to starting?

Wrapping It Up:

Pray for one another, that you will be consistent in practicing holy habits in your life and eliminate bad ones.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our upcoming Skill School, where hundreds of elementary kids will have the opportunity to hear the transforming message of the Gospel.

Memory Verse:

"Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin..."

Zechariah 4:10 NLT

BREAK THE CYCLE THAT'S BREAKING YOUR LIFE

Proverbs 13:20

“Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.”

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Share one thing that you believe is standing in your way of becoming more Christlike or effective for His Kingdom?

Big Idea:

Why resist a temptation in the future that you have the power to eliminate today?

Key Scriptures:

James 1:21

“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.”

Proverbs 4:14-15

“Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.”

Discussion:

1. Bad habits are difficult to break because the payoff is now and the pain comes later. Good habits are hard to start because the pain is now and the payoff comes later. When you understand this principle, you can begin to break the cycle of the negative habits in your life. Discuss the pain points and payoffs of one negative habit that trips you up, or one positive one that you struggle with developing.
2. *Read James 1:21.* You can't defeat what you do not define. And if you want to break a bad habit, you must remove the cue. Define and discuss the cue that most draws you into a bad habit you desire to break.

3. How might you combat that cue with the truth of the pain that will eventually result when you allow it to draw you into your negative habit?
4. *Read Proverbs 4:14-15 and Proverbs 13:20.* Who is someone wise you can spend more time with as you seek to break negative habits and cycles in your life? How do you think that might impact you?
5. Talk about your mindset when it comes to your habits. What needs to shift in your mindset in order to break bad habits?

Wrapping It Up:

Identify one bad habit you want to break and pray about this together. Discuss how your life will look different as a result of breaking this habit.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our middle schoolers and their leaders who are heading out on their summer trip this week.

Memory Verse:

"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." James 1:21



YOU DON'T WIN BY TRYING

WEEK 5 SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Share about something that you trained for and had success with as a result.

Big Idea:

Stop trying and start training.

Key Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NLT

"Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should."

1 Timothy 4:7-8 NLT

"Instead, train yourself to be

godly. Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come."

Discussion:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. In this week's message the point was made that trying is an attempt to change with minimal commitment. Training is whole-hearted commitment to achieve a specific result. Share an example of each of these from your own life.
2. Read 1 Timothy 4:7-8. What does "training in godliness" look like in the world today? What tools could help you train for godliness?
3. What's your current mindset like when it comes to making a lasting change in your life? What truths about your identity do you need to embrace to make the changes you want to see?

4. Talk about some of the habits you have in your life that strengthen your relationship with God. In what ways could you prioritize these habits to serve you and the people around you?
5. When you're training, you get the gear and you create a game plan. Describe what that might look like in your spiritual life.

Wrapping It Up:

Based on who you want to become, how are you going to train?

Prayer Focus:

Pray for the Widows Walking Together group that meets this week.

Memory Verse:

"Instead, train yourself to be godly. Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come." 1 Timothy 4:7-8 NLT

YOU IN FIVE YEARS



WEEK 6 SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Think about where you were five years ago spiritually, relationally, financially and physically and where you are now. What positive habits helped you be where you are today?

Big Idea:

Our lives are the sum total of all the small decisions we make.

Key Scriptures:

Galatians 6:7-9

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Hosea 10:13 NIV

"But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil..."

Mark 4:20 NLT

"And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

Discussion:

1. Share about a time when your hard work paid off. What were some of the things you did to be successful? How did you see God at work?
2. Discuss where you'd like to see yourself in five years:
 - Spiritually
 - Relationally
 - Financially
 - Physically
3. If the habits you have today shape who you are tomorrow, what habits might

you need to adopt in order to be where you envision yourself?

4. *Read Galatians 6:7-9.* What are some of the good things you're currently sowing in your life? How could God use those habits to positively impact your future?
5. *Read Hosea 10:13 and Mark 4:20.* You reap after you sow. In *The Compound Effect*, by Darren Hardy, he notes that small, smart choices + consistency + time = Radical Difference. With which parts of this equation do you most struggle?
6. What commitments are you willing to make to see a radical difference in your own life?

Wrapping It Up:

Write down one thing you defined when considering where you want to be in five years. Tuck it away in your Bible or somewhere you can review it from time to time to keep you on track.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our nation, that our hearts would be turned to return to one nation, under God.

Memory Verse:

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." Galatians 6:7



NOTES:

Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?

Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
- Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____



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