

LINDELL RECOVERY NETWORK

HABITS & ADDICTIONS

Success in Self-Control

KEYS FOR LIVING LIBRARY



THE LINDELL KEYS FOR RECOVERY HANDBOOK

50 Topics for a Transformed Life

Addiction and Recovery

- Alcohol & Drug Abuse
- Anorexia & Bulimia
- Codependency
- Gambling
- Habits & Addictions
- Overeating
- Sexual Addiction
- Workaholism

Crisis and Trauma

- Abuse Recovery
- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Assault & Rape Recovery
- Suicide Prevention
- Trials
- Verbal & Emotional Abuse

Thoughts and Emotions

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Fear
- Forgiveness
- Grief
- Guilt
- Hope
- Identity & Self-image
- Loneliness
- Rejection & Abandonment
- Self-Worth
- Stress
- Temptation
- Worry

Attitude and Character

- Lying vs. Truthfulness
- Perfectionism
- Rebellion
- Sexual Integrity
- Stealing

Counseling and Coaching

- Boundaries
- Conflict Resolution
- Decision Making
- Purpose in Life
- Reconciliation
- Success through Failure

Marriage and Family

- The Blended Family
- Divorce
- The Dysfunctional Family
- Marriage
- Parenting

Faith and Apologetics

- Assurance of Salvation
- The Bible
- Evil & Suffering ... Why?
- God: Who is He?
- Jesus: Is He God?

The Addiction and Recovery Series

HABITS & ADDICTIONS

Success in Self-Control

KEYS FOR LIVING LIBRARY



Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

GENERAL DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this resource is general in nature and is not intended to provide or be a substitute for advice, consultation or treatment with a duly licensed mental health practitioner or other medical professional. This resource is intended to provide practical faith-based guidelines for balanced living and is not a replacement for medical advice. Professional services should be pursued whenever necessary and/or appropriate. By utilizing this resource, individuals acknowledge that Hope for the Heart (HFTH) and the Lindell Recovery Network (LRN) are not providing direct clinically-oriented mental health treatment or therapy, and that it does not create a therapeutic relationship between any individual and HFTH or the LRN. Individuals who use this resource also agree to indemnify and hold harmless, HFTH and the LRN, its licensees, affiliates, and assigns, as well as the officers, agents, and employees of HFTH and the LRN, and its licensees, affiliates, and assigns, from and against any and all liability, loss, damages, costs, charges, legal fees, recoveries, judgments, penalties, and expenses, which may be obtained against, imposed upon or suffered by HFTH and the LRN. Additionally, certain views and opinions expressed in this resource may be those from sources other than HFTH or the LRN and do not necessarily represent the views of HFTH or the LRN, nor imply an endorsement by HFTH or the LRN. All rights are reserved worldwide and no part of this resource may be reproduced in any form (print or electronic) without the expressed written permission of Hope for the Heart.

Copyright © Hope for the Heart

ISBN: 978-1-7924-0346-0

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Published in the United States of America

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Personal Note..... 1

Introduction3

Definitions

What Are Habits and Addictions?..... 10
What Is the Avenue to Addiction?13
What Are the Signs That Habits Have Become Addictions?15
What Is God’s Heart on Habits and Addictions?18

Characteristics

What Is Characteristic of All Habits and Addictions?24
What Are Four Categories of Habits? 25
What Characterizes Those Controlled by Addictive Habits?29
What Is an Addictive Habits Checklist?31

Causes

What Causes the Cycle of Addiction? 35
What Self-defeating Thoughts Reinforce Addictive Habits?38
What Excuses Keep You Hooked?41
What Is the Root Cause of Harmful Habits? 42
What Is God’s Primary Plan for Setting Captives Free? 47

Steps to Solution

Key Verse to Memorize	54
Key Passages to Read	55
How to Have a Transformed Life	57
How to Have Success in Self-Control	62
How to Break an Addictive Habit	70
How to Stop a Compulsive Habit.....	76
How to Develop and Demonstrate Good Habits	80
How to Help with Accountability Questions	83

Scriptures to Memorize..... 87

Endnotes & Bibliography..... 93

A PERSONAL NOTE

from Mike Lindell

My passion is to see people recover from addiction! And that's why I'm proud to partner with author June Hunt and Hope for the Heart, and so excited to use the *Keys for Living* as part of the Lindell Recovery Network. People everywhere are struggling with addictions, wounds, and challenges in life. They need hope. They need help. And the *Keys for Living* provide that hope and real answers from God's Word.

This is the best material I've seen in biblical counseling and caregiving . . . with over 100 topics that speak to almost every presenting problem. There's nothing else like them. They take God's Word and apply it to life's challenges.

The *Keys for Living* are exceptional and outstanding resources for those who need help in overcoming the obstacles they face, and above all, to find Christ.

Read this book. Share it with others. Ask God in prayer to make it real in your life.

May God bless you as you do it!



Mike Lindell

Lindell Recovery Network

INTRODUCTION

I wish you had known my Uncle Billy. He was quite bright. His teachers said he was a stellar student who could make straight A's without even coming to class. With thick brown hair, deep-set dimples, and a winsome smile, everyone wanted to be around Uncle Billy, and yet, he kept his distance. He seemed to maintain an impenetrable wall.

I always felt sorry for my uncle because he was somewhat the black sheep of the family. By the time I was a teenager, he had experienced many losses because of his heavy drinking. The worst, by far, was the day he discovered his business partner had run off with all of their company's money *and* with his wife. Uncle Billy was devastated.

He not only lost his work and his wife, but he also lost control of his life—because something else had control of him. He was an alcoholic, and he literally lost his life. He died by suicide. We all loved Uncle Billy, but in the end, we lost him.

I've often wondered, *What might have helped my Uncle Billy? What would have delivered him from his addiction? What would have saved him from his own self-destruction?* Like my uncle, countless others have been destroyed by debilitating habits and addictions, leaving family and friends grappling with the haunting “if onlys”: *If only I'd grasped the gravity of the situation. If only I'd learned more about what was going on. If only I'd really understood.*

With addictive habits affecting so many millions who continually relapse, some wonder, *Can people really be set free—permanently?* The answer is *Yes!* There is absolute hope—guaranteed hope—rooted in the promises of God. He can give the supernatural help so desperately needed not only to be *set* free but also to *stay* free. It all begins with the admission that there is a problem. Then there must be a willingness to face the problem so healing can begin.

With God's help, you can overcome harmful habits and begin developing healthy ones. But realize, your habits will either make you or break you—depending on your priorities. They will break the potential of what God has planned or make it possible for you to fulfill His plan.

And for every struggler: Remember, you are not alone. God is ready to provide the strength, power, and discipline you need to overcome your habit or addiction. He is reaching out to you, saying, “*I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear; I will help you*” (Isaiah 41:13).

Do you need His help? Do you need His strong hand to get you on the road to recovery? If so, grab hold. Start now. Keep in mind, every journey begins with a single step. So start walking. And if you stumble, that’s okay. Don’t give up! Get back up and keep going!

You *can* leave the world of addictions—you *can* live in the world of freedom. It’s not impossible! The Bible offers you this absolute assurance: “*Nothing is impossible with God*” (Luke 1:37).

June Hunt
Founder, Hope For The Heart

HABITS & ADDICTIONS

Success in Self-Control

“The thrill of victory . . . and the agony of defeat!”¹ This is the universal experience of the athlete—the heart-racing thrill of finishing first, the gut-wrenching angst of finishing last. But before athletes can even enter competition, they must first train the mind, tighten the muscles, and toughen the body.

However, even athletes—considered models of self-control—can allow harmful habits to slip into their lives and sabotage their valiant efforts for victory. Self-control must not only be mastered, but also sustained. And as it is with athletes, so it is with us: If we are going to win in the game of life, glorifying the God who created us by cultivating His character within us—we must develop discipline. We must have healthy habits. We must utilize strict training to effectively win the race God has called us to run. The apostle Paul makes this point clear:

*“Everyone who competes in the games
goes into strict training.”*
(1 CORINTHIANS 9:25)

DEFINITIONS



*“Habits are like
seesaws—
they can either
push you up
or pull you down.”*



Have you ever watched athletes competing in the Olympics and thought almost in disbelief, *How on earth can they do that? It seems impossible!* Whether it's a figure skater performing a leap with four 360-degree revolutions or a gymnast doing a series of backflips atop a narrow balance beam, we ask with amazement, "How is that possible?"

The answer isn't rocket science. It's practice, practice, practice! It's developing the habit of doing an action over and over and over again until it feels natural—until it can be done, in essence, without thinking.

Consider, for example, the biathlon. (In Greek, *bi* means "two" and *athlon* means "contest.")² It's a curious combination of events—cross-country skiing and rifle sharpshooting. One is aerobic, requiring speed, strength, and stamina. The other is stationary, requiring stillness, keen sight, and steady hands. These carefully honed skills developed by the Scandinavians in hunting and winter warfare led to the inauguration of this skiing/shooting sport in the 1960 Winter Olympics.

Training for the biathlon can be treacherous, particularly because of the hazardous effects of staying outdoors in continuously cold weather. Therefore, specialized physical conditioning is absolutely mandatory. One 31-year-old policeman from Norway developed highly productive habits to prepare himself for the 1968 Winter Olympics. And his disciplined fitness regimen got the world's attention.

Those who tenaciously train in this way can identify with these figurative words spoken by the apostle Paul:

"I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave."

(1 CORINTHIANS 9:27)

What Are Habits and Addictions?

He is a dark horse on the glistening white snow. . . .

Magnar Solberg is far from being a favorite to win a medal at the Olympics in Grenoble, France. In fact, he isn't even considered a serious competitor in the winter biathlon.⁵ But he develops all the necessary habits that enable him to train and qualify for the event—habits that include building leg and upper body strength, exercising in high-altitude environments, and sharpening precision shooting skills.

But there is one habit that sets Solberg apart from all the other skiers and shooters, and this particular exercise is conducted in blistering heat rather than blustery cold. Whether training for an athletic event or facing any other challenge that requires shedding old habits and adopting new ones, these words are most appropriate: *“Let us discern for ourselves what is right; let us learn together what is good”* (Job 34:4).

In your quest for knowledge and discernment, it is critical that you learn the all-important differences between habits and addictions because you control one while the other controls you.

Habits are learned patterns of behavior or attitudes repeated so often they become typical of a person. In the New Testament, the Greek word *manthano* means “to learn” (in any way) or to “get into the habit.”⁴

“Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good” (TITUS 3:14).

- **Habits** are based on thinking, and reflect the heart. The Greek word *hodos*, meaning a “natural path or way,” is used metaphorically in Scripture to mean “a course of conduct or way of thinking.”⁵

“Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways”
(HEBREWS 3:10).

- **Habits**, when based on trusting God, result in being consistently on the right path. The Hebrew word *derek*, usually translated as “way” or “road,” means “habit or habitual way of behavior.”⁶

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight”
(PROVERBS 3:5–6).

Addictions are a compulsive, enslaving dependence on something, resulting in detrimental patterns of thinking and behaving. There are *substance addictions* (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, heroin, inhalants) and *process addictions* (e.g., gambling, eating, shopping, sex).

“People are slaves to whatever has mastered them” (2 PETER 2:19).

- **Addictive habits**, when based on deceitful desires, result in a corrupt way of life. The Greek noun *anastrophe*, usually translated “life” or “way of life,” means “one’s conduct or behavior.”⁷

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (EPHESIANS 4:22–24).

- **Dual or poly addictions** refer to dependence on two or more addictions at the same time. The Greek word *poly*, translated “many,” when used with addictions means being dependent on multiple behaviors or substances.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. . . . For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (EPHESIANS 6:10, 12).

Typically, strugglers have multiple addictions because one addictive “high” firing in the brain makes them highly susceptible to another addiction. Each addiction impacts the brain, training it to want the same chemical effect again and again. For example, when sexually acting out, dopamine (the “feel good” chemical) is released in the brain, then soon after, the body craves more. Both alcohol and crack cocaine can increase dopamine release. When the high of one addiction begins wearing off, the high of another replaces the craved chemical effect in the brain.

The rationale is often this: *If one addiction feels good, two will feel better. If two are better, three will feel great. Do anything to keep the highs coming!* Thus goes the logic of those who have given control of themselves over to mood-altering addictions.

*“Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves
to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness,
so now offer yourselves as slaves
to righteousness leading to holiness. . . .
What benefit did you reap at that time
from the things you are now ashamed of? . . .
But now that you have been set free from sin
and have become slaves of God,
the benefit you reap leads to holiness,
and the result is eternal life.”*

(ROMANS 6:19, 21–22)

Habit vs. Addiction

Question: “What is the difference between a common habit and a compulsive addiction?”

Answer: With any behavior, repetition leads to the forming of a habit that can then develop into an addiction. The difference between a repeated habit and an enslaving addiction is the amount of time it takes from your life, the power it has over your life, and the negative impact it has on your life.

