

LifeGroup Study
UNSTUCK: Creating Good Habits that Stick
2022-01-16
Leader Notes

OVERVIEW:

Welcome to our LifeGroup study, Unstuck. This series is all about experiencing change in our lives. This week we'll focus on answering the very practical question: "How do I create new habits that actually stick?" For this study we'll look at the four laws of creating a good habit from James Clear's book, Atomic Habits. Then we'll dig into what the Bible teaches about the importance of diligence as we structure our habits around growing as followers of Jesus.

ICEBREAKER: That Was a Great Habit!

When I was in college I developed a regular habit of working out by lifting weights. Key to this were friends who agreed to meet with me at the gym so we could work-out together. That was a great habit! How about you? What activity or routine would you look back on and say – "That was a great habit!" **Share your story with your group.**

STUDY:

Today we'll begin our study with a look at what James Clear, author of Atomic Habits, calls the **four laws** of creating a good habit.

- **As a group, read through the two lists of laws.**
- **What do you like about these laws? What questions do you have about them?**

The Four Laws of Creating a Good Habit

1. How can I make it obvious?
Tip: Create a visual cue to encourage your habit.
Example: If the habit you want to create is reading Scripture each day, put your Bible or reading plan in a place where you will see it.
2. How can I make it attractive?
Tip: Build in a reward for engaging in your new habit.
Example: As I read Scripture, enjoy a great cup of coffee or tea.
3. How can I make it easy?
Tip: Repetition is key. The more you practice your habit, the easier it can become.
Example: Choose a reading plan on YouVersion that will engage you for a month.
Read each day for 30 days and note how you progress. <https://www.youversion.com/>

4. How can I make it satisfying?

Tip: To get a habit to stick you need to feel immediately successful, even in a small way.

Example: The YouVersion reading completion check-mark system is a simple but satisfying way to mark your progress.

Inverting the Four Laws to Break a Bad Habit

1. How can I make it invisible?

Tip: Reduce exposure. Remove the cue for your bad habit.

Example: If notifications (cue) on your phone distract you from your habit, turn them off.

2. How can I make it unattractive?

Tip: Reframe your mind-set. Highlight the benefits of avoiding the bad habit.

Example: If the Facebook logo triggers you to distract yourself, when you see the Facebook logo, think – “That will deter me. If I avoid it I’ll have more time and focus for my good habit.”

3. How can I make it difficult?

Tip: Increase the number of steps between you and your bad habit.

Example: Sign out of Facebook so you have to sign in to view it.

4. How can I make it unsatisfying?

Tip: Get an accountability partner who you let know if you engage the bad habit.

Example: Track your time on Facebook week to week and send to your accountability partner.

Exercise: Making it Real (10 minutes)

Connect together with one other person in your group. Brainstorm how you can apply the 4 laws to creating an effective system for yourself for starting or stopping a habit.

- **Share with each other one thing you want to change. Apply the four laws.**

LEADER NOTE: I can be helpful to give some practical examples here (exercise, bible reading, healthy eating, better sleep schedule). Pair men with men and women with women. If you are using Zoom, try utilizing the breakout rooms for this part of your meeting.

Bible Study – Diligence

For our Bible study time let’s do a study on the word *diligence*. Diligence in the Bible is seen as careful and persistent work or effort. It is persevering application of what we know to be good. Paying attention to how our brains work and researching about habits makes us more wise and is a form of diligence.

“Diligent people get the job done. They don’t quit until they have given it their all.”

- **Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?**

i. READ: Proverbs 6:6-11

- **What lessons can we learn here about the rewards of diligence?**
- **What lessons can we learn about the pitfalls of laziness?**

LEADER NOTE: This Proverb gives us a powerful contrast of diligence and laziness. The diligent are like ants, labouring hard in the summer (in the time of opportunity) and gathering food for winter (preparing for the future). The lazy person, by contrast, lets the time of opportunity pass by. They are asleep (vs. 9-10) which means they miss out on the opportunity to work and reap a future reward.

ii. READ: Proverbs 10:4

“Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth.”

- **What practical example can you point to of how “diligent hands bring wealth”?**

LEADER NOTE: As your group looks at these proverbs, keep in mind these are general truths. Sometimes lazy people get rich and sometime hard workers remain poor. The general truth here is that diligence brings reward. Working hard in school or on the job, for example, generally pays off with a wealth of opportunities and/or material earnings.

iii. READ: Proverbs 13:4

“A sluggard’s appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.”

- “ ... the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.” **How do you see this tying in with James Clear’s law of developing a good habit – “Make it satisfying.”?**

LEADER NOTE: There is satisfaction in a job well done. There is a reward in knowing you’ve put in the effort and have a tangible result.

The Importance of Spiritual Diligence

The most important area of our lives to apply diligence is in our walk with God. Let’s explore how diligence will help us in our quest to follow Jesus.

iv. READ: Proverbs 4:23

“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.” NASB

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” NIV

- **What does it mean to “guard your heart”? Why is this important “above all else”?**

LEADER NOTE: In this Proverb, the heart is our inner person, the source of our desires and choices that form who we become. To guard our heart is to keep watch over what we allow to influence our thoughts and decisions. It is to put a wall of protection around our heart, guarding ourselves from evil influences that can taint our heart. This is of prime importance because our thoughts and our choices directly influence our ability to follow Jesus.

- v. READ: 1 Timothy 4:15

“Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.”

- In this instruction to Timothy, “be diligent in these matters” the Apostle Paul refers back to an earlier verse – “train yourself to be godly.” (vs. 7) **What role might training have in following Jesus?**

LEADER NOTE: Following Jesus is not about *trying* but *training*. Trying is about my own effort. Training is allowing God to work through me. Trying means I may quit if I have a setback. Training means I keep going even if I fall down along the way. Training is diligence, the intentional, regular habits I practice in my life that God uses to move me forward in my walk with Jesus.

- vi. READ: Mark 12:30-31

When asked what the most important commandment is, Jesus said this –

³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.^[a] ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[b] There is no commandment greater than these.”

When it comes to our habits, the most important ones we can pursue are habits that help us love God and love people. **What are some habits that can help you grow strong in these areas?**

LEADER NOTE: There are some keystone habits that can help us love God and love people. These are spiritual disciplines like worship and reading and thinking about the Bible. There is the habit of prayer. The habit of building friendships with other followers of Jesus is also key.

Ask your group members to brainstorm the habits they have seen beneficial to growing their love for God and for others.

EXPERIENCE GOD

A Prayer for our Habits.

Here's a prayer you can pray together as a group about your habits. Have someone in your group read this prayer to the group, then invite everyone to read it out loud together.

“Lord, we confess that we spend much of our day thoughtlessly consuming the things around us. Our habits often lack intention and cause us to live distracted, self-focused lives. Would you bring to our attention the unhealthy ways we spend our time, energy, thoughts, talents, and money? Show us old habits to turn away from and new habits to practice. Shape us by your Spirit into more merciful people who love you and neighbor with greater intention.”

Source: Christianity Today: Ten Prayers for the New Year

PRAYER

This week let's pray for our local CR (Celebrate Recovery) ministry.

- Please pray for Step Study participants, as they prepare to start their inventory process, and for the new participant that they would have the courage to return and begin their recovery journey.
- Please pray for more leaders for our Open Share Groups & Life's Healing Choices in the Winter