

STUDY 17 – WHAT IS THE LEGACY I WILL LEAVE BEHIND?

PART 2A – HOW TO CHANGE

This morning we want to look some more at “**how**” to make spiritual changes in our life. This is the progressive, ongoing part of this series. We will be talking about how to “**develop good habits**” in our life for the next couple of weeks. We have been addressing what it means to be “**spiritually minded**” from [Romans 8:6](#), and it should be apparent that having a “**spiritual mindset**” is not something automatic. Obviously, it takes effort, determination, time, and certainly discipline.

Becoming “spiritually minded” is not an overnight process, but a lifelong process.

You will never reach a place in your life where you do not have to work at being “**spiritually minded**”. I have been a Christian for over 50 years and I am working at this in my life as much as I ever have. So, from my perspective as a pastor, what we want to do is to develop godly habits in our life. A good habit is simply a meaningful repetitive routine that you have developed in your life – like consistently brushing your teeth or taking a shower each day, or spending time in God’s Word. Godly habits are no different, so think of godly habits this way.

God uses godly habits to create a specific kind of response to a specific kind of situation.

Stated a little differently, a godly habit prepares you to respond a certain way in a difficult circumstance. Now the problem that I face as a teacher is that the word “**habit(s)**” is not used in the Scriptures. However, there are other biblical words that are often used when speaking of habits. The primary word is “**practice**”. For instance, [Hebrews 5:15](#) in the NASB says,

Heb 5:14 (NASB) **But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice (good habits) have their senses trained to discern good and evil.**

The Greek word for “**practice**” is “*hexis*” and Strong’s, Vine’s, Zodhiates, and Harris all literally define a “practice” as a “**habit**”, so I am going to use the “**habit(s)**” in this series. The Bible also uses words like “**sins**” or “**transgressions**” to identify bad habits that people have. For instance, [Proverbs 28:13](#) says,

Pr 28:13 (NKJV) **He who covers his sins (bad habits) will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them (good habit) will have mercy.**

Now, I want to give you six (6) “spiritual habits” as we begin. I will only get to the first of these today, but they will serve as the basis for our future studies on “How to Change”.

HABIT 1: I must always be reminding myself of what matters the most in my life.

You MUST determine what matters the most in your life, and then develop the habit of keeping that picture and image in your mind. **You can become so busy with life that you actually miss life**. If the ladder you are climbing is not securely anchored, then every step you take on it just gets you to the wrong place faster.¹ If the direction your life is headed in is in the wrong direction, then you simply get to the wrong place faster. In essence, your drive to do what you want to do and to live how you want to live is only blinding you to the things that matter the most, and before you know it, those things are gone.

¹ Covey, 105.

HABIT 2: Small changes make a big difference.

You must take care of the small things first. Think of it this way. **Not taking care of little things eventually creates big problems.** For instance, if you know that you have a small roof leak that is easy to fix, but you keep procrastinating to fix it, before long, what started out as a small problem has become a big problem. Maybe you are always yelling at your kids, or mistreating your marriage partner, or getting angry at people all the time. These may seem like something small at the time, but they eventually create big problems in your life. They will actually destroy your life.

HABIT 3: Focus on WHO God wants me to become, not WHAT I want to achieve.²

This is probably one of the top three habits that you need to develop in your life – that of **making sure that you are more focused on who you are than what you do**. So many people have this completely backward. They see their life as “accomplishing something” rather than “becoming something”.

HABIT 4: Build godly habits around my identity in Christ, on who I am in Christ.

Every habit that you develop should be related directly to how it helps you to reflect Christ in every area of your life – your thought life, your words, your morals, your convictions, your behavior, your relationships, your commitment, your faithfulness – everything that makes you who you are.

HABIT 5: Repeating a godly behavior reinforces my identity with Christ.³

This is so important because you always want to be growing in Christlikeness. You want to always be measuring every area of your life against the life of Christ. “*How would Jesus have responded to this difficult moment? What would Jesus have said to someone who spoke evil of Him?*” **A lack of godly habits will prevent you from being able to identify with Christ.** Let us say that you curse a lot when you are not at church. You curse around your marriage partner, your children, and your co-workers. When that happens, you have no testimony simply because you have refused to identify with Christ. You have no identity with Christ at that point. Your identity is your own and not His.

HABIT 6: Every bad habit I develop is a vote for that identity.⁴

Just assume that you are a very lazy person, so you never work hard at anything and you are always finding excuses as to why you do not have to work diligently at developing godly habits. Well, it will not take very long and that will become your identity. It will become the way that people see you and relate to you. They will just say “*Oh, he’s a very lazy person*”, or “*She’s a very wasteful person*”, or “*He’s a very angry person*”. You get the picture. **Your bad habits become your identity.**

Now, each of these six (6) statements are the kind of principles and habits that I want to govern and control my life, so here is what I want to do this morning as we look at Habit 1. This is so important to me. **I want to begin each day with the end in mind.**⁵ When you leave here today, I want you to think about what you want the end of your life to look like not just to you, but **to your family**. Get that image in your mind so that you create a specific direction that you can live out in your life. Determine what

² Clear, 31.

³ Clear, 36-37.

⁴ Clear, 38.

⁵ Covey, 104-105.

will really matter the most to you, not today, but **THEN**. Here is the paradigm shift, the spiritual change that you must embrace.

YOU MUST DECIDE TODAY WHAT YOU WANT TO BE TOMORROW.⁶

I know this sounds a little crude, but you will never make a difference on the last day of your life. It does not work that way. **You have to make a difference today if you want to make a difference then.** You have to start becoming now what you want your life to be later. Here is the habit.