If the behavior has mastery over your life rather than you having mastery over it, then it is an addiction. But if you are determined to allow only God to have mastery over you, He will give you the power to either gain and maintain mastery over the behavior or to have victory over it and stop it.

*“Sin shall no longer be your master,
because you are not under the law,
but under grace.”*

(ROMANS 6:14)

What Is the Avenue to Addiction?

Solberg's coach for the biathlon uses a bizarre training technique to prepare his student. In Solberg's own words: "On purpose, my coach placed the shooting stand right in the middle of an anthill. When I shot from this stand on hot summer days, my legs were immediately covered with ants. This was very disturbing, especially when they reached my face."⁸

Solberg's coach isn't trying to *torture* the initially befuddled biathlete; he is trying to *toughen* him. He reasons that if Solberg can learn to shoot precisely with hundreds of ants crawling all over him, "distractions" will be the least of their worries during the Olympic sharpshooting event.

And if we need to cultivate a new habit in life, we too are not to be distracted, "*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith*" (Hebrews 12:2).

The natural inclination of the average person standing or lying on an anthill is to quickly get up and feverishly brush off the tiny, troublesome insects. But Solberg overcomes his natural inclination, first in his mind and then in his behavior. He ignores the sting and focuses on the target. He trains his mind to check his natural inclination so he will develop the habit of mentally blocking anything that might distract him from his goal.

*"But as for you, be strong and do not give up,
for your work will be rewarded."*

(2 CHRONICLES 15:7)

An unchecked, natural inclination generally follows this avenue of progression:

Inclination—A natural desire that compels a person to act a certain way under a given set of circumstances. The Bible says everyone comes into this world with the natural inclination to sin.

"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (PSALM 51:5).

Impulse—A sudden, spontaneous inclination to act impetuously.⁹

“Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart” (ECCLESIASTES 5:2).

Habit—A pattern of behavior acquired by frequent repetition.¹⁰

“They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former practices [habits]” (2 KINGS 17:40).

Obsession—A persistent, disturbing preoccupation with an unreasonable idea.¹¹

“I was so obsessed with persecuting them [Christians] that I [Paul] even hunted them down in foreign cities” (ACTS 26:11).

Compulsion—An irresistible, irrational impulse to act against one’s own will.¹²

“The man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will . . . this man also does the right thing” (1 CORINTHIANS 7:37).

Addiction—A compulsive, overpowering dependence on an object, an action, or a feeling, resulting in major life problems.¹³

“Teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good” (TITUS 2:3).

Addictions and the Tendency to Sin

Question: “When I became a Christian, shouldn’t that have changed my addictions and my tendency to sin?”

Answer: When you put your trust in Christ, you did indeed receive a new life. The Spirit gave you new life at the moment you received Christ as your Savior! The Spirit of God inside you now enables you to overcome sin. While you have been saved from the penalty of sin (eternal separation from God) and while the power of sin over you has been broken, you still have tendencies to think, feel, and act in sinful ways. You must still choose not to sin when you are tempted.

You must choose daily to put off your old self (also referred to in Scripture as *the flesh*) with all its bad habits and inclinations and not be controlled by it. Instead, you must put on your new self, which was created to be like Christ, and be controlled by Him.

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

(EPHESIANS 4:22–24)

What Are the Signs That Habits Have Become Addictions?

Although Magnar Solberg’s practice of standing on an anthill while shooting initially appears to be a *destructive* habit, it ultimately proves to be a *constructive* habit. At the Grenoble Olympics, the Norwegian hits all 20 targets in his event and his stringent training habits pay off with a gold medal. He competes again four years later at the Olympics in Sapporo, Japan, and, at age 35, wins another gold medal.

Solberg makes a place for himself in the record books as the only Olympic biathlete to defend and keep his title in an individual event. And he’s the oldest athlete to win a gold medal in an individual event at the winter Olympics.¹⁴

Typically, those who regularly train and exercise receive compliments and admiration. But what about those who overtrain or overexercise? What about those struggling with anorexia athletica or those who are obsessed with their body shape? What is their reward? Their training has gone from being a positive, productive habit to a compulsive addiction. They are controlled not by God, but by their addiction. The Bible says,

*“Physical training is of some value,
but godliness has value for all things,
holding promise for both the present life
and the life to come.”*

(1 TIMOTHY 4:8)

Signs of Habits and Addictions

And what about you? Is it possible that you have developed an addiction in some area? If you suspect so, ask yourself these ten questions to help clarify the truth:

- Y / N** “Have I stopped the habit in the past, only to consistently relapse?”
- Y / N** “Have I become abnormally preoccupied with the habit?”
- Y / N** “Have I continued the habit in spite of suffering its negative consequences?”
- Y / N** “Have I practiced the habit primarily because it changes my mood or comforts me?”
- Y / N** ““Have I engaged in the habit more and more often over time in order to achieve the same mood-altering experience I had in the beginning?”
- Y / N** Have I persisted in the habit even though it is harmful to me?”
- Y / N** “Have I begun hiding the habit from those closest to me?”
- Y / N** “Have I neglected relationships in order to accommodate the habit?”

Y / N “Have I ever experienced problems at work because of the habit?”

Y / N “Have I considered getting help for the habit?”

If the answer to any one of these questions is *Yes*, you are on the way to forming an addiction. If the answer to all of them is *Yes*, you are already wrapped up in the web of addiction and are powerless to free yourself. Your only recourse is to seek help in order to regain control of your life. You can walk in the freedom Christ died to provide for you.

*“You see, at just the right time,
when we were still powerless,
Christ died for the ungodly.”*

(ROMANS 5:6)

Addictive Personality

Question: “What does it mean when someone is said to have an addictive personality?”

Answer: The term *addictive personality* is generally applied to individuals who are prone to form multiple addictions. They are believed to have certain genetic and psychological influences that make them vulnerable to developing substance or behavioral addictions. The apostle Peter’s instruction to first-century Christians is pertinent to all of us today, and especially to those suffering with addictions.

*“Be alert and of sober mind.
Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion
looking for someone to devour.”*

(1 PETER 5:8)

What Is God's Heart on Habits and Addictions?

With their eye on the gold medal, winter biathletes like Magnar Solberg cover a predetermined distance on skis carrying bolt-action .22 rifles with nonoptical sights. Then they stop at a target range and lie down in the prone position while firing five shots. Shots that miss the target are penalized by adding time to an athlete's overall performance or by adding extra ski laps. The skiers then race around another lap and return to the range to shoot five more rounds, this time while standing up. The pattern is repeated, depending on the format of the race and whether the competition is for individuals or a team.

Obviously, those who have disciplined habits that enable them to sharpen their skills are more likely to win. The apostle Paul, who frequently used athletic analogies, says this about believers who go into strict training:

*"They do it to get a crown that will not last,
but we do it to get a crown that will last forever."*

(1 CORINTHIANS 9:25)

Habits are like seesaws—they can either push you up or pull you down. To determine the degree to which your habits are good or bad, helpful or harmful, look at Scripture and see what conclusions you discover.

God's Heart on Habits and Addictions

Habits can be beneficial and profitable.

"Blessed are those who keep my ways" (PROVERBS 8:32).

Habits can be evil and destructive.

"They get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to" (1 TIMOTHY 5:13).

Habits can be passed down from generation to generation.

“The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him” (2 CHRONICLES 17:3).

Habits can reflect devotion to God and God’s character.

“I have kept the ways of the LORD; I am not guilty of turning from my God” (PSALM 18:21).

Habits can increase consistency and strengthen character.

“The righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger” (JOB 17:9).

Habits are a choice—a function of the will—but they can also be influenced by the mind and emotions.

“What you decide on will be done, and light will shine on your ways” (JOB 22:28).

Habits can be a positive witness to others.

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (MATTHEW 5:16).

Addictions are not just a choice, but the result of a bad choice that has been repeatedly made over an extended period of time.

“They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for ‘people are slaves to whatever has mastered them’” (2 PETER 2:19).

Addictions lead hearts astray and hurt the cause of Christ.

“Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute” (2 PETER 2:2).

Addictions hold people captive and cover them with a canopy of darkness.

“I will keep you and will make you . . . to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness” (ISAIAH 42:6–7).

Addictions enslave people, but freedom comes from the Lord who delights in breaking the yoke of slavery.

“They will know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them” (EZEKIEL 34:27).

Addictions hold mastery over us, but God is to be our only Master.

“I have the right to do anything’—but I will not be mastered by anything” (1 CORINTHIANS 6:12).

Habits and addictions can both be overcome through Christ.

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one [Jesus] who is in you is greater than the one [Satan] who is in the world” (1 JOHN 4:4).



CHARACTERISTICS



*“Is there a habit
that has mastery
over you?”*



“Lazy . . . complacent . . . settle for mediocrity . . . last guy in the building [before a competition] . . . first guy out.”¹⁵

You’d hardly expect an athlete with these self-described habits to succeed in a game of flag football, much less catapult to the pinnacle of the National Football League. But Michael Vick’s career has been full of sad surprises.

Endowed with spectacular, innate athleticism, Vick discovers as a boy—playing pickup football in the gang-infested housing projects of Newport News, Virginia—that athletic achievement comes easy for him. Sadly, so does a later life of habitual bad choices, moral shortcuts, and, eventually, serious crime.

But the shocking truth about Vick’s character is carefully concealed from his fans. During his ensuing glory years, the NFL’s number one draft pick in 2001 earns a reputation as the most electrifying player in professional sports. And he becomes one of the highest paid, with a \$130 million contract.¹⁶

Vick’s meteoric rise to stardom leads him to believe that he can live life on his own terms, immune from the baggage of bad habits and destructive choices and unwilling to embrace the biblical instruction to . . .

*“Be very careful, then, how you live—
not as unwise but as wise,
making the most of every opportunity,
because the days are evil.”*

(EPHESIANS 5:15–16)

What Is Characteristic of All Habits and Addictions?

In 2007, the hidden habits of Michael Vick explode into public view. A police raid on Vick's Bad Newz Kennels in rural Virginia turns up gruesome evidence of a savage dogfighting operation. Investigators allege that, for six years, Vick and friends from childhood have bought, bred, and sold pit bulls, which fight to the death in kennel matches with gambling purses as high as \$26,000.¹⁷

Ghastly reports of barbaric cruelty begin to emerge. Dogs that lose fights or don't perform well are tortured mercilessly—beaten, shot, drowned, or electrocuted. International media pounces on the news with the ferocity of Vick's own vicious pit bulls. The public outcry is deafening—the revulsion palpable.

In truth, pit bulls simply behave as they are trained. They develop learned behaviors and, consequently, can become brutal killers, or beloved pets, or brilliant service dogs for law enforcement, search and rescue teams, and therapy.¹⁸ In the same way, a habit is *learned behavior* that becomes a powerful force in your life, whether for good or bad, for virtue or vice. And, in the end, all wrong habits—whether perceived as good or bad—lead to destruction.

*“There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.”*

(PROVERBS 16:25)

All Habits Are . . .

H—Habitual: They occur with regularity.

A—Automatic: They happen without thinking.

B—Behavioral: They outwardly reflect inner morals and character.

I—Intense: They grow stronger and more ingrained with repetition.

T—Tenacious: They persist and become hard to change over time.

S—Satisfying: They are purposeful and provide a degree of pleasure.

Your habits reflect your heart and communicate your devotion either to God or to the things of this world.

*“No one can serve two masters.
Either you will hate the one and love the other,
or you will be devoted to the one
and despise the other.”*

(LUKE 16:13)

What Are Four Categories of Habits?

Upon being indicted by a federal grand jury for dogfighting and other charges, Michael Vick’s impulse is to . . . lie. Habitually, he lies to the media, the public, teammates, team owners, and, eventually, to a federal grand jury and judge.¹⁹ Especially heartbroken by the immense betrayal is Atlanta Falcons’ owner Arthur Blank, who has “bet the future of the franchise on the young quarterback, awarding him the largest contract in the history of the NFL. And Blank stands by him as the charges pile up and Vick falls from grace.”²⁰

Still, Vick has no intention of halting his addictive habits, daringly defiant of the lifelong consequences that lie in wait. Michael is like those described in Romans 1:21,

*“Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God
nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile
and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*

Scripture uses words like “strongholds,” “slavery,” and “bondage” to paint a picture of being a prisoner to sin. Although you may not be enslaved to the more visible vices (e.g., drunkenness, gambling, or gluttony), you may be held captive to a seemingly “acceptable activity.” Even behavior that appears “good,” such as volunteer work, can be wrongly motivated and overindulged to the degree that it goes beyond God’s will and thus becomes sin.

