

## STUDY 26 – OVER AND OVER AND OVER

### PART 2E – HOW TO CHANGE

As we begin, I want to emphasize something that should be very important to you. **Do not undervalue or underestimate how critical developing godly habits is to your spiritual growth.** Godly people have always developed godly habits. They make godly choices. Here is what is obvious:

**The quality of your CHOICES AND HABITS greatly impact the quality of your life.**

This is so huge, so enormous. Think about it. If you owned a business, would you want to hire someone who was always late, very sloppy, argued all the time, was extremely lazy, and did not get along with anyone? I doubt it. Why? It is because you know that **people who make bad decisions and have bad habits will always create bad results.** They will always have a ripple and domino effect, on other people, on your profit, on your business. [1 Corinthians 15:33](#) says,

**1Co 15:33 (NKJV) Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits (morals, character)."**

The word “**corrupts**” means to shrivel up, to wither, to spoil, to ruin. It is the idea that this kind of person influences people to literally waste their life away.<sup>1</sup> It means that they will bring you into a worse state.<sup>2</sup> This is not good. [Galatians 6:7](#) gives the principle that is so important to understand. It says,

**Gal 6:7 (NKJV) Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**

If you make **bad decisions** or develop **bad habits**, you WILL reap **bad results**. If you make **good decisions** and develop **good habits**, you WILL reap **good results**. It is so important that we learn how to make really good decisions and how to develop really good habits. We cannot measure the benefit that this adds to our life. Unfortunately, many Christians totally underestimate and miscalculate the value of **making small improvements over an extended period of time**, so they rarely develop godly habits. They want quick results with the least effort. Now, I am committed to a very simple principle.

### **YOUR SMALL DECISIONS ARE WHAT SHAPE YOUR LIFE THE MOST.**

In my mind, they actually shape and influence your spiritual success and future much more than big decisions. When I look back on my life, it is clear that I have not made many big decisions. The three greatest decisions I ever made was to trust in Christ for my salvation, to marry my precious wife, and to become a pastor. However, past those three decisions, my life is comprised of many really small decisions – and it is those small decisions that have shaped my life the most. So, to reinforce this reality, I want to take a small detour and talk about **biblical principles** for just a moment. Why? It is because **developing godly habits is such an important and crucial biblical principle.** Here is what we know.

### **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES NEVER FAIL. WHY? IT IS BECAUSE GOD NEVER FAILS.**

So, in order to be spiritually successful in a culture whose values are constantly changing, **we need to live by biblical principles that never change.** Most people take shortcuts around God’s principles. They want love without commitment, success without hard work, a thin body and pecan pie with ice

<sup>1</sup> Strong, *phtheirō*, #5351, ep.

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, *phtheirō*, ep.

cream, and the rewards of godly character without being godly. The truth is that if you **IGNORE** God’s principles, your life cannot be spiritually successful.<sup>3</sup> We only have one life to live, so we had better figure out how that life is to be lived. Here is what I have learned.

**Spiritual success is not about doing a lot of different things well, but about doing godly things well over and over and over.**<sup>4</sup>

**Doing the right thing over and over and over ALWAYS strengthens you to become what God wants you to become**, but doing the wrong thing over and over diminishes your chances of becoming what God wants you to become. God’s principles never change, and they apply anywhere, anytime, with anyone. You **MUST CHOOSE** to live by God’s principles. [1 Corinthians 4:2](#) says,

1Co 4:2 (NKJV) **Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.**

The question is “**faithful**” to **what**? It is being “**faithful**” to whatever God desires for your life. When God speaks of being “**faithful**”, He is always talking about **doing the right and godly thing over and over and over, and doing it with excellence**. That is being faithful. Honestly, I despise spiritual gimmicks, spiritual shortcuts, and not being disciplined in spiritual things. Why is that? It is because I know from the Word of God that becoming spiritually successful requires **hard work, a lot of discipline, and really godly habits**. For instance, if you are someone who is impatient and you have to have quick results, then you will never be spiritually successful. Scripture is replete with example after example revealing that **GOD IS NEVER IN A HURRY**. You can rush ahead of God and get what you want quicker, but in the end, you will blame God because nothing worked out the way you wanted it to work out. **What I love is developing godly habits that help me to be fully committed to what is biblical and right.**