You always want to be adjusting your life to ensure that you are headed in the right direction.

So, here is the question that I know that I MUST answer if my life is ever going to make a difference to my family (and to this church) and it relates specifically to my role as a husband and a father.

“How do I ultimately want my family to be impacted by my life?”

How do I want my family to remember me? This is no small question because it actually reveals the depth and significance of my so-called Christian life. I may “say” that I want them to remember me as a fully devoted follower of Christ, but if my life does not coincide with what I “say”, then I have NOTHING to offer them. So, I have to face the man in the mirror and ask myself some critical questions:

“What do I want to be the legacy that I leave behind to my family?”

“How can I convince my family of what is truly and eternally important?”

“How can I help my family discern what are the principles and values by which they should live?”

For me personally, and this is so super important, but **I have to start with me.**

I have to FIRST decide who God wants me to be, and NOT who I want to be.

If I do not do this in my life, then I put my family at great spiritual risk. I know fathers who claim to be Christians, but their life simply does not really reflect that claim. This frightens me. They just breeze along living life however they want to live. It is like they have foolishly convinced themselves that in the end that everything will just work out the way they want it to work out. In essence, they really DO NOT BELIEVE GOD and are not willing to trust God with their life. That is so “**worldly minded**” and so foolish that it completely confuses me. I **MUST** understand the kind of life that God wants me to live. If I choose not to live how God wants me to live, then I place my entire family in a place of great spiritual danger. I trivialize their life. I jeopardize their life. I endanger their life. You may ask, “*How do I do that?*” I do that by not modeling Christ to them, by refusing to trust God and by not anchoring my life to His Word. As a husband, as a father, as a patriarch in my family, I MUST understand my spiritual responsibilities.

In my mind **if I do not do this**, I think of it as me ACTUALLY opening the door for the enemy to harm my family because I was so spiritually negligent. I failed to cover them in prayer. I was unwilling to be a spiritual model for them to follow. I was not willing to be a consistent testimony of what a godly life should look like. It is like I have neglected this part of my life so grossly that I just opened the doors of my home to anything evil that wanted to come in. Nothing is more important to me than my family and their spiritual life and their eternity, and it should be the same for you. I am not God and I know that I

⁶ Covey, 105.

cannot save anyone – I know that, but I know that people rarely, if ever, get saved in a vacuum. There is always someone that God is using to reach them, to encourage them, to pray for them, to love them, to be patient with them – AND I WANT TO BE THAT PERSON! I want you to want to be that person.

My life should never be about what I want, but what God wants.

If you choose to build your life around what you want, then you will quickly miss what God wants, and you will literally send **THE EXACT OPPOSITE MESSAGE** that God wants you to send to your family. On the day that each of them cross over into eternity, I want every single one of them to be on the God side of eternity, and not the wrong side. Before that moment arrives, I want them to know beyond any shadow of a doubt that they are saved. However, in order for me to have any chance of this happening, it requires that my focus, my **“habit”** is to always be **“spiritually minded”**, **“God minded”**, **“Christ minded”**, **“Scripture minded”**, to always be a model of God’s truth, to always **MAINTAIN** and **REFLECT** my identity which is in Christ, which is becoming more and more Christlike. Anything less will give me the absolute wrong results.

You may be a father or a mother or a grandparent here today, but you **CONTINUE** to build your life around temporal things, worldly things, carnal things. You may not really care that much about developing godly habits in your life. In fact, all of this may just seem like a waste of your time, a waste of your Sunday morning. If that is the case, then I imagine you are building your life around what you want and not what God wants. Be **“spiritually minded”**. Let God, His Word, and His will control your life. Let them be your life, your life blood. Please give me your heart for just a moment. This is so important to me.

The ungodly choices that you have made and are maybe continuing to make, the bad habits that you may currently have in your life, each one of them will eventually have a profound influence on the choices that your children make.

The impact of my life on my family is **NEGATIVELY** impacted by what I want to call **“generational distance”**. It is much more difficult for me to influence my great grandchildren than my grandchildren than my children. So, as I get older, my influence as a patriarch becomes less and less.

As a parent, you are the greatest role model that your children have and they will look at you and invariably begin to become like you – **EVEN IF YOU DO NOT WANT THEM TO.** If you curse a little, they will curse a lot. If you drink a little, they will drink a lot. If you only have a superficial relationship with God, they will have no relationship with God. If you do not listen in church, they will not even go to church. Here is the principle you need to understand, so please write it down.

WHAT YOU DO IN MODERATION, YOUR CHILDREN WILL DO IN EXCESS.

That is one of the most frightening statements I believe that I can ever make. Nothing drives me more in my life today than doing everything in my power to always be a constant encouragement to my family to become everything that God wants them to become. So, what do I have to do. **I have to begin each day with the end in mind.** This is a habit that I have to develop in my life, a godly habit that I want to always control my life.

My prayer for you this morning is very simple. It is that you will do everything in your power to prepare your family for the return of Christ, **FOR THE END.** It will happen **“in a moment, in the twinkling of**

an eye”, and if one of your family is left behind, if you are left behind, all I can say is “*May God have mercy on you.*” This is the only life you have to get salvation right, to get God right in your life, so please do not waste one more day of your life on things that have no eternal value and that keep you from truly knowing God intimately. Please do not waste another day being “**worldly minded**”. It is just a dark, deep hole. Please, **always keep reminding yourself of what matters the most in life**. Hold on to it, keep it close to you. Please, never, never let go of what matters the most in life.

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