No behavior, whether viewed as harmless or helpful, is to have mastery over us. If it does, then it has enslaved us. The Bible clearly states,

“People are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”

(2 PETER 2:19)

Harmless Habits

Some habits are common to many but cause injury to none. They are at best innocuous and at worst irritants (e.g., nail biting and hair twirling, cracking knuckles and popping gum, belching and bellowing). The Bible offers this insight: *“Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult”* (Proverbs 12:16).

Heart Habits

The heart that is not right in God’s sight produces wrong attitudes and emotions that result in ungodly “heart habits” (e.g., envy and jealousy, prejudice and pride, ungratefulness and unforgiveness). The Bible states this truth: *“Out of the heart come evil thoughts . . .”* (Matthew 15:19).

Hidden Habits

Some habitual actions are often not recognized as harmful addictions because they are not recognized as being habitual or regarded as being negative. However, good behaviors done to excess become bad behaviors and “hidden habits” (e.g., *excessively* helping and

rescuing others, working and cleaning, apologizing and procrastinating, shopping and spending). The Bible cautions against such excessiveness: “Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes” (Ecclesiastes 7:18).

Hard Habits/Addictions

Destructive habits create a damaging climate for everyone, making them “hard habits” (e.g., verbal and emotional abuse, drunkenness and divisiveness, vulgarity and violence, stealing). The Bible explains:

“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”

(GALATIANS 5:19–21)

Shoes, Shoes, and More Shoes

The Story of Imelda Marcos’ Compulsive Spending Habit²¹

Taken from: HOW TO DEFEAT HARMFUL HABITS
Copyright © 2011 by Hope for the Heart, Inc.
Published by Harvest House Publishers.
Used by permission.

It was a compulsive shopping spree that lasted 20 years, and millions of Filipino people believe they footed the tab.

At the side of the corrupt President Ferdinand Marcos, his wife, Imelda Marcos, believed she was “a symbol of pride of the Philippines” and that her impoverished people expected her to wear expensive jewelry, clothing, and shoes—*lots* of shoes.²² The photos released in the late 1980s stunned the world—Imelda posing beside her shoe collection, a casual “Exhibit A” that supported allegations of gross corruption. The grand total tallied . . . 2,700 pairs of shoes!

That's when the calculations began: If Imelda wore a different pair of shoes every day, it would take over seven years to "see her store" of shoes. And if she changed shoes three times a day and never wore the same pair twice, it would take almost two-and-a-half years for her to stroll through her colossal collection. And because of her compulsive spending, Imelda most assuredly would continue to make many more additional purchases. Obviously, hundreds, if not thousands, of shoes would have never actually been worn.²³

Following the ouster and exile of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, subsequent Filipino governments accused the notorious pair of stealing \$10 billion.²⁴ These governments tried to recover their losses, but to little avail. Despite hundreds upon hundreds of lawsuits and court cases, neither Ferdinand nor Imelda ever saw prison time. Ferdinand died in exile in Hawaii in 1989. Imelda—nicknamed the "Iron Butterfly"—was indicted and convicted, but her cases were either overturned or dismissed due to technicalities.

The alleged \$10 billion theft by Ferdinand and Imelda bought a lot more than just shoes: two palaces, dozens of country homes, private and commercial real estate in New York, crates of gold and pesos, with plenty of reserves in bank accounts around the world. In 1978 at a price tag of \$10 million, Imelda began building the Coconut Palace, a presidential guesthouse on Manila Bay that was constructed with chemically treated coconut lumber. All elements of the coconut tree were used to create the tropical palace, which was completed in 1981.

Imelda had hoped her first guest would be Pope John Paul II, for whom the Coconut Palace was actually commissioned. But the pope declined. Given the backdrop of a poverty-stricken nation, he perceived the idea of such a stay as ostentatious.²⁵

The spending habits of both Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos stand in stark contrast to the life of Christ and couldn't be more contrary to the call of Scripture. Instead of compulsive buying, Jesus says, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:33-34 NIV 1984).

What Characterizes Those Controlled by Addictive Habits?

Alone in prison, Michael Vick begins considering the vast weight of his wrongdoings and the gracious God of his youth. He contemplates his high school years, when he'd given his life to Christ and had first begun reading the Bible. Finally, his future becomes clear: "The only thing I could do in prison was fall back on God," he said. "I wanted to do things right."²⁶

As Vick yields to Christ, his life begins a remarkable transformation. Tony Dungy, retired coach of the Indianapolis Colts, begins mentoring the imprisoned athlete. After his release, Vick begins working with The Humane Society, traveling the country, speaking at churches, schools, and community events, imploring would-be dogfighters and gamblers to shun the gruesome sport that has ravaged his life.

In 2009, Vick is reinstated into the NFL, and goes on to play for the Philadelphia Eagles. The following year he becomes the Eagles' starting quarterback. In 2010, he plays in his fourth career Pro Bowl, is named the Associated Press Comeback Player of the Year, and receives the prestigious Ed Block Courage Award for steadfast commitment to sportsmanship and courage.²⁷

Bad choices replaced by good ones lead Vick to finally achieve what God has had in mind for him all along—a yielded life—a life not controlled by addictive behaviors but by God. Certain characteristics are common among those who, like Vick, repeatedly practice addictive behaviors. These characteristics become so automatic that those who have them are often oblivious to their destructive damage.

*“Those who live according to the flesh
have their minds set on what the flesh desires;
but those who live in accordance with the Spirit
have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.
The mind governed by the flesh is death,
but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.”*

(ROMANS 8:5–6)

Those controlled by addictive habits . . . ²⁸

Become mastered by multiple bad habits

Even though the Bible says, *“I have the right to do anything,’ you say—but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything’—but I will not be mastered by anything”* (1 CORINTHIANS 6:12).

Don’t obey the law or those in authority

Even though the Bible says, *“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities”* (ROMANS 13:1).

Think their addictions resolve their problems and give them peace

Even though the Bible says, *“If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river”* (ISAIAH 48:18).

Don’t keep their bodies pure or treat them with respect

Even though the Bible says, *“let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God”* (2 CORINTHIANS 7:1).

Don't practice self-denial, self-discipline, or self-control

Even though the Bible says, *“The grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age”* (TITUS 2:11–12).

What Is an Addictive Habits Checklist?

During the course of his fall from football fame—and reinstatement to the sport—Michael Vick loses many previous fans but gains new ones. Still others remain in “wait and see” mode, skeptical his conversion may be one merely of convenience. Neither fans, detractors, nor skeptics, however, are nearly as important to Vick as the peace he has made with his Lord. “The main thing is, I don’t want to disappoint God.”²⁹

Though the details of your life will differ from Michael Vick’s, most of us become adept at justifying our negative habits. So proficient are we at rationalizing that undesirable habits can remain hidden—even from ourselves!

So, consider this probing question: Is there a habit that has mastery over you? According to God’s Word, *“Sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace”* (Romans 6:14).

How do you know if you have a destructive habit or a hidden addiction controlling you?

Be accountable before God and take an honest look at your thoughts and actions. Ask yourself whether you have any habits or desires that would cause you to answer *Yes* to the following questions:

The Addictive Habits Checklist

- Y / N Are my thoughts consumed with it?
- Y / N Is my time scheduled around it?
- Y / N Could my health be harmed by it?
- Y / N Does my guilt increase because of it?
- Y / N Are my finances affected by it?
- Y / N Am I defensive when asked about it?
- Y / N Are my relationships hurt by it?
- Y / N Am I upset when I can't do it?
- Y / N Is my spiritual growth hindered by it?
- Y / N Have I been asked to stop it?
- Y / N Would I discourage my children from doing it?
- Y / N Do I hide it from others?
- Y / N Would Jesus avoid doing it?
- Y / N Does it diminish my witness for Christ?

Let David's prayer be your own personal prayer:

*"Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting."*

(PSALM 139:23-24)



CAUSES



*“Jesus can empower
you to break free
of any bondage
you have developed
to destructive habits
and addictions.”*



At the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia, Marion Jones wins three gold medals in the 100-meter, 200-meter, and 1600-meter relay races, as well as two bronze medals in the long jump and 400-meter relay. Her strong, athletic build and speed, along with her sweet smile charm the world and challenge young women to pursue their Olympic dreams.

But seven years later, those medallions of achievement no longer belong to the track and field queen. They have been taken away by the International Olympic Committee, leading to Jones' painful admission: "Making the wrong choices and bad decisions can be disastrous."³⁰

*"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.
Later on, however, it produces a harvest
of righteousness and peace for those
who have been trained by it."
(HEBREWS 12:11)*

What Causes the Cycle of Addiction?

From September 2000 to July 2001, Marion Jones trains more intensely than ever and has attained improved running times and faster recovery periods. But the peak performances aren't due only to modifications in diet and exercise—Jones has gotten swallowed up in the performance-enhancing promises of steroids, and they are paying off.

Her former coach originally tells her that he's giving her flaxseed oil, but she later realizes it is an illegal substance, something Jones emphatically denies publicly for years. In 2004, she makes the following statement: "I have never, ever used performance-enhancing drugs."³¹ However, misguided choices mar her reputation.

*"Anyone who competes as an athlete
does not receive the victor's crown
except by competing according to the rules."
(2 TIMOTHY 2:5)*

The Cycle of Addiction

Just as Marion Jones did not enter the world of track and field intending to use steroids, no one enters this life with even the slightest thought of engaging in behavior that will develop into an enslaving addiction. And yet, many later develop addictions through simple repetition of behavior that appears, at least temporarily, to satisfy a deep desire or meet a neglected need. The progression of this “cycle” that both leads to addiction and then perpetuates it generally looks something like this:

Past Pain: You are motivated to find a way to ease the continual hurt of past experiences.

—“I can no longer cope with what happened in my past unless I find something to ease the pain.”

“Even in laughter the heart may ache, and rejoicing may end in grief”
(PROVERBS 14:13).

Mood-altering activity: You attempt to temporarily relieve emotional or psychological pain.

—“I hate the way I feel and the tormenting thoughts I have—I must escape them if only temporarily.”

“How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?” (PSALM 13:2).

Addiction: You participate in unbridled mood-altering activities on a regular basis.

—“I feel compelled to keep increasing my participation to better mask the pain I feel.”

“When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!” (ROMANS 6:20–21).

Violating values: You disregard your own convictions by engaging in mood-altering addictive behaviors.

—“I will do whatever I have to do in order to attain this feeling—I must have it!”

“Our parents were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the LORD our God and forsook him. They turned their faces away from the LORD’s dwelling place and turned their backs on him” (2 CHRONICLES 29:6).

Guilt: You feel conscience-struck for having wrong attitudes and committing wrong actions.

—“I realize I have been wrong and have committed wrongful acts.”

“My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear” (PSALM 38:4).

Shame: You believe you are a bad person who is without worth or hope because of your addictions.

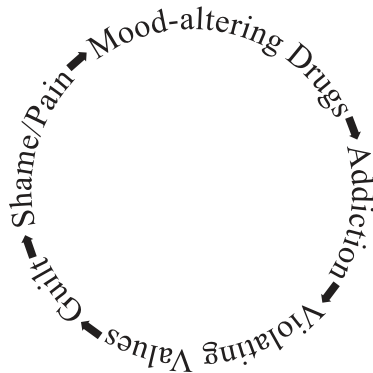
—“I know I have no value and there is nothing good in me, only bad.”

“I live in disgrace all day long, and my face is covered with shame . . .” (PSALM 44:15).

Present Pain: You are motivated to find a way to ease the continual pain produced by the shame that accompanies addictive behaviors.

—“I hate living with this painful shame. I must do something—anything—to feel better.” And the cycle is complete—only to be repeated again and again and again.

Past/Present Pain



Once an addictive behavior is developed, the cycle that accompanies it becomes established and is common among all who engage in addictive behaviors. The “antidote to past pain” (the addiction) produces present pain and then becomes the antidote to the present pain as well. This cycle keeps going around and around until past and present pain become so convoluted they seem inseparable and indistinguishable from one another. It’s a vicious cycle that ensnares and enslaves, but it’s a cycle that *can* be broken!

*“We have escaped like a bird from the fowler’s snare;
the snare has been broken, and we have escaped.*

*Our help is in the name of the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.”*

(PSALM 124:7–8)

What Self-defeating Thoughts Reinforce Addictive Habits?

Marion Jones’ misplaced dependency on performance-enhancing drugs leads to catastrophic consequences for her. The need to excel, to maintain an edge over her competitors, to retain her five Olympic medals drives Jones not only to lie to the public for years about her habitual steroid use but also to federal investigators.

In 2008, she serves a six-month federal prison sentence for those lies as well as for her involvement in a check fraud scam.³² Before the sober-faced judge, Marion Jones calls herself what she believes is her new identity: a liar and a cheat. But what she feels she has become doesn’t have to be permanent. Change is always possible—forgiveness is always available.

