

“Habits Lead To Success”
1 Corinthians 9:24-27
Sermon Series: “Habits”

Introduction: Is there anybody here whose goal is to be a complete failure? We talked about in the first message that we have similar goals in life that we want to succeed in accomplishing, but are we willing to do what it takes to have that success?

Casey Graham, quoting Jim Rohn, said, “There’s two kinds of pain, the pain of discipline and the pain of disappointment. You choose.”

Craig Groeschel said, “Successful people do consistently what other people do occasionally.”

Main Idea: Discipline [good habits] is necessary for us to successfully live the Christian life.

Why is this true? Why is discipline [good habits] necessary? Let’s let our text tell us.

Paul is using a couple of analogies from athletics in this passage. The background is probably the Isthmian Games (images of the excavation site and the statue with the wreath). You had to be a citizen to enter the games. You have to get saved to enter the race. We are not running to get to heaven. This is a picture of how we are to live the Christian life and how we will be rewarded.

Areas of discipline: time, thoughts, words, eating, drinking, spiritual, financial, physical, work, relational

1. Discipline is necessary because we cannot live however we want to live and be successful (v. 24, Proverbs 25:28).

A. We can disqualify ourselves by breaking the rules.

B. We can mess up our lives by a lack of discipline and practicing bad habits instead of good habits.

2. Discipline is necessary because there is a price to be paid to honor God and be used by God (v. 24-25, 27, Colossians 1:24).

The victory is won in private but displayed in public.

3. Discipline is necessary in order for us to fulfill our purpose and receive our heavenly reward (v. 25-26, Mark 8:36, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15). The ultimate and daily purpose of our lives should be to honor the Lord Jesus. Our primary motivation should be to hear, “well done my good and faithful servant.” We should evaluate our lives in the light of eternity. We can time efficiently waste our lives.

4. Discipline is necessary in order for us to avoid being disqualified and ruining our witness (v. 27).

John MacArthur writes, “A considerable part of that fight was against Paul’s own body. I buffet my body and make it my slave. Buffet literally means to hit under the eye. He figuratively would give his body a black eye, knock it out if necessary. Make it my slave is from the same root as “made...a slave” in verse 19. Paul put his body into subjection, into slavery to his mission of winning souls for Christ.

Most people, including many Christians, are instead slaves to their bodies. Their bodies tell their minds what to do. Their bodies decide when to eat, what to eat, how much to eat, when to sleep and get up, and so on. An athlete cannot allow that. He follows the training rules, not his body. He runs when he would rather be resting, he eats a balanced meal when he would rather have a chocolate sundae, he goes to bed when he would rather stay up, and he gets up early to train when he would rather stay in bed. An athlete leads his body; he does not follow it. It is his slave, not the other way around.”

How can we implement good habits and live with discipline that enables us to live the Christian life successfully?

1. Conviction: James Clear, Atomic Habits:

“Habits do not restrict freedom. They create it. In fact, the people who don’t have their habits handled are often the ones with the least amount of freedom. Without good financial habits, you will always be struggling for the next dollar. Without good health habits, you will always seem to be short on energy. Without good learning habits, you will always feel like you’re behind the curve.” (p.46)

2. Here is a scriptural principle to guide us (Romans 13:14). It is both spiritual and practical.

3. Spiritually, we are to hold fast to Christ (Colossians 2:6-7, 18-23).

4. Practically, we are going to make it as hard as we can to sin and as easy as we can to do what is right (“make no provision for the flesh”). How do we do this?

A. Craig Groeschel, “Why resist a temptation tomorrow that you can eliminate today?”

B. (Clear) The process of starting good habits and breaking bad habits:

“The process of building a habit can be divided into four simple steps: cue, craving, response, and reward.” (p.47)

How to Create a Good Habit

The 1st law (Cue)

Make it obvious.

The 2nd law (Craving)

Make it attractive.

The 3rd law (Response)

Make it easy.

The 4th law (Reward)

Make it satisfying.

“We can invert these laws to learn how to break a bad habit.” (p.54)

How to Break a Bad Habit

Inversion of the 1st law (Cue)

Make it invisible.

Inversion of the 2nd law (Craving)

Make it unattractive.

Inversion of the 3rd law (Response)

Make it difficult.

Inversion of the 4th law (Reward)

Make it unsatisfying.

C. Plan our lives with a schedule based on our ultimate desire to honor God and be rewarded by Him that includes our God-given priorities. (habit stacking)

D. Make space to do what God wants us to do [A “To Don’t” List]

E. Keystone habit (Charles Duhigg): This is a habit that is foundational to us executing our other habits (starting the day with the Lord and sugar)

F. Decisive moments

**G. The importance of relationships in changing our habits (Proverbs 13:20)
[Clear says we are influenced by the close, the many, and the powerful]**

Conclusion: Are you running the race? Are you “in Christ?” Are you holding fast to Him? Are you living with discipline? Is there a habit you need to break to honor the Lord? Is there a habit you need to start to honor the Lord? Let’s “make no provision for the flesh.”