**The day you graduate to spiritual maturity is the day that you accept full responsibility for your life – for the decisions you have made and the habits you are developing – good or bad.**

You have two choices. First, you can **blame someone else** for the problems in your life. Secondly, you can **accept personal responsibility** for the problems in your life. The issue with Christians who are not spiritually successful in their life is that they are always making excuses for why things did not turn out how they wanted them to turn out. They constantly blame other people for their problems. **They never take personal responsibility for their life, for their words, or for their actions**. They tell other people – “*This is all your fault*”. Let me give you a great habit to develop in your life.

### **ELIMINATE ALL OF YOUR EXCUSES.**

Just get rid of them, just dump them out of your life. Stop looking for a scapegoat to blame. This started in the garden of Eden when Eve blamed the serpent and Adam blamed his wife. Today, everyone blames God or someone else. Listen very carefully. This is so super important.

**The difference between spiritually successful Christians and spiritually unsuccessful Christians is that successful Christians are willing to do what unsuccessful Christians are not willing to do.**

They know what they have to do to be successful and they know how to measure if they are actually successful. I love the idea of being able to **MEASURE** spiritual progress on a regular basis - daily,

<sup>3</sup> Covey, 364.

<sup>4</sup> Hardy, xxi.

weekly, monthly, yearly. Here is a word to integrate into your spiritual mindset – “**tracking**”. Think of **TRACKING AS MEASURING**. You need a small notepad to track your progress. Write down on the top when you started because your **goal**, your **benchmark** is three to six weeks to develop a godly habit. Track yourself with intentionality. Be thorough and organized at doing this. Let me give you two principles to help you with this habit of tracking yourself. Principle 1:

**YOU CANNOT IMPROVE SOMETHING UNTIL YOU MEASURE IT.**

Every godly habit that you develop **MUST** be measurable because it is important to know if you are actually making any meaningful progress. **If you cannot measure your progress, then most likely you are not making any progress.** Principle 2:

**THE MORE CONSCIOUS YOU ARE OF YOUR ACTUAL BEHAVIOR, THE MORE YOU CAN SHAPE THAT BEHAVIOR.**

If you never figure out and accept that you are doing something that is not good for your life, then what you are doing will eventually become a very bad habit that will be extremely difficult to break. Just assume that you want to become more **punctual** in your life. Right now, you are never on time, so here is what you do. You begin to track yourself, and every time that you are late to where you are going, you have to mark it down. You track if you are progressing or regressing. You get out your notepad, and you write it down. Eventually, you begin asking yourself “*Do I really want to be late today?*” If you will do this, what you will find is that you will soon choose to do what you need to do to be on time.

**A greater awareness of your bad habit will motivate you to develop a good habit.**

If you keep repeating the same bad choices just a little bit each day, and you keep making excuses as to why it is okay to keep making those bad choices, then the only thing you have to look forward to are bad results. We intuitively know that **BAD CHOICES CREATE BAD RESULTS**. Secondly, we know that **SMALL CHOICES CREATE LARGE RESULTS**. The small choices that you make each day, either good or bad, probably seem insignificant at the time because they are so small. However, the principle is simple - **SMALL HABITS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE**.

Now, I have been encouraging you for over six months to develop good habits in your life to replace your bad habits. Developing a godly habit is like planting a seed and just watching it grow. Here is what you need to do, so listen carefully. First, you determine what God wants you to change. Next, you make a decision to change. Thirdly, you keep reinforcing that decision over and over in your life until it just becomes an unconscious habit that gets stronger and stronger the more that you do it.