Following her court appearance, Marion makes the following statement:

It is with a great amount of shame I stand before you and tell you that I have betrayed your trust . . . I have been dishonest and you have the right to be angry with me. I have let them [her family] down, I have let my country down, and I have let myself down. I recognize that by saying I'm deeply sorry, it might not be sufficient to address the pain and hurt that I've caused you. Therefore, I want to ask for your forgiveness for my actions, and I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me. I have asked Almighty God for forgiveness.³³

What “music” to God’s ears.

*“My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart you,
God, will not despise.”*

(PSALM 51:17)

As with Marion Jones, behavior springs from beliefs, and what we tell ourselves greatly influences our actions. If you are struggling with trying to overcome a bad habit but having little success, it may be that you are entertaining self-defeating thoughts. You need to be aware that . . .

*“The word of God is alive and active.
Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates
even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow;
it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”*

(HEBREWS 4:12)

Self-defeating Thoughts That Bolster Bad Habits

Check the list of wrong beliefs below to see whether your thoughts are helping or hurting your efforts to rid yourself of an unhealthy and sinful habit.

- “It shouldn’t be this difficult to change; something must be wrong with me.”
- “I cannot control this habit. It’s simply too strong for me.”
- “I don’t have what it takes to overcome this habit.”
- “The only way to overcome this habit is if God supernaturally heals me.”
- “It’s unfair that I have to deny myself the enjoyment of this substance/activity.”
- “My desires are too strong for me to ever deny them.”
- “I can’t stand going without the pleasure this habit gives me.”
- “I’m not worth all this trouble, effort, and pain anyway, so why try to change?”
- “God knows I am too weak to overcome this habit.”
- “I’m just a loser anyway.”
- “God won’t help someone like me.”
- “I’ve been doing this far too long to try to change now.”
- “This has just become a part of who I am.”
- “God understands that this is too difficult for me to change.”

Negative, self-defeating thoughts will continue to keep you in bondage unless you change your faulty thinking.

“Stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.”

(1 CORINTHIANS 14:20)

What Excuses Keep You Hooked?

Steroids seemingly surround Marion Jones. Everyone else seems to be doing it.

Marion's ex-husband, C. J. Hunter, is busted for using performance-enhancing drugs. Tim Montgomery, the father of her son, is stripped of his world record in the 100 meters. But she ultimately realizes that there are no excuses to be made. "I am responsible fully for my actions. I have no one to blame but myself for what I've done."³⁴ Her words reflect the heart of this passage:

*"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,
fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.
For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame,
and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
(HEBREWS 12:1-2)*

Marion no longer makes excuses for her wrong choices. She now fully understands the rationalizations others use. Just as behavior comes from beliefs, so do the excuses we make to justify our behaviors, habits, and addictions. It logically follows that the lies you believe also generate the excuses you give for not breaking bad behaviors.

What Excuses Are You Giving?

- "This makes me feel better; and, besides, I deserve it."
- "A lot of people do this; after all, no one is perfect."
- "This habit is caused by my past. I really can't help it."
- "It's useless to try to change or quit."
- "I can control this anytime. I'll change when I'm ready."

- “I don’t want to try to quit and risk finding out I can’t.”
- “Doing it one last time won’t make any difference.”
- “What I’m doing is not really that bad. A lot of people do worse things.”
- “I’ve not been able to change before, so why try now?”
- “Everyone needs at least one vice.”
- “If I give this up, something worse will just take its place.”
- “This is not a good time for me to try to change.”
- “I don’t have the time to focus on this right now.”
- “As soon as I have a sign from God, I’ll change.”

Ultimately, you will lose the war with addictive habits if you continue to make excuses for prioritizing yourself or others over pleasing the Lord. Take heed lest you become like those the prophet Jeremiah describes:

*“They did not listen or pay attention;
instead, they followed the stubborn
inclinations of their evil hearts.
They went backward and not forward.”*
(JEREMIAH 7:24)

What Is the Root Cause of Harmful Habits?

Marion Jones recognizes her need for change, and others recognize her need for a second chance. Marion becomes one of the most popular basketball players in the Women’s National Basketball Association, signing a multi-year deal as a point guard with the Tulsa Shock in February 2011.

More importantly, Marion maintains a spirit of humility and repentance. Once her thinking changes, her life changes. Why do some people change and others do not? They are able to change because they rid themselves of their wrong beliefs.

The deepest longing of the human heart is to have intimacy with God through a loving, personal relationship with Christ. God created each of us with this desire to seek Him. He knows that He alone can fulfill us, and anything less will ultimately fail us!

*“Whatever were gains to me I now
consider loss for the sake of Christ.
What is more, I consider everything a loss
because of the surpassing worth
of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”*
(PHILIPPIANS 3:7–8)

Like Marion Jones, uncontrolled habits often represent our own attempt to meet our inner needs for *love*, *significance*, and *security* through unhealthy dependencies on people, things, or activities.³⁵

As you examine your habits, give honest answers to the following questions:

Are you seeking to meet your inner need for *unconditional love* through sensual pleasure?

- Sexual activity
- Pornography
- Drug use
- Overeating

The Bible says: *“Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity . . . Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving”* (Ephesians 5:3–4).

The truth: God created you to have a *loving*, personal relationship with Him.

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (JOHN 15:12).

Are you seeking to meet your inner need for *significance* through achievement?

- Performance
- Popularity
- Position
- Power

The Bible says: “*Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*” (Colossians 3:17).

The truth: God created you to find your *significance* in His relationship with you.

“I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me”
(PSALM 57:2 ESV).

Are you seeking to meet your inner need for *security* through acquisitions?

- Possessions
- Property
- Money
- People

The Bible says: “*Whoever fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge*” (Proverbs 14:26).

The truth: God created you to be *secure* in His relationship with you.

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you’”
(HEBREWS 13:5).

Unfortunately, many of our own efforts to meet these three inner needs have little or no connection to the provisions and promises of God. If you have developed behavioral patterns that make you dependent on anything or anyone other than your heavenly Father, you can find freedom by seeking Him now.

*“You will seek me and find me
when you seek me with all your heart.
I will be found by you,’ declares the LORD,
'and will bring you back from captivity.”*

(JEREMIAH 29:13–14)

The Ultimate Need-Meeter

What do our inner needs reveal about us and our relationship with God?

God did not create any person or position or any amount of power or possessions to meet our deepest needs. People fail us and self-effort also fails to meet our deepest needs. If a person or thing could meet all our needs, we wouldn't need God! Our inner needs draw us into a deeper dependence on Christ and remind us that only God can satisfy the longings of our hearts. The Lord brings people and circumstances into our lives as an extension of His care, but ultimately only He can satisfy all the needs of our hearts. The Bible says . . .

*“The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.”*
(ISAIAH 58:11)

All along, the Lord planned to meet our deepest needs for . . .

Love—*“I [the Lord] have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness”* (JEREMIAH 31:3).

Significance—*“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’”* (JEREMIAH 29:11).

Security—*“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged”* (DEUTERONOMY 31:8).

Our needs for love, significance, and security can be legitimately met in Christ Jesus! Philippians 4:19 makes it plain, *“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”*

WRONG BELIEF—THE REBEL:

“I really don’t want to change—what I’m doing is not that bad!”

RIGHT BELIEF—THE REBEL:

“I really need to change and take responsibility for my behavior. Instead of choosing to please myself, my deepest desire needs to be to please the Lord. I will give control of my life to the supernatural control of Christ.”

*“Do not let sin reign in your mortal body
so that you obey its evil desires.
Do not offer any part of yourself to sin
as an instrument of wickedness,
but rather offer yourselves to God as those
who have been brought from death to life;
and offer every part of yourself to him
as an instrument of righteousness.”*

(ROMANS 6:12–13)

WRONG BELIEF—THE REPENTANT:

“I really want to change and I’ve tried, but I can’t. There is no hope for me.”

RIGHT BELIEF—THE REPENTANT:

“I can have success by yielding my bad habit to Christ’s supernatural control. My new habit is this: With Christ living in me, I will submit to His leadership so that His character can be clearly seen through my life.”

*“I can do all things through Christ
who strengthens me.”*

(PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV).

What Is God's Primary Plan for Setting Captives Free?

God sent His only Son into the world to pay the ultimate price to secure your complete freedom from the control of sin in your life. Jesus can empower you to break free of any bondage you have developed to destructive habits and addictions.

4 Points of God's Plan

Whether you're trying to make sense of your past, trying to overcome something in the present, or trying to make changes for a better future, the Lord cares about you. He loves you. No matter what challenges you or your loved ones are facing, no matter the pain or difficult feelings you may be experiencing, no matter what you've done or what's been done to you, there is hope. And that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

God has a plan for your life, and it begins with a personal relationship with Jesus. The most important decision you can ever make is whether you will receive His invitation. If you have never made that decision, these four simple truths can help you start your journey together with Him.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord,
‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.’”*

(JEREMIAH 29:11)

1. God's Purpose for You: *Salvation*

- What was God's motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth? To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says, *“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him”* (JOHN 3:16–17).

- What was Jesus’ purpose in coming to earth? To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”* (JOHN 10:10).

2. The Problem: *Sin*

- What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God’s standard—knowing what is wrong and doing it anyway—also knowing what is right and choosing not to do it. The apostle Paul said, *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway”* (ROMANS 7:18–19 NLT).
- What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. The Bible says, *“Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God”* (ISAIAH 59:2). Scripture also says, *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (ROMANS 6:23).

3. God’s Provision for You: *The Savior*

- Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says, *“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (ROMANS 5:8).
- What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (JOHN 14:6). The Bible says, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”* (ACTS 16:31).

4. Your Part: *Surrender*

- Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him. Jesus said, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”* (MATTHEW 16:24–26).

- Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your “good works” as a means of earning God’s approval. The Bible says, *“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (EPHESIANS 2:8–9).

Has there been a time in your life when you know you’ve humbled your heart and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—giving Him control of your life? You can tell God that you want to surrender your life to Christ in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

“God, I want a real relationship with you.
I admit that many times I’ve chosen to go my own way
instead of your way.
Please forgive me for my sins.
Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross
to pay the penalty for my sins.
Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.
Change me from the inside out and make me the person
you created me to be.
In your holy name I pray. Amen.”

What Can You Now Expect?

When you surrender your life to Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit who empowers you to live a life pleasing to God. The Bible says, *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . .”* (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus assures those who believe with these words:

*“Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word
and believes him who sent me
has eternal life and will not be judged
but has crossed over from death to life.”*

(JOHN 5:24)



STEPS TO SOLUTION



*“You can choose
to develop
and demonstrate
good habits
that are desirable
and pleasing
to God.”*



911 Operator: “911, do you have an emergency?”

Caller: “Yeah, we have a shark attack.”

911 Operator: “And the person is still in the water?”

Caller: “They’re still in the water, yes. I think her arm might be gone.”³⁶

By age 13, Hawaiian surfing prodigy Bethany Hamilton has quickly risen through the ranks of amateur surfing in pursuit of her lifelong dream of turning pro. She has sponsors interested in endorsing her and a tight-knit family of surfing enthusiasts staunchly supporting her. But, in a matter of seconds—while paddling to catch the next wave off Kauai’s North Shore—her arm is savagely severed from her tiny frame by a 14-foot tiger shark.³⁷

Emergency responders rush Bethany to the hospital, radioing ahead to alert the staff. Bethany’s father, Tom—prepped to undergo knee surgery that same morning—is quickly removed from the same operating room table his daughter will occupy minutes later as doctors race to save her life.³⁸

After surgery, Bethany awakens to find more than her left arm missing. Gone, too, are her dreams and her identity as a surfing phenomenon. But not for long. Within days, an undeniable desire to surf the world’s wildest waves come flooding back. *Is such a feat physically possible*, she wonders. *And, if so, how? What new habits and skills will she need?* Bethany has more questions than answers. But of one thing she is completely certain: As soon as her stitches are removed, she’ll be heading straight back to the water with a surfboard under her right arm, her only arm.

Strength of spirit is something we cannot inherit, imitate, or learn, but it is essential to have it when faced with situations that test our spirit to its very core. And like the apostle Paul, Bethany rallies and rises to meet that challenge head on.

*“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed,
but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned;
struck down, but not destroyed.*

*We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus,
so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”*

(2 CORINTHIANS 4:8–10)

Key Verse to Memorize

For as long as Bethany can remember, her parents emphasize having true faith in Christ and, indeed, she had received Jesus as her personal Lord and Savior, entrusting her life to Him. Never in the ensuing years, however, had her growing faith been tested so severely as on October 31, 2003—the day of the attack—and in the grueling months to come.

Uncertainty over how to live life as an amputee—and a surfer—is a constant companion. How can she tie her swimsuit top, much less tunnel through world-class waves balanced atop a bobbing board? Since the *Handbook of Habits for One-Armed Surfers* doesn't exist, Bethany turns to the only book she can trust to guide her—the Bible.

She had learned it in church and at home, committing so many Scripture verses to memory. Now hundreds of Bible passages come flooding back, reassuring her that . . .

