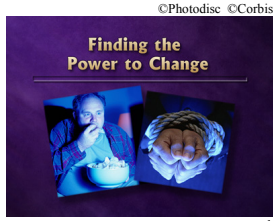


Finding the Power to Change



Today we are going to discuss how to find the power to change.



Do you dislike exercise?



Find it hard to get up in the morning?



Do you wish you could just stop smoking, eat healthier, or lose those extra pounds?



Most of us desire to be different—to live healthier, more disciplined lives. Yet our most determined efforts to change too often come to nothing.



Many people joke about how their New Year's resolutions don't last more than a few days or weeks.

Finding the Power to Change



One pledges never to drink alcohol or smoke again.



Another vows never to eat another box of chocolates.



Still another promises to spend less time at the office and more time with the family.

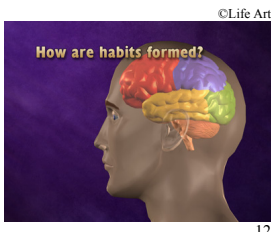


Are you tired of your bad habits, broken promises, and the resulting unhappiness?

Why is it so hard to change anyway?



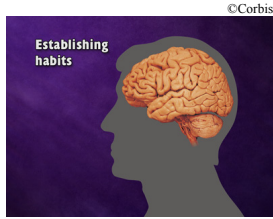
Habits tie us down—and our personal lifestyle is often little more than the sum total of all our habits.



But how are these habits formed?

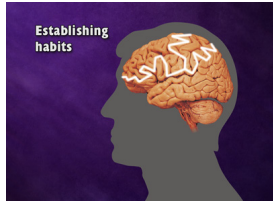
Our brain is like a central processing headquarters, sending messages to the rest of our body through the nerve cells. Habits are formed by the same messages being sent repeatedly.

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13

Brain scientists have discovered that **any** thought or action repeated over and over...



14

...creates physical changes in the nerve pathways. This makes it easier to repeat that same thought or action the next time.



15

Well-established habits are almost completely automatic, like tying your shoes, and hardly require any thinking at all.



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It's as though this repetition wears a deeper groove in the brain, just as repeatedly walking over the same place in the grass will wear a path.

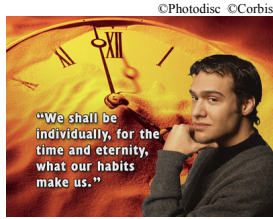


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Our thoughts and feelings lead to personal choices and then actions. Over time these repeated actions become habits that shape our characters. And in the end a person's character determines their destiny.

How sobering to realize that every repeated thought, feeling, or action is producing physical and chemical changes in our nerve pathways—changes that will tend either to bless or to curse us when they become firmly established as habits.

Finding the Power to Change



18

There is much truth in the saying, "We shall be individually, for time and eternity, what our habits make us."¹



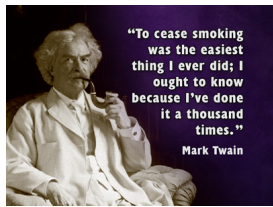
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Any habit in your life that is not totally under your voluntary control displays an addictive element. Bad habits and addictions often hold enormous control over us.



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Mark Twain, the famous American author, said it well in describing his battle with smoking,



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"To cease smoking was the easiest thing I ever did; I ought to know because I've done it a thousand times."



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We need more than an intellectual awareness; **we need a source of power.**

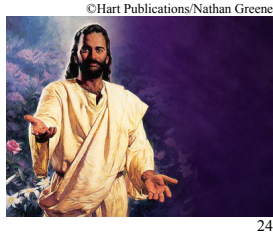


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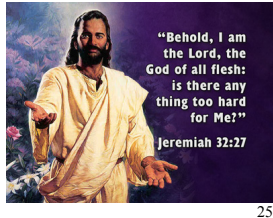
In dealing with bad habits and addictions, the ones who experience lasting success are usually those who approach these matters from a strong spiritual perspective.

With God there is no habit, no practice, and no addiction that is too difficult to overcome.

Finding the Power to Change



Whether it's tobacco, alcohol, poor eating habits, lack of exercise or whatever the habit, it makes no difference. You can have victory! God still has the power to transform lives.

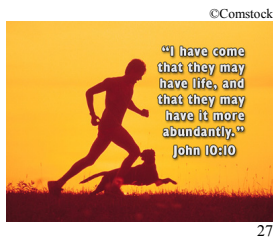


He declares, “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?” Jeremiah 32:27

But is the God of the universe really interested in our personal lifestyle habits?



Yes! The Bible tells us that our body is the temple of God, and that our health is important to Him. Our Creator has a deep interest in the quality of life of every man, woman and little child.



Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10, NKJV)

Are you craving to experience life more abundantly? Do you want freedom from the habits that bind you? Perhaps you even lack the desire to change. Whatever your situation, God is ready and willing to supply **both** the desire and the necessary strength to carry it out.



How should we expect God to work in our behalf?