The goal that you want to associate with developing godly habits in your life is **NOT** what do I want to accomplish in my life (even though that is a great goal), but **WHO** do I want to become. I.e., what kind of person do I want to become? Does being a godly person really mean that much to me or not? Can I look at my life and know with certainty that my life is headed in the direction that God wants it to be headed? Define the issue this way - “*Is my life truly a reflection of someone who identifies with Christ in a visible, tangible, measurable way?*” **Colossians 3:1-2** says it this way,

**Col 3:1 (NKJV) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**

If you have been “**raised with Christ**”, the question is whether or not you have made a genuine commitment to “**seek those things which are above**”, and to “**set your mind on things above**”? Do you have **godly habits** that are **reinforcing that commitment**? The word “**seek**” in v1 is an imperative mood verb in the present tense and active voice. That parsing is the strongest Greek construction possible when it comes to God telling you to do something. “**SEEK**” what is above! Do not live for this world, do not waste your life on things that will not last or endure. In v2, we have the same exact parsing for “**set your mind**” – imperative mood, present tense, active voice. “**SET YOUR MIND**” is just one word and it means to **constantly be thinking about things above**. This **MUST** become your habit - you seek what is above, you set your mind on what is above, and you constantly think about what is above.

Personally, the greatest goal in my life is to become more and more like Christ every day. That is the one goal that I want to always be controlling my life. I know I have to figure out how to implement that goal into my life. I.e., how do I actually accomplish becoming more like Christ. We saw in our last study that when God gives a command, normally that command does not provide **HOW** to apply that command to our life. When that happens, **GOD IS FORCING US TO THINK**. I.e., I have to figure out HOW I am going to practically “**seek what is above**” and “**set my mind on things above**”. How can I do that? Both of these are clear, unmistakable commands that we are to implement into our life. We cannot just casually ignore and sidestep these two verses. God is compelling us to do something, and we must pay attention to it, or it will just fall by the way side. In the Parable of the Sower in [Luke 8:15](#), listen to what Jesus said about the seed that fell on good ground and yielded a hundredfold.

Lk 8:15 (NKJV) **But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.**

I love this. This whole idea, this entire process of knowing what I need to do and then figuring out how to do it in a way that is honoring and pleasing to God is exhilarating to me. These people **heard the Word**, and they developed a way to keep it and bear fruit in their life. Here is what we know.

**The imperative mood verbs are God’s way of compelling you to think so that you can fully exercise your faith in God’s desire and power to change your life.**

**God is compelling you to think**, and to think godly and to think about how to implement His commands into your life. I just love this process, this ongoing **habit** of trying to **figure out how to apply God’s truth to my life**. However, here is what I have learned after well over four decades of teaching.

**If all that I do is tell you WHAT God wants you to do, you will rarely do it.**

Why is that? It is because **every biblical command needs a process and a means to achieve what is being commanded**, and the average Christian rarely, if ever, thinks through how to apply God’s commands to their life. Listen carefully,

**IF YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO, BUT YOU NEVER DO IT, TO YOU THAT IS SIN.**

[James 4:17](#) says,

Jas 4:17 (NKJV) **Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.**

What do you call it when you tell your children to do something and they ignore you and disobey you? **YOU CALL IT DISOBEDIENCE**, and you should. Well, it is the same spiritually.

Now, I am not asking you to just go out and develop some habits in your life for the sake of just developing some habits – not at all. However, whatever habits that you do need to develop in your life must be anchored in God’s principles that identify what you really need in your life to make spiritual progress. For instance, let us just assume that you are always angry and short with people. Scripturally, that is simply a lack of self-control. So, whatever habit you decide to develop to deal with your anger, it must first be related to self-control. “**Self-control**” is the last of the nine fruits of the Spirit listed in [Galatians 5:22-23](#). I can assure you that if you are an angry person, that there are many other areas of your life that are out of control. So, whatever habit you choose to develop and work on to help you regarding your anger, you MUST start with developing the habit of self-control. **It is not anger that you focus on, it is self-control.** You must concentrate on self-control. Just identify one area of your life that lacks self-control, then work on it. Start small. For instance, if you are always procrastinating, then make a list of things that you procrastinate about, set your goal, then develop a specific habit that has a trigger that reminds you when you do procrastinate so it can help you NOT to procrastinate. This is how you are to think. This is what it means to be “**spiritually minded**” and to “**set your mind on things above**”.

**YOU DETERMINE WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE, THEN YOU DEVELOP A SPECIFIC GODLY HABIT TO HELP YOU CHANGE.**

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