*“I can do all things through Christ
who strengthens me.”*

(PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV)

Key Passages to Read

“My mom and I were praying for God to show me His will,” says Bethany. “I wanted to be a light for Him in everything I was doing. And then, a couple of weeks later, the shark attack happened.”³⁹ At that point, few would have blamed her had Bethany questioned God’s plan for her life. To be sure, she grappled with at least two more critical questions: Will she spend her life in fear of whether God can be trusted—or will she choose a life of faith?

Of all the questions that crowded Bethany’s mind, *Why?* becomes the one she asks herself most often—but with a faith-filled twist. “I have this thought every second of my life,” she says. “‘Why me?’ Not necessarily in a negative way—like, ‘Why did this horrible thing have to happen to me?’ But more, ‘Why did God choose me and what does He have in mind for me?’”⁴⁰

By habitually training her mind to focus on the *promise* of God’s plan rather than fearing the possibility of future peril, Bethany discovers the freedom she needs to pursue her dream.

*“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.
Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves
be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*

(GALATIANS 5:1)

Freedom! People live for it and die for it—cherish it and curse it. But what does it mean? How do you get it? How do you keep it? Some say freedom is being able to do and say whatever they want. Others are more restrictive, adding, “As long as no one else’s freedom is violated.” But freedom, from God’s perspective, is not being able to do whatever we want, but rather being able to do whatever is right. For those controlled by harmful habits, freedom means having the ability to choose how they will think and behave, which involves breaking the power of the habits controlling them.

According to God’s Word, the solution to a bad habit is not just replacing it with a good habit, but also examining what made us susceptible to developing that bad habit in the first place. The Bible says our natural inclination is to sin, which means doing things our own way rather than God’s way. It’s a struggle we all have in common—a struggle we all can win—as long as we are empowered by the Spirit of God to say *No* to our will and *Yes* to God’s will. Truly, there is no real freedom apart from Him.

Your True Freedom Galatians 5:13-17

¹³ *“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free.
But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh;
rather, serve one another humbly in love.*

¹⁴ *For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command:
‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’*

¹⁵ *If you bite and devour each other, watch out
or you will be destroyed by each other.*

¹⁶ *So I say, walk by the Spirit,
and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

¹⁷ *For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit,
and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.
They are in conflict with each other,
so that you are not to do whatever you want.”*

You are called to be free v. 13

- Choose to not indulge your fleshly desires or satisfy your selfish wants.
- Choose to serve others with true humility out of genuine love for them.

You are commanded to love othersv. 14

- To love others as yourself is the foundation on which all laws are based.
- To love others summarizes the entire Law of God.

You are warned about failing to love.....v. 15

- To not love each other can lead to fighting and devouring one another.
- To not love each other will ultimately lead to destroying one another.

You are told how to live.....v. 16

- Be fully yielded to the power and control of the Holy Spirit within you.
- Be victorious over your natural sinful desires in the power of the Holy Spirit.

You are engaged in internal conflict.....v. 17

- Understand that your natural inclinations are in conflict with those of the Holy Spirit.
- Understand your need to choose to obey the Spirit and oppose the flesh.

How to Have a Transformed Life

Despite her strong faith, determination, and courage, the possibility of another shark attack is not lost on Bethany Hamilton. She answers the inevitable question, “What about sharks?”

To constantly dwell on what might happen would totally suck the joy out of the sport. Besides, it’s like asking, ‘What if the roller coaster comes off the track?’ (It has happened.) What if the horse throws you? . . . Life is full of what-ifs. You can’t let it hold you back. If you do, you’re not really living at all . . . just kind of going through the motions with no meaning.⁴¹

Rather than dwelling on all the reasons she shouldn't don a swimsuit, shouldn't get back in the water, shouldn't surf, Bethany focuses on her purpose, priorities, and plans. The key is learning what to focus on and what not to focus on.

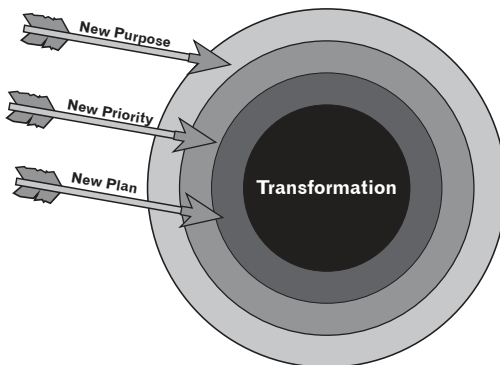
Have you ever said to yourself, *I'm not going to eat that chocolate pie*—and then all you can think about is chocolate pie? In the battle with temptation, you will shoot yourself in the foot if your thoughts are aimed downward. Understand, you are bound to hit what you aim at! Don't dwell on the negative. Rather, focus on the positive.

Realize that training and disciplining the mind to think victoriously and reject even the possibility of failure is critical to winning in the Olympics, competing in professional surfing events, and in developing godly character and strength of spirit. Set your thoughts high on God's character-building truths, and then with Christ's strength, you can reach the target every time.⁴²

*"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right,
whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—
if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."*

(PHILIPPIANS 4:8)

Reaching the Target: Transformation!



THE FREEDOM FORMULA

A New Purpose
+ A New Priority
+ A New Plan

A Transformed Life

Target #1—A New Purpose

God's purpose for me is to be conformed to the character of Christ.

“Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (ROMANS 8:29).

— “I’ll do whatever it takes to be conformed to the character of Christ.”

Target #2—A New Priority

God's priority for me is to change my thinking.

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (ROMANS 12:2).

— “I’ll do whatever it takes to line up my thinking with God’s thinking.”

Target #3—A New Plan

God's plan for me is to rely on Christ’s strength, not my strength, to be all He created me to be.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV).

— “I’ll do whatever it takes to fulfill His plan in His strength.”

My Personalized Plan

Just three weeks after the attack, Bethany Hamilton wades into the Pacific Ocean. Her parents and brothers verbally encourage her, though inwardly feel unsure of what to expect. Rather than the long board she had become accustomed to using, Bethany starts over with a beginner board. Never will she forget what happened next.

In some ways it was like learning to surf all over again. I had to learn how to paddle evenly with one arm.” Her initial tries didn’t work. Discouraged, she thought it would be easier. “Then it happened . . . It’s hard for me to describe the joy I felt after I stood up and rode a wave in for the first time after the attack. Even though I was all wet, I felt tears of happiness trickling down my face.⁴⁵

Bethany had taken the first step toward her dream. Determination and strength of spirit help lift her atop her surfboard that November day, but another power is also at work. “It was what God had taught me growing up that helped me overcome my fear and get back on the board,” she says.⁴⁴

*“Be strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged,
for the LORD your God will be with you
wherever you go.”*
(JOSHUA 1:9)

As you seek to defeat a harmful habit, remember to . . .

Seek to do God’s will.

- Commit your will to God.
- Regularly remind yourself of your heart’s desire to do God’s will.

“I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart” (PSALM 40:8).

Ask God for wisdom to know and accomplish His will.

- Discern God’s priorities and plans for breaking the bad habits in your life.
- Seek God’s will regarding the best strategy for breaking each identified habit.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (JAMES 1:5).

Accept by faith that God will give you the wisdom you need.

- Reject any thoughts that suggest you may not be able to break your habit.
- Believe that God is guiding and enabling you to succeed.

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 JOHN 5:14).

Write out the strategy that God has placed on your heart.

- Write down the first particular habit you plan to change and make a list of the reasons you want to change it.

- Detail the steps you will take and the various strategies you will employ.

“I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted”
(JOB 42:2).

Identity the wrong beliefs supporting your habit.

- Recall the time, circumstances, and your internal dialogue surrounding the starting of this habit.
- Replace each wrong belief with a biblically accurate belief.

“The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps”
(PROVERBS 14:15).

Plan ways to remove possible reinforcements of your bad habit.

- Make a list of the physical, emotional, and mental rewards reinforcing your habit.
- Negate rewards for the bad behavior by replacing them with negative repercussions. Institute rewards for engaging in a desired behavior.

“The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways, and the good rewarded for theirs” (PROVERBS 14:14).

Share your plan with an accountability partner.

- Enlist the help of a mature Christian to help strengthen and support you in your efforts and to correct you when you get off course.
- Commit to being completely honest and forthright about your successes and failures.

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed”
(PROVERBS 15:22).

Resolve to stay the course.

- Have no expectation that your fleshly desires will die or will accept defeat quietly, quickly, or easily.
- Put on the full armor of God on a daily basis as you wage war against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

“Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (EPHESIANS 6:11).

How to Have Success in Self-Control

Along with determination and a strong spirit, another factor in Bethany's success at remounting a surfboard is her enormous self-control. Her new workout regimen is proof of that.

Before releasing her from the hospital, Bethany Hamilton's doctor summarizes her prognosis this way: "The list of what Bethany will have to do *differently* is long; the list of what she will be *unable* to do is short."⁴⁵

Prior to the attack, her training routine was simple: Surf, and watch videos of herself surfing, so she can improve her technique. Those habits hardly suffice now, when training to compete against elite athletes possessing endurance, strong core muscles, tremendous upper-body strength, and two arms.⁴⁶

To compensate, Bethany adds workouts to her regimen of grueling physical therapy that were nearly twice as hard as before. Because her spine begins curving toward her stronger right side, she incorporates spinal realignment exercises into her routine. Instead of swimming (it's too hard on her arm), she runs, does push-ups (one-armed!), hikes, lifts weights, and, of course, surfs—between two to eight hours a day when the waves allow.

When she finds it too hard to duck underwater while paddling out to catch a wave, she forms a new habit—riding a custom-made board with a handle she can hold on to. She also learns to use her legs more efficiently to compensate for her slower paddling.

"She's working at a huge deficit with only one arm," Bethany's trainer says. "Yet the things she is able to do . . . like competing in paddle battles, out-maneuvering two-armed surfers for waves, or getting whipped around in 25-foot surf . . . it's just amazing. She copes incredibly well with her disadvantage and makes it seem like it doesn't exist."⁴⁷

Bethany's self-control and discipline is key to her success. Likewise, you will need self-control to overcome harmful habits and develop new, healthy ones. But to have self-control you must first know what self-control is *not*. It is *not* "pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps." It is *not* overcoming one bad habit only to replace it with another bad habit. It is saying *No* to a negative habit so that you can say *Yes* to a positive habit. Self-control is a gift from God that empowers you to fulfill the will of God. It is what the Holy Spirit does in you when you yield your will to His will.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."
(GALATIANS 5:22–23 ESV)

Steps to Self-Control

Start with a commitment to truth, admitting what habit God wants you to change.

- Believe: God wants only what is best for you.
- Believe: God has the desire and power to help you.
- Believe: God doesn't punish you, but disciplines you.
- Believe: God is faithful, perfect, good, and just.

Personalize: *"He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he"* (DEUTERONOMY 32:4).

Separate yourself from your sinful habit, writing out what it's costing you.

- Repent (change your thinking) and confess your habit as sinful.
- Realize that yielding to your habit makes you a slave to sin.
- Review the negative consequences of your habit regularly.
- Read and memorize Psalm 1.

Personalize: *"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"* (ROMANS 6:1–2).

Set a new goal, picturing yourself establishing the new habit.

- Make it your goal to be empowered by God.
- Make it your goal to please God.
- Make it your goal to depend on God.
- Make it your goal to do the will of God.

Personalize: *“So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 CORINTHIANS 5:9–10).*

Stand on the truth, setting a time to begin.

- Know: In Christ you are set free from the penalty of sin.
- Know: In Christ you are set free from the power of sin.
- Know: In Christ you are “dead to sin.”
- Know: In Christ you no longer have to be a slave to sin.

Read Romans chapters 6, 7, and 8. Write down every verse in which Paul mentions your freedom from sin.

Personalize: *“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin . . .” (ROMANS 6:6).*

Substitute your thoughts with God’s thoughts, identifying your weak points.

- When you are tempted by a habit, remember:

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 CORINTHIANS 10:13).

- When you think you are powerless over a habit, say:

“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak” (ISAIAH 40:29).

- When you think you’ve had the habit too long to change, claim:

“If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 CORINTHIANS 5:17).

- When you begin to rationalize that the habit is okay, admit:

“Since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God” (1 PETER 4:1–2).

- When you think no one will know about the habit, remind yourself of this truth:

“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (HEBREWS 4:13).

- When you have given in to a habit, remember:

“The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down” (PSALM 145:14).

Personalize: *“In view of God’s mercy . . . offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (ROMANS 12:1–2).*

Surrender your will to God and seek out an accountability partner.

- Acknowledge that you belong to God.
- Acknowledge that God has authority over all your thoughts, words, desires, time, money, actions, relationships, and possessions.
- Acknowledge that the decision to change is yours. You are making a choice!
- Acknowledge that you have the actual presence of God’s Spirit in you to help you make the right choice!

