

# **Bad News, Good News (Habits) (Sanctification)**

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.  
Hebrews 12:1*

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16*

## **The Basic Bible Truth**

We humans are creatures of habit. We tend to get comfortable and are reluctant to embrace change. Habits can be advantageous, or they can be detrimental. Our path is a straight and narrow one and we must be watching. There are guideposts, also known as God's Word, along the way.

## **The Object**

A Spool Of Thread  
Soot Covered Mirror  
A Rag  
A Flashlight  
A Scissors



The premise is to show how bad habits bind us and good habits result in clarity. Thread represents bad habits in our lives. Wrapped around two wrists one time is easily broken. 6 or 7 times and it is impossible to tear. A very sooty mirror with a little scrubbing becomes quite clean and very reflective.

## **The Lesson**

First the bad news. Our bad habits result in much heartache in our lives. When we embrace sin, we bind ourselves. Freedom in Christ is freedom from sin. God refers to sin as a master, and we are the potential slave. The unique thought here is that we have a choice as to who we want to serve—God or Satan. Satan would have us bound and gagged if he had his way. A couple of wraps around the two wrists here are relatively easy to break. But wrap 7 or 8 times around, and it is an entirely different story. We become

comfortable with a sin, we snuggle up to it and do it again...and again...and again. At some point in the process, we are caught with few options to extricate ourselves from our predicament.

God warned Cain that sin must be mastered or it would master him. Our relentless search for that which makes our lives seem familiar results in repeated behaviors commonly known as habits. We find them everywhere in our lives. Many habits are good, almost necessary. When I walk into the house each evening, I will, without fail, hang my pickup keys on the key hooks by the door. If I don't make that a habit, I know without any hesitation that I would lose my keys on a regular basis. Those kinds of repeated behaviors make our lives better and less stressful.

There are other, less honorable behaviors that we repeat over and over until they become a natural part of our life. Those habits may have the potential to not only cause difficulty, but they could actually end in harm. It is amazingly simple to pick up and begin using bad or foul language. In the construction world that I work in, it is prevalent on job sites. It is very easy to become accustomed to hearing it so often that it almost rolls off of the tongue. I had a worker come up to me one day and comment that he figured out that I did not use swear words on the job and wanted to know why. I had a perfect opportunity handed to me to explain why I choose not to swear or curse.

Nearly any sin can become a habit when we allow it to creep into our lives a little at a time. No hardcore, drug addict mainlining heroin started at that level. It all began with a puff of marijuana, or maybe even back a little farther when they started making friends with those who were inclined to partake of those kinds of things. I had a friend who claimed to be a Christian, but had a real problem with drugs and alcohol. I talked to him about the issue often, but the draw towards the weekend "highs" had a tremendous hold on him. He could not walk away from something that he had been doing for 25 years. That habit eventually took his life.

Good habits take commitment. They do not just happen by themselves. Personal time in the Word each day is a great place to start. I have a big advantage over many people in that area. I work in a very noisy environment in a woodworking enterprise, so ear protection in the form of earmuffs are a must. I discovered years ago that I could carry a personal cassette player, run the cord for the speakers into my earmuffs and listen to the Bible on tape all day long every day. I have now graduated to an Mp3 player. It has become a habit for me now to make sure the Mp3 player is charged each evening and ready for the following day. Over the years it has taken a concerted effort to continue listening to the Bible as I do. I have worn out many "Walkmans", a couple of Zunes, and an iPod. I have purchased and completely worn out many rechargeable batteries, and accidentally torn the cord from the cassette or Mp3 player going up to the earmuffs countless times in my work. But I made a commitment to myself that I was going to keep this habit going. I crossed a great milestone in my life a few years ago when I achieved my 100<sup>th</sup> time through the Scriptures.

Habits require little or no thought. We do them without thinking. God's desire for our lives is that we be so in tune with His plans that we react and follow His directions without a second thought. We should behave with a Christ like attitude naturally. And then we will not have to constantly be asking ourselves, "What Would Jesus Do?" We know what Jesus would do and have been doing it so long that it is the natural course of events for us.

When our lives are geared in that direction, our testimony will shine to the world we live in each day. Others are watching, often intrigued by our seemingly strange behavior. Maybe they see us pray before a meal while in a public restaurant, or they notice that when we are confronted by serious issues in life, that we don't crumble but keep a cheerful, confident attitude. God calls us to be a *peculiar* people. That means that we will stand out from the crowd—in a good way. The ultimate goal is that others are drawn

to God as they observe our habits and behaviors, wanting some of what we have in our lives infused into theirs.

So by now I think you may have figured out the good news. Good habits like regular Bible study and prayer always result in positive results. We see our sinful condition exposed by Scripture, and with God's help, we begin to clean out the problem areas in our lives. It is like scrubbing the soot off of this mirror. When our lives are clean, we can then reflect the love of God into the world around us.

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