

SMALL GROUPS

This week's message focused on identifying and breaking bad habits that prevent us from becoming who God has called us to be. Pastor Mack reminded us that nobody plans to mess up their life—it happens one bad decision, one wrong step, one harmful habit at a time. Using Samson's story, we learned that he didn't destroy his life all at once, but through 56,250 steps in the wrong direction. The key is to remove the cues that trigger bad habits and interrupt the action before it becomes a cycle.

Key Scripture

Judges 16:1 - "One day Samson went to Gaza where he saw a prostitute."

James 1:21 - "Get rid of every filthy habit and all wicked conduct. Submit to God and accept the word that he plants in your heart, 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 Questions

Understanding the Message

1. The Reality of Bad Habits
 - Pastor Mack said, "You cannot defeat what you do not define." Why is it so difficult for people to clearly identify and name their bad habits? What makes us want to avoid this step?
2. Good vs. Bad Habits
 - Discuss this statement: "Good habits are difficult to start because the pain is now and the payoff is later. Bad habits are difficult to break because the payoff is now and the pain is later." How have you experienced this in your own life?
3. The Five Common Cues
 - Review the five most common cues: Places, Times, Moods, Moments, and People. Which of these is the strongest trigger for you personally? Why do you think that is?

Going Deeper

4. Samson's Journey
 - Samson had 56,250 steps (25 miles) to turn around and go back home. What does this tell us about God's patience and our opportunities to change course? When have you experienced God giving you multiple chances to turn back?
5. The People Factor
 - The sermon stated that if you have a friend who is overweight, your chances of being overweight increase by 57%. How do the people around us influence our habits—both good and bad? Is there a relationship in your life that might need boundaries?
6. Spiritual Transformation vs. Behavior Modification
 - How is "spiritual transformation" different from just "behavior modification"? Why does lasting change require more than just willpower?

Personal Application

7. Your One Habit

- Based on who you want to become, what ONE habit do you need to break? (You don't have to share the specific habit if it's too personal, but discuss what makes this habit so difficult to break.)

8. Removing the Cue

- What is one practical step you can take THIS WEEK to remove a cue or interrupt the action of a bad habit? Be specific.

9. The Lie of Control

- Pastor Mack said, "We think we have control over it when in reality it has control over us." Have you ever convinced yourself you could stop something "anytime" only to realize you couldn't? How did you break through that deception?

Key Takeaways

✓ You cannot defeat what you do not define - Be specific about the habit you need to break

✓ Good habits are hard to start (pain now, payoff later) while bad habits are hard to break (payoff now, pain later)

✓ The 5 common cues are: Places, Times, Moods, Moments, and People

✓ Two strategies for breaking bad habits:

1. Remove the cue
2. Interrupt the action

✓ You're not what you did - One bad decision doesn't define you, but you'll become more of what you do if you don't turn away from it

✓ Why resist a temptation in the future if you have the power to eliminate it today?

Practical Action Steps

Individual Commitments

Have each person share ONE specific action they will take this week:

Examples:

- "I will move my phone out of my bedroom to break the habit of scrolling before bed"
- "I will delete social media apps from my phone for 30 days"
- "I will avoid [specific place] that triggers [specific habit]"
- "I will reach out to a counselor or accountability partner about [specific struggle]"
- "I will identify the time of day I'm most vulnerable and create a new routine for that time"

Group Accountability

- Exchange contact information if you haven't already
- Set up a group text or messaging thread
- Commit to checking in with at least one other person this week about your specific habit you're working to break
- Schedule your next meeting time

The HALT Check-In

This week, when you're tempted toward a bad habit, pause and ask yourself:

- Am I Hungry?
- Am I Angry?
- Am I Lonely?
- Am I Tired?

Then address the real need instead of the habit.

Closing Activity

Confession & Prayer

Optional but powerful: If your group has built trust, consider this exercise

1. Have each person write down on a piece of paper the ONE habit they want to break (they don't have to show anyone)
2. Pray over those papers together
3. Each person can choose to either:
 - Keep the paper as a reminder and commitment
 - Tear it up as a symbol of breaking the habit
 - Exchange papers with an accountability partner in the group

Prayer Focus

- Pray for each person to have the courage to define their habit clearly
- Pray for wisdom to identify and remove cues
- Pray for strength to interrupt the action when tempted
- Pray for spiritual transformation, not just behavior modification
- Pray for anyone who needs professional help or rehab to have the courage to seek it

For Next Week

- Continue practicing the ONE good habit you started in Week 3
- Work on breaking the ONE bad habit you identified this week
- Be prepared to share one success and one struggle
- Read Proverbs 4 as a group before you meet again

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive: Some people may be dealing with serious addictions. Have resources ready (counseling contacts, rehab information, etc.)
- Create safety: Remind the group that what's shared stays in the group
- Don't fix: Your role isn't to solve everyone's problems but to point them to Jesus and create space for honest conversation

- Follow up: Reach out to group members individually during the week, especially those who shared vulnerable struggles
- Celebrate small wins: Breaking habits is hard work—celebrate every step forward

"There's no habit too great for God's grace. His power is made perfect in you as Jesus Christ is stronger in you than the wrong desire that's in you."