Personalize: *“Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness” (ROMANS 6:19).*

Stay on track, practicing your new habit daily for three months.

- Avoid taking pride in gaining victory over your habit.
- Avoid thinking you have control over what caused your habit.
- Avoid thinking it will be okay to occasionally indulge the habit.

— Avoid moving out from under God’s grace into self-sufficiency.

Personalize: *“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand” (ROMANS 5:1–2).*

The Tale of Two Women The Story of Sandra LeSourd⁴⁸

Taken from: HOW TO DEFEAT HARMFUL HABITS
Copyright © 2011 by Hope for the Heart, Inc.
Published by Harvest House Publishers.
Used by permission.

This is the tale of two women whom I [June Hunt] personally have known. One was athletic and energetic, the other was an alcoholic and a compulsive eater. One became Miss Vermont and entered the Miss America pageant, the other weighed well over 200 pounds and eventually attempted suicide.

One became actively involved in Broadway and television, the other became actively involved in psychics and the occult. One was married to a doctor and had the “perfect home,” the other was twice divorced and a prescription-drug addict. One was a charity organizer who became an activist for social causes, the other was a chain smoker who became a compulsive spender. One became an artist who ended up with the American dream, the other became an anorexic who ended up in a hospital for the mentally ill.

The name of the beautiful woman in the first list is Sandra Simpson LeSourd. The name of the bewildered woman in the second list is none other than Sandra Simpson LeSourd.

Sandy seemingly had it all. In fact, two years after the Miss America pageant, she became the coordinator of a Miss America

foundation, managing the public appearance schedule of that year's Miss America winner. Later, Sandy landed a prominent public relations position with Pepsi Cola and was swept up into the world of celebrity.

But while Sandy seemed cool and collected on the outside . . . inside, her emotional circuitry was becoming increasingly a mangled mass of fear, shame, guilt, and *pain*. One or two alcoholic drinks soon became three or four. And during one stop to a boutique, she bought 22 pairs of shoes and five matching handbags. An entire month's salary—gone in an hour.

Sandy momentarily panicked about how to pay the rent, but then lost herself in the exhilaration of her spontaneous purchases. "I floated back to the hotel in a euphoric trance. From then on, shopping would give me what almost amounted to a chemical high."⁴⁹

After living in her isolated, frightening world of multiple addictions, Sandy finally realized it really wasn't alcohol or shopping or drugs that she needed to battle, but the *compulsive personality* behind it all.

People with compulsive personalities fool themselves into thinking they'll have just one cookie or one beer, and before long, paper wrappings and bottles are strewn throughout the house. "For the compulsive personality, moderation is the hardest achievement of all," Sandy explains.⁵⁰

The compulsions and the cross-addictions led to self-hatred, self-pity, and ultimately a suicide attempt. "I had everything to live for and yet something inside me was pushing me straight into a dark pit,"⁵¹ Sandy remembers. Following a botched sixteenth birthday party for her daughter, Lisa, she fell headfirst into the pit after deeply wounding her daughter on Mother's Day.

Lisa prepared a surprise Mother's Day dinner, but Sandy and her husband chose to spend most of the day with friends—*drinking*. When they returned home at 11:30 p.m., Sandy, stumbling past pots of dried up broccoli and ribs, headed for Lisa's bedroom, where her anguished daughter had been crying. "Where were you, Mom? I've been so worried."⁵²

Sandy responded with a hollow promise: "Please forgive me, honey. It will never happen again."⁵³ When she bent down to kiss Lisa goodnight, her worn-out daughter turned her face into the pillow.

That was it! The taunting voices inside Sandy's head had been urging her to take her own life, accusing her of making Lisa's life miserable as well as everyone else's. Sandy grabbed a stash of sleeping pills and a nearly full bottle of vodka. The deadly concoction also included two hot cups of vodka-laced coffee that Sandra reasoned would melt the capsules faster.

Waiting for death, Sandy found herself singing a song that she had sung alongside her Aunt Ethel as a child, a sweet melody about unconditional love. "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so . . ." Sandy became baffled as to why she would recall the song, but it was all she could think about.

Drowsiness soon swept over Sandy, so she lay down and anticipated a finality of all pain, a sudden stop of all addictions. "My eyes rested on a framed watercolor of a red barn . . . a Vermont barn . . . then inky blackness . . . a howling wind. Nothingness."⁵⁴

But next came the smell of ether, surgical tape, and a blinding light above her, and Sandy realized death had eluded her. Then something filled her with self-loathing: The very person she didn't want to hurt *found her*—the daughter she so

desperately wanted to protect from pain. Flailing at the bottom of the pit, finally Sandy recognized she needed help to be pulled out.

While at a hospital for mental disorders, Sandy encountered a young woman who talked often about Jesus. Every mention of the name *Jesus* was grating—Sandy hated that name. Then one morning at 3:00 a.m., this woman suddenly appeared in Sandy’s room, crying, pleading to have one question answered: “Does Jesus *really* love me?”⁵⁵

In that moment of despair, Sandy awkwardly assured her, “Yes, Karen, Jesus loves you.”⁵⁶ Suddenly, the woman’s sobbing stopped and something extraordinary happened: The moment Sandy spoke the name *Jesus*, a breaking of her bondage occurred—and Sandy received a spirit of lightness and peace.

Later, after leaving the hospital, Sandy attended a church service where she encountered the One who broke the bondage, and she began a relationship with Him. As a result, Sandy gained new insight, recognizing the root of her lifelong compulsive behavior—*shame*. It started at age five, when she was sexually abused by an uncle. Somehow, she thought the abuse was all her fault. Years later, when her parents divorced, Sandy again believed she was to blame, resulting in even more self-loathing.

Sandy desperately needed reassurance that she was lovable. But when relationships didn’t work, she turned to food, alcohol, cigarettes . . . whatever she could find to dull the pain. Her occult involvement—fueled by a desperate search for self-worth—filled her, instead, with seething self-hate. “Soon all my compulsive behaviors and dependencies became woven together in a spider web trap. I’d break through one area only to be strangled in another,” she said.⁵⁷

Finally Sandy saw firsthand that she could be freed forever! She experienced the overwhelming love of Jesus and began calling upon Him for help to overcome her compulsive behaviors. “I was the object of a love greater than any I had ever known. My compulsive lifestyle was reordered by a power outside myself, which I continue to experience and call Jesus Christ.”⁵⁸

How to Break an Addictive Habit

Change takes time. Breaking free of an old habit, especially an addictive one like smoking, is not a quick or easy task. Just as it takes time to develop a habit, it takes even more time to break it and establish a new habit. Remember that God is with you every step of the way to strengthen you and help you.

*“Do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*
(ISAIAH 41:10)

Breaking Harmful Habits

Note: The principles that empower you to overcome smoking can also be employed to kick other bad habits.

Check your thoughts and self-talk to see if they are causing you to stumble.

- “It’s too hard to quit”
- “I’ll never be able to quit.”
- “I can’t stop thinking about smoking.”

- “Christians look down on smokers.”
- “God is ashamed of me for smoking.”
- “God will punish me for smoking.”

Living under the “law” never changes you. If you focus only on what you shouldn’t do, you will be pulled more powerfully to do it.

Ways to Break the Smoking Habit

Those who break the habit of smoking either “taper off” or go “cold turkey.”

Tapering Off

“I will give Christ increasing control of my life and my smoking habit in order to taper off gradually.”

- By carrying a limited number of cigarettes for each day along with a gradual cutback schedule
- By limiting buying cigarettes to only certain days of the month
- By buying only one pack at a time
- By entrusting my cigarettes to a friend so that I have to ask for one or by keeping them in an inconvenient place
- By setting restrictions on when, where, and around whom I will smoke (outside, when I take a walk around the block, not around loved ones, etc.)
- By breaking patterns of when I would normally smoke (not smoking while on the phone, immediately after a meal, in the car, before going to sleep)
- By making myself accountable to someone who is willing to help
- By memorizing and personalizing 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 and dwelling on it when I want a cigarette

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies”
(1 CORINTHIANS 6:19–20).

Going “Cold Turkey”

“I will give Christ total control of my life and my smoking habit in order to quit cold turkey.”

- By refusing to purchase cigarettes
- By avoiding looking at cigarette ads
- By choosing not to dwell on the “comfort” of smoking
- By doing another preplanned activity when I desire a cigarette (especially doing something with my hands)
- By finding a substitute for wanting something in my mouth (chewing gum, hard candy, ice, or a toothpick)
- By abstaining from activities and foods that cause me to want to smoke
- By memorizing Romans 14:21 and 1 Corinthians 6:12

“It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall” (ROMANS 14:21).

“‘I have the right to do anything,’ you say—but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’—but I will not be mastered by anything” (1 CORINTHIANS 6:12).

Common Questions about How to Quit Smoking

Negative Reinforcement

Question: “What is negative reinforcement?”

Answer: Negative reinforcement is presenting negative truths or reasonings to aid with decision making. For example, “What is the *truth* about tobacco?”

Tobacco smoke contains more than 200 known poisons. Those who smoke two packs a day shorten their life expectancy by eight years.

Tobacco:⁵⁹

- Is the most common cause of lung cancer
- Is a major cause of hardening of the arteries, which in turn causes strokes and most heart attacks
- Is a major contributor in mouth and throat cancers, which can disfigure a person for life
- Causes emphysema (making breathing very taxing) which in turn causes death
- Produces chemicals that erode the lining of the stomach, which in turn causes gastric ulcers
- Increases the risk of bladder cancer
- Slows down physical healing
- Produces carbon monoxide and retards the growth of a fetus in a mother who smokes, which also increases the risk of premature birth and infant death
- Contributes to heart disease, the leading cause of death in men

The Bible addresses the need to consider whether an activity is beneficial and constructive when we are deciding whether or not to engage in it.

*“I have the right to do anything,’ you say—
but not everything is beneficial.
‘I have the right to do anything’—
but not everything is constructive.”*

(1 CORINTHIANS 10:23)

Chewing Tobacco

Question: “Isn’t chewing tobacco better than smoking tobacco?”

Answer: Absolutely not! The harmful effects of tobacco remain, whether it is chewed or smoked. Apart from the obvious yellow teeth stains and unpleasant taste (especially for the spouses of users),

Smokeless tobacco:⁶⁰

- Causes cavities and tooth decay due to high quantities of sugar
- Possesses coarse particles that damage gums and erode tooth enamel
- Can lead to gum and tooth disease
- Is a common cause of mouth and throat cancer
- Can cause leukoplakia
- Contributes to increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Increases the incidents of heart disease and heart attack

The American Academy of Otolaryngology states that spit, chewing, and smokeless tobacco are “not a safe alternative to smoking. You just move health problems from your lungs to your mouth,” providing a more potent nicotine rush to the blood.⁶¹

The Bible offers this poignant observation:

*“The prudent see danger and take refuge,
but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.”*

(PROVERBS 27:12)

Smoking Tobacco

Question: “What does God think about smoking?”

Answer: When you smoke, you are harming your physical body because smoking can cause sickness, disease, and even death. First Corinthians 6:19–20 reminds believers that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and that we are to honor God with our bodies. So to smoke is to dishonor God.

But it should also be noted that our salvation is not contingent on whether we smoke or not. Romans 10:9–10 says, *“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”*

God’s desire is that we walk in freedom from any addiction or unhealthy habit. His plan for our lives is good. If we choose to shorten our lives as a result of this kind of vice, we may miss opportunities of ministry and the privilege of touching the lives of other people whom He had planned for us to influence. Scripture makes this appeal:

*“I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy,
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and pleasing to God—
this is your true and proper worship.”*

(ROMANS 12:1)

Saying “No”

Question: “What do I say when someone offers me something I really shouldn’t have?”

Answer: As with any addictive behavior, it is essential that you say *No* to those things that trigger your addiction, whether it be sugary food, alcohol, a drug, a cigarette, or even an invitation to join a shopping excursion. Of course, the best means of escape, whenever possible, is to simply avoid people and situations where you might be tempted. However, to be prepared for facing your weakness, you must practice saying *No*—and mean it!

Here are some ways to say *No* politely, yet firmly:

- “While I appreciate you making such a beautiful dessert, I’m afraid I must say *No*. I’m working hard to make good food choices to improve my health.”
- “No thanks. I don’t drink anymore.”
- “Thanks, but I quit smoking.”
- “I’ve stopped using drugs.”
- “Thank you for inviting me to go shopping with you, but I’m trying to curtail my spending. Maybe we could meet for lunch or a cup of coffee?”

Remember: It is not in your own strength that you are able to say *No*, but it is God’s grace operating within you, empowering you.