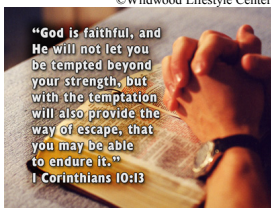
Many people who wish to conquer their bad habits mistakenly hope that by praying to God their temptations will simply go away.

However in most cases, rather than entirely removing the challenges and temptations we face...

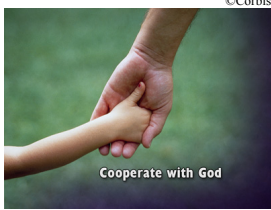
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...God strengthens and enables us to overcome them.



The Bible assures us that "God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." 1 Corinthians 10:13 (*RSV*)



With the promise of strength from above, our part is to cooperate with God to achieve our goals.

Here's what we can do.



Make a **decision** to change. Without the right use of the power of choice, we are sure to fail.



Make a clean break with the habit. This will dramatically increase your likelihood of success. In most cases, tapering off is much more difficult.



If you wanted your dog to have a short tail, would you cut off a little piece every day until its tail was the right length?

Finding the Power to Change



36

In a similar way, the reason many people never break free of their most ingrained habits is because of the erroneous belief of “moderation.” Whether it’s tobacco, alcohol, or eating unhealthy food, the method is the same,

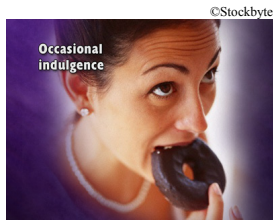


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...make a clean break.



A word of caution is in order to those who are addicted to alcohol, prescription medications, or illicit drugs. Severe withdrawal symptoms may occur, so seek medical help.



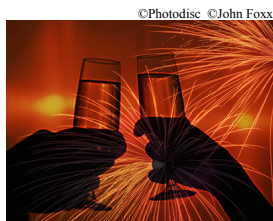
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The occasional indulgence of any habit will lead to defeat. In this way the desire is kept alive—and may even be increased. Occasional indulgence often leads to feelings of deprivation, and before long a person is usually back to their former lifestyle.



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Temperance, in its truest sense, can be defined as “**abstaining entirely** from that which is harmful, and using wisely that which is good.”



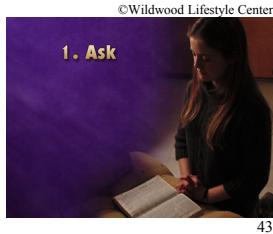
Many people approach issues of self-control like New Year’s resolutions, and most have exactly the same results—temporary success that leads to ultimate defeat and discouragement.

There is a better way. Temperance, or self-control, has its foundation in the power and will of God.

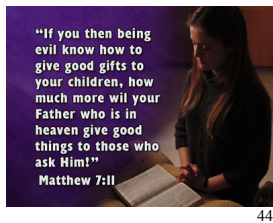
Finding the Power to Change



Would you like to “plug in” to this source of power? The scriptures give us a simple plan for victorious living.



The first step is to: **1. Ask**



The Bible promises, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who **ask** Him!” *Matthew 7:11 (NKJV)*



Step number 2. We must **believe** it is already done—



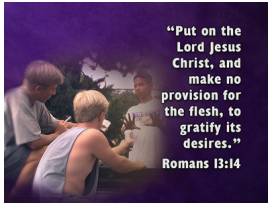
Jesus assures us, “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, **believe** that you receive them, and you will have them.” *Mark 11:24 (NKJV)*

God asks us not to rely on our feelings, but to have faith in His promises, believing that we’ve received the help we’ve asked for.



And **Number 3. Make no provision** to fail
The scriptures counsel us to

Finding the Power to Change



48

“...Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and **make no provision** for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” *Romans 13:14 (RSV)*

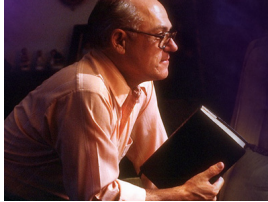
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49

For most people struggling to overcome an addictive habit, knowing that the object of their desire—such as a cigarette—is just around the corner, will dramatically lessen their ability to resist temptation.

©ADM



50

For lasting victory, we need to ask for God’s help, believe that we receive it, and determine to succeed, not making any provision to return to our former negative behavior.

©Brand X



51

The benefits and joy of the new improved lifestyle far outweigh the temporary pleasure of indulging in a harmful habit.

By making a conscious choice, and a consistent decided effort to change our lives for the better, we can reach the place where it will be easier to take the new route rather than the old.

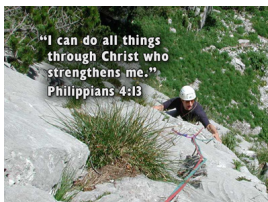
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52

Remember, old habits were not formed in a day and they do not die easily. We must persevere until the new lifestyle becomes automatic, and second nature. A new nature!

Empowered by God, we can say with full assurance,



53

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

¹ White, Ellen G., *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 452