*“The grace of God has appeared
that offers salvation to all people.
It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness
and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled,
upright and godly lives in this present age.”*
(TITUS 2:11–12)

How to Stop a Compulsive Habit

In January 2004, just over a year after the attack, Bethany wins the first national title of her career. In 2008, she begins competing full-time, placing third in a contest against many of the world’s best female surfers. She has successfully replaced every habit that served her well as a two-armed surfer with a new habit that now serves her well as a one-armed surfer. She evaluates every little behavior involved in her surfing style to determine which ones will benefit her in the future she envisions for herself and which ones will hold her back from achieving her dream.

Have you ever formed a habit you once thought beneficial which has turned into a compulsion that is now destroying you? Maybe you found that spending money eased the emotional pain in your life so you began to spend more and more until you are in deep debt—resulting in the death of your financial freedom or possibly even a relationship?

If you want to stop your habit of compulsive spending, you must first discover the need you are trying to meet through this compulsive behavior. What is the driving force behind it? Examine it closely and determine what you are getting from it. Then commit to trusting God to meet your needs and commit to pleasing the Lord with the financial resources He gives you. Rely on Him as you seek to heal from emotional pain and other factors that may have precipitated your compulsive spending.

The truths that applied to the Israelites when they were enslaved to the Philistines apply to us today. God desires to deliver us but we must cooperate by taking action to rid ourselves of the things in our lives that enslave us—our own “Philistines”!

*“If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts,
then rid yourselves of the foreign gods . . .
and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only,
and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.”*

(1 SAMUEL 7:3)

Before making a purchase of any kind, ask yourself:

- Y / N** “Is this something I really need, or is it something I just want?”
- Y / N** “If I wait a day or two to purchase this item, will I still want it?”
- Y / N** “Do I have adequate funds to purchase this without using credit?”
- Y / N** “Have I compared the cost of competitive products?”
- Y / N** “What is driving my desire to make this purchase?”
- Y / N** “Am I willing to wait on God’s provision rather than making this purchase right now?”

Y / N “Do I feel God’s peace about making this purchase?”

Y / N “Have I prayed about this purchase? Do I need to do that first?”

Y / N “Will I experience ‘buyer’s remorse’ if I purchase this item?”

Y / N “Do I need to consult my spouse (if married) or check in with an accountability partner before making this purchase?”

*“Be on your guard against all kinds of greed;
life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”*

(LUKE 12:15)

In order to not be caught off guard or fall into deeper debt, make a plan that includes some of these practical steps that will enable you to develop healthy spending habits.

Breaking the Habit of Overspending

Avoid your favorite stores; pick new ones to make your needed purchases.

Check with stores before leaving home to ensure they have the things you need.

Confine orders from catalogs, the Internet, and TV shopping channels to only those items already on your shopping list.

When you feel the desire to go shopping, divert your attention to another enjoyable activity.

Keep only one credit card and use it just for emergencies.

Limit your window shopping to times when the stores are closed or when you have no means of making purchases.

Never shop when you are tired, depressed, stressed, frustrated, or lonely.

Plan your shopping trips late in the day so you arrive with just enough time to purchase necessities before the doors close.

Put off buying anything you are hesitant to purchase.

Always use a shopping list and purchase only those items on your list.

Tell your spouse, friend, or shopping buddy just what you plan to buy when shopping.

Use cash, check, or debit card when making your purchases.

Use mail-order catalogs to purchase specific items only, not for browsing or compiling a list of items for purchase.

When thinking about purchasing an item, ask yourself: *Do I really need this? Can I afford it?*

Planning for Future Purchases

Formulate a realistic weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly budget with the help of a financially responsible person, and stick to it.

Develop and implement a savings plan.

Enter purchases in your checkbook and deduct them from your balance on the day they occur or within the next few days.

Start a list of any expensive items you would like to purchase in the future, do three cost comparisons on each item, and then determine when you can realistically save the money needed to purchase each item.

Disclose all of your purchases and the cost of each to your spouse, friend, or accountability partner.

Purchase and wrap gifts early for loved ones you will be visiting throughout the year in order to avoid making expensive purchases during your visits.

Pray before walking into a store to purchase an item and ask, “Lord, is this a hasty decision or a well-thought-out decision? Is this just my will or your perfect will?” Remember . . .

*“The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty,
but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.”*

(PROVERBS 21:5 NKJV)

How to Develop and Demonstrate Good Habits

In 2010, Bethany Hamilton ranks twentieth on the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) Women's Tour. A legend in water sports circles, her accomplishments will one day be eclipsed only by her efforts to minister internationally to the needs of those who, like her, have suffered a major setback in life.

On a ministry trip to Thailand, for example, she helps traumatized orphans regain their courage to enter the water, which years before devastated their country through a deadly tsunami. Her foundation, Friends of Bethany, supports shark-attack survivors, traumatic amputees, and other charitable efforts.⁶²

A movie about Bethany Hamilton's life, based on her book, was released in 2011, providing a platform for this star surfer to tell her story and share her faith around the world. To those struggling to understand and overcome, she says:

I don't pretend to have all the answers to why bad things happen to good people. But I do know that God knows all those answers, and sometimes He lets you know in this life, and sometimes He asks you to wait so that you can have a face-to-face talk about it. What I do know is that I want to use what happened to me as an opportunity to tell people that God is worthy of our trust, and to show them that you can go on and do wonderful things in spite of terrible events that happen.⁶³

This habit of sharing her faith will benefit Bethany for the rest of her days, as well as thousands of others who hear it and believe it!

Many habits—good and bad—are the result of childhood experiences. Family and friends have a powerful influence on us. But as we grow older, like Bethany Hamilton we decide for ourselves the values and behaviors we want to incorporate into our lives. No longer a child, you do not have to be controlled by the attitudes and actions of others. You can choose to develop and demonstrate good habits that are desirable and pleasing to God.

*“When I was a child, I talked like a child,
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.
When I became a man,
I put the ways of childhood behind me.”*
(1 CORINTHIANS 13:11)

Develop and Demonstrate . . .

Moral Sensitivity

- Study Scripture daily so you will know God’s standards.
- Write out the Ten Commandments and apply each one to your life (Exodus 20:1–17).
- Consider what it means to *“have no other gods before me”* (verse 3).
- Memorize the Beatitudes and rehearse in your mind ways to apply them in your life (Matthew 5:3–12).
- Measure all of your behavior with the yardstick of God’s Word.

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you”
(PSALM 119:11).

Accountability

- Be open to the truth when others criticize you.
- Say with appreciation, “It takes courage to point out where a person needs to change. Thank you for taking the risk.”
- Think about how your negative attitudes impact your life and the lives of others around you.
- Confess your failures to God, and ask forgiveness from those you have offended.

- Daily or weekly talk with a friend who will help you kick the habit that plagues you.

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other.” (JAMES 5:16).

Gratefulness

- Memorize Psalm 100, meditate on its message, and think of ways you can apply it to your life.
- Acknowledge the gifts God has given you—gifts for which you can be grateful.
- Keep a prayer journal, and give thanks for answered prayers.
- Always express gratitude to those who are helpful to you.
- Thank God for what He is teaching you through each trial He allows in your life.

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 THESSALONIANS 5:16–18).

Forgiveness

- Remember that God extends forgiveness to you for all your sins.
- Remind yourself how many times God has forgiven you.
- Choose to forgive others even when you feel justified in your anger.
- Forgive by releasing that person into the hands of God.
- Realize that forgiveness is often a process of forgiving again and again—not a one-time act.

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (COLOSSIANS 3:13).

Selflessness

- Set a high standard for yourself, but allow others to set their own.
- Ask God to shine a spotlight on your acts of selfishness.
- Avoid talking about yourself or bragging about your endeavors; rather, encourage others to talk about themselves and praise them for their godly qualities.
- Resist the urge to criticize or to give unasked-for advice.
- Do a random act of kindness for someone each day.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves” (PHILIPPIANS 2:3).

Communion with God

- Spend time alone with God every day.
- Eliminate preventable noise and remove other distractions.
- Slowly say from your heart, “Lord, I do love you.”
- Close your mind to invading thoughts and focus on God’s presence and character.
- Be quiet in your spirit and wait on God to reveal Himself to you.

“May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD” (PSALM 104:34).

How to Help with Accountability Questions

Bethany Hamilton will be the first to say that she has not made the journey from shark-attack victim to national surfing champ alone. It would be difficult to imagine a more supportive family than hers. Along with her family, there are many friends, fans, and a close-knit church community who have cheered for this surfer continuously.

Encouragement is important. But when it comes to shedding old habits, learning new ones, and achieving goals once thought unobtainable, nothing is more critical than accountability. For Bethany, that has come, first and foremost, in the form of her surfing coaches. She admits, “There are times when the last thing I feel like doing is running another mile . . .” And that is why she has a coach who pushes her “farther and harder than I ever think I (or any human!) can go.”⁶⁴

Through a caring, supportive network, God has shown Bethany that . . .

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:
If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”*

(ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10)

Many who have struggled with and overcome temptation say, “I couldn’t have made it without someone holding me accountable. God knew that’s what I needed!”

But at times having an accountability partner isn’t effective. Why? Because many strugglers hope no one will ask them *specifically* how they are doing in the area of their habits and addictions.

Asking specific questions is a key component of effective accountability. Strugglers need to know that they are going to be asked targeted questions. They also need to know they will have someone *trustworthy* to hold them accountable. The Bible says,

*“If someone is caught in a sin,
you who live by the Spirit should
restore that person gently.
But watch yourselves,
or you also may be tempted.”*
(GALATIANS 6:1)

Accountability Questions

Since we last spoke . . .

Have you found yourself in a compromising situation? How did you respond?

Have you had any tempting thoughts?

Have you been obsessing about anyone or anything?

Have you rationalized any bad behavior in your thinking?

Have you been justifying a harmful habit or behavior to others?

Have you violated any of your own personal boundaries or those of others?

Have you engaged in any addictive behavior?

Have you done anything that has caused feelings of guilt or shame?

Did you find yourself hiding the truth or keeping a secret?

Have you told any half-truths or outright lies?

In what area of your life do you most need to change? What have you done to make that change a reality?

Is there anything in your life that you are struggling to surrender to God?

How has your spiritual life been? Have you been reading God's Word and praying regularly?

What is God telling you to do? What are you going to do about it?

What good habits do you want to develop in your life? What steps have you taken to cultivate those habits?

Is there something you hope I won't ask?

Have you just twisted the truth or lied to me?

Is this accountability relationship helpful for you?

If our roles were reversed, what would you do differently to help me?

How can I specifically pray for you?

Remember, Christ is shaping and maturing both of you through this time of accountability.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

(PROVERBS 27:17)

The Game of Life

For each of us, the entry fee has been paid, and we are in the race—a race that must be run. How we handle our habits will determine our personal outcome. When you yield your life to the Lord—when you complete the race He has laid out for you to run with Him, in His strength, and for His glory—you can echo the following words:

*“I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.”
(2 TIMOTHY 4:7)*

Even with missteps and false starts, how satisfying it will be to hear the heavenly Father say one day: “Race well run—race well done.”



SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE



*“First seek the counsel
of the LORD.”*

(1 KINGS 22:5)



God's Word offers the hope and promise of a changed life. The Lord will renew your mind—transforming the way you think, act, and live—as you saturate yourself in His Word. In the following questions, the bold-faced words serve as prompts to help you more easily memorize the verses related to this topic. May God's truth come alive to you, flourish in you, and flow through you.

Is it possible to **serve two masters**? Can I **be devoted to God**, yet be mastered by **money**?

*“No one can **serve two masters**.
Either you will hate the one and love the other,
or you will **be devoted to** the one
and despise the other.
You cannot serve both **God and money**.”*
(LUKE 16:13)

If we're totally forgiven by God's **grace**,
can we **go on sinning**?

*“Shall we **go on sinning** so that **grace**
may increase? By no means!
We are those who have died to sin;
how can we live in it any longer?”*
(ROMANS 6:1–2)

How do I **avoid all extremes** . . . especially all bad habits?

*“Whoever fears God will **avoid all extremes**.”*
(ECCLESIASTES 7:18)

Who can give me the strength to change my harmful habits?

*“I can do all this through
him [Jesus] **who gives me strength**.”*
(PHILIPPIANS 4:13)

If I **have the right to do anything**, why must I be concerned with what society says is **beneficial**?

*“**I have the right to do anything**,’ you say—
but not everything is **beneficial**.
‘I have the right to do anything’—
but I will not be mastered by anything.”*
(1 CORINTHIANS 6:12)

As Christians, our **bodies** are our **own** responsibility.
Why be obsessed with a lot of talk of how
to **honor God with our bodies**?

*“Do you not know that your **bodies** are temples
of the Holy Spirit, who is in you,
whom you have received from God?
You are not your **own**; you were bought at a price.
Therefore **honor God with your bodies**.”*
(1 CORINTHIANS 6:19–20)

What if I don’t have the self-discipline to be **faithful**
to do what **God calls** me to do?

*“The one [**God**] who **calls** you is
faithful, and he will do it.”*
(1 THESSALONIANS 5:24)

How can I **not gratify the desires of my flesh**?
How can I break the sinful habits that serve
to meet those desires?

*“Walk by the Spirit, and you
will **not gratify the desires**
of the flesh.”*
(GALATIANS 5:16)

Is there real **hope** that I can keep my **mind alert**
and **sober** so that I can conquer my habits?

*“With **minds** that are **alert** and fully **sober**,
set your **hope** on the grace
to be brought to you when Jesus Christ
is revealed at his coming.”*

(1 PETER 1:13)

How should I pray so that I may **know** what is in
my heart—to reveal anything **offensive in me**?

*“Search me, God, and **know my heart**;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any **offensive** way **in me**,
and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

(PSALM 139:23–24)



ENDNOTES & BIBLIOGRAPHY



ENDNOTES

1. Registered trademark of ABC Sports with the United States Patent Office registration number: 1074755.
2. Random House, *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, 2d ed. (New York, NY: Random House, 2001), s.v. "biathlon."
3. Ed Grabianowski, "How Biathlon Works" (Silver Spring, MD: Discovery Communications, n.d.), <http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/outdoor-activities/snow-sports/biathlon5.htm>.
4. W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985), s.v. "learn."
5. Vine, Unger, and White, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, s.v. "way."
6. Ibid.
7. Vine, Unger, and White, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, s.v. "life."
8. James M. Citrin, *The Dynamic Path: Access the Secrets of Champions to Achieve Greatness* (Emmanus, PA: Rodale, 2007), 56.
9. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Basic English*, s.v. "impulse."
10. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Basic English*, s.v. "habit."
11. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Basic English*, s.v. "obsession."
12. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Basic English*, s.v. "compulsion."
13. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Basic English*, s.v. "addiction."
14. Olympic Website, "Magnar Solberg," <http://www.olympic.org/magnar-solberg>.
15. CBS News, "Michael Vick: 'I Blame Me'" (August 16, 2009), <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/08/10/60minutes/main5231257.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody>.
16. Ibid.
17. United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia Richmond Division, "United States of America v. Purnell A. Peace, Quanis L. Phillips, Tony Taylor, Michael Vick—Indictment" (Richmond, VA: US District Court, July 2007), http://assets.espn.go.com/media/pdf/070717/vick_indictment.pdf.
18. Timothy Moral, "History of the Pit Bull," <http://www.pitbull411.com/history.html>.
19. Juliet Macur, "Vick Receives 23 Months and a Lecture," *The New York Times* (December 11, 2007), <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/11/sports/football/11vick.html?pagewanted=>.
20. CBS News, "Michael Vick: 'I Blame Me.'"
21. June Hunt, *How to Defeat Harmful Habits* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008), 33–35.
22. David Chaikin and Jason Campbell Sharman, *Corruption and Money Laundering: A Symbiotic Relationship* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009), 160.

23. Lance Morrow, "Essay: The Shoes of Imelda Marcos," TIME.com (March 31, 1986).
24. "Imelda Marcos Acquitted, Again," NYTimes.com (March 11, 2008).
25. Philippines Travel Guide, "Coconut Palace Manila, Come and Judge for Yourself!" (n.p.: 2004), <http://www.philippines-travel-guide.com/coconut-palace-manila.html>.
26. Art Stricklin, "Michael Vick Shares First-Ever Testimony" *Baptist Press* (February 8, 2010), <http://www.bpnews.net/32239/michael-vick-shares-firstever-testimony>.
27. Associated Press, "Michael Vick Receives Ed Block Courage Award," *The Times-Picayune* (March 9, 2010), https://www.nola.com/saints/2010/03/michael_vick_receives_ed_block.html.
28. For the following list see Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling—A Comprehensive Guide*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 507–508.
29. Stricklin, "Michael Vick Shares First-Ever Testimony."
30. CBC Sports, "Marion Jones retires after pleading guilty" (October 5, 2007), <http://www.cbc.ca/sports/marion-jones-retires-after-pleading-guilty-1.659759>.
31. David Morgan, "Marion Jones Pleads Guilty To Doping," *CBS News* (October 5, 2007), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/marion-jones-pleads-guilty-to-doping/>.
32. Ibid.
33. Marion Jones, *On the Right Track: From Olympic Downfall to Finding Forgiveness and the Strength to Overcome and Succeed*, (New York, NY: Howard Books, 2010), 4.
34. Ibid.
35. For more on the three inner needs (or longings), see Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr., *Understanding People: Why We Long for Relationship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 17–18, 124–127; Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance: Seeing Your True Worth through God's Eyes*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 6–11, 21–24.
36. CBS Studios Inc., "One-Armed Surfer Turns Pro," *Inside Edition* (March 31, 2009), <http://www.insideedition.com/news.aspx?storyID=2786> (site discontinued).
37. Bethany Hamilton, "Biography," <http://bethanyhamilton.com/about/bio/>.
38. Mark Moring, "A Surfer with Soul," *Christianity Today* (April 5, 2011), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/movies/interviews/2011/surferwithsoul.html>.
39. Ibid.
40. Bethany Hamilton, Sheryl Burk, and Rick Bundschuh, *Soul Surfer* (Kindle ed.) (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2004), n.p.
41. Ibid.
42. Erwin W. Lutzer, *How to say "No" to a Subborn Habit* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1994), 57–58, 76–84.
43. Hamilton, Burk, and Bundschuh, *Soul Surfer*.
44. *Soul Surfer Wave*, "Meet the Hamiltons" (TriStar Pictures, Inc., 2011), <http://www.soulsurferwave.com/meetthehamiltons>.
45. Hamilton, Burk, and Bundschuh, *Soul Surfer*.

46. For Bethany Hamilton's workout regimen, see Jen Murphy, "A Surfer and Phenom At Her Very Core," *The Wall Street Journal* (April 12, 2011), <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703712504576244631924797232.html>.

47. TRX Training, "Soul Surfer Bethany Hamilton's Amazing Comeback" (April 8, 2011), <http://www.trxtraining.com/connect/blog/2011/04/08/soul-surfer-bthany-hamiltons-amazing-comeback/>.

48. Hunt, *How to Defeat Harmful Habits*, 51–53.

49. Sandra Simpson LeSourd, *The Compulsive Woman* (Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1996), 53.

50. Sandra Simpson LeSourd, *The Compulsive Woman*, 177.

51. Sandra Simpson LeSourd, *The Compulsive Woman*, 82.

52. Sandra Simpson LeSourd, *The Compulsive Woman*, 91.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Sandra Simpson LeSourd, *The Compulsive Woman*, 94.

55. Sandra Simpson LeSourd, *The Compulsive Woman*, 100.

56. *Ibid.*

57. Sandra Simpson LeSourd, *The Compulsive Woman*, 184.

58. Sandra Simpson LeSourd, *The Compulsive Woman*, 132.

59. *The World's Best Anatomical Charts: Diseases and Disorders* (Skokie, IL: Anatomical Chart Company, 2000), 29.

60. Well Being of Wyoming, "Smokeless Tobacco—Newsletter" (Casper, WY: Wyoming Department of Health, August 2008), <http://www.welbeingofwyoming.org/newsletter.htm>.

61. American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery, "What is Spit Tobacco?" (Alexandria, VA: American Academy of Otolaryngology, n.d.), http://www.entassociates.net/html/spit_tobacco_-_it_s_no_game.html.

62. Hamilton, Burk, and Bundschuh, *Soul Surfer*.

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Neil T. *A Way of Escape*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994.
- Backus, William D. *Finding the Freedom of Self-Control*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1987.
- Chapel of the Air. *Reversing Self-Destructive Patterns*. Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1990.
- Crabb, Lawrence J., Jr. "The Sin in Self-Discipline." *Discipleship Journal*, no. 44, 1988.
- Crabb, Lawrence J., Jr. *Understanding People: Why We Long for Relationship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.
- Gillham, Anabel. *The Building Up & Tearing Down of Strongholds*. Fort Worth, TX: Lifetime Guarantee Ministries, na.
- Hart, Archibald D. *Healing Life's Hidden Addictions: Overcoming the Closet Compulsions that Waste Your Time and Control Your Life*. Ann Arbor, MI: Vine, 1990.
- Hunt, June. *Counseling Through Your Bible Handbook*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008.
- Hunt, June. *How to Forgive . . . When You Don't Feel Like It*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007.
- Hunt, June. *How to Handle Your Emotions*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008.
- Hunt, June. *Seeing Yourself Through God's Eyes*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008.
- Kelfer, Russell. *Tough Choices: Secrets to Bringing Self Under Control from the Book of Proverbs*. San Antonio, TX: Into His Likeness, 1991.
- LeSourd, Sandra Simpson. *The Compulsive Woman*. Old Tappan, NJ: Chosen, 1987.
- Lutzer, Erwin W. *How to Say "No" to a Stubborn Habit: Even When You Feel Like Saying "Yes."* Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1986.
- Lutzer, Erwin W. *Seven Snares of the Enemy: Breaking Free from the Devil's Grip*. Chicago, IL: Moody, 2001.
- May, Gerald G. *Addiction and Grace*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988.
- McGee, Robert S. *The Search for Freedom: Demolishing the Strongholds that Diminish Your Faith, Hope, and Confidence in God*. Ann Arbor, MI: Vine, 1995.
- McGee, Robert S. *The Search for Significance: Seeing Your True Worth through God's Eyes*. rev. ed. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003.
- Moore, Beth. *Breaking Free: Making Liberty in Christ a Reality in Life*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000.
- Moore, Beth. *Breaking Free: Making Liberty in Christ a Reality in Life* (workbook), Nashville, TN: LifeWay, 1999.
- Ryan, Dale, and Juanita Ryan. *Recovery from Shame: 6 Studies for Groups or Individuals*. Life Recovery Guides. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990.

- Walters, Richard P. *Counseling for Problems of Self-Control. Resources for Christian Counseling*, ed. Gary R. Collins, vol. Waco, TX: Word, 1987.
- Wilkes, Peter. *Winning the War Within: How to Stop Doing What You Don't Want to Do*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995.
- Wilkinson, Bruce H. *Experiencing Spiritual Breakthroughs*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1999.
- Wilkinson, Bruce H. *Personal Holiness in Times of Temptation*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1998.
- Wilkinson, Bruce H. *Personal Holiness in Times of Temptation: Course Workbook*. The Biblical Manhood Series. Atlanta, GA: Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, 1997.
- The World's Best Anatomical Charts: Diseases and Disorders*. Skokie, IL: Anatomical Chart Company, 2000.
- Wright, H. Norman. *Making Peace With Your Partner: Healing Conflicts in Marriage*. Dallas, TX: Word, 1988.





Hope for the Heart

... presenting God's Truth for Today's Problems

Our Partnership

We are honored to partner with **Lindell Recovery Network**—to encourage, equip, and empower others with the truth of God's Word. What a joy to see lives changed as we share His hope—together!

A Legacy of Hope

Special thanks to author, broadcaster, and biblical counselor **June Hunt**, founder of Hope For The Heart, for her years of research, writing, editing, and guidance in developing the *Keys for Living Library*.

Anchored to a Solid Foundation

God's Word is our sure and steady anchor, the foundation of our ministry and all our resources. We are grateful to God for His 30+ years of guidance and enabling us to impact the world with His truth that sets people free.

Resources for the Continuum of Care and Ministry

We present biblical hope and practical help through our print and digital resources (over two million books sold), radio broadcasts, and podcasts. Likewise, our counseling services and seminars, the International Christian Coaching Institute (ICCI), the Lifeline to Hope caregiver training program, credentialing and certifications, and a global outreach that touches over 60 countries in 36 languages and on 6 continents—are all designed to help people have a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD,
‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.’”
(Jeremiah 29:11)*

To learn more about Hope For The Heart, our ministry, resources, and initiatives, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit HopeForTheHeart.org.

www.HopeForTheHeart.org

HABITS & ADDICTIONS

Success in Self-Control

Habits can be good or bad, beneficial or destructive. But when lives are impacted and detoured by addictions, people desperate for answers are searching for hope. These *Keys for Living* will teach you how to recognize addictive impulses and habits, set boundaries, seek help, and trust the power of Christ and God's Word to release you from the hold of addictions.

KEYS FOR LIVING LIBRARY



"First seek the counsel of the LORD."
(1 Kings 22:5)

Life is full of challenges, but there is hope. The *Keys for Living Library* provides biblical truth and practical help for more than 100 topics to help you overcome difficulties, grow in maturity, and move forward in life. In each of the 100+ Keys, you'll discover God's wisdom and guidance in a simple format:

- *Definitions* help you understand the topic from God's perspective.
- *Characteristics* give insight into the different aspects of the topic.
- *Causes* shed light on the underlying issues related to the topic.
- *Steps to Solution* show you how to be transformed and walk in freedom.

Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10). Our prayer is that God will use these *Keys for Living* to encourage, equip, and empower you with His life-changing truth.

