



The traditional purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer through prayer, penance, repentance of sins, almsgiving, atonement and self-denial. The period of 40 days represents the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness being tempted of Satan, while emptying himself to prepare for His earthly ministry. As we move through these 40 days, we consider what we might set aside in keeping with the example of Jesus. As we make these discoveries, let us not just give them up for Lent, but give them up for Christ.

Week 2. **Life Controlling Habits**

Galatians 5:1, 2 Peter 2:19

Gal. 5:1 *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then and so not let yourself be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."*

This week we will look at how to identify and break free from life controlling habits.

The apostle Peter writes:

2 Peter 2:19 *"For a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him (NIV), or "For a man is a slave to whatever controls him." (LB)*

When we talk about Life Controlling Habits, most think of those addicted to drugs, alcohol, pornography, but 2 Peter goes so much further than that and many who sit in this room today need to break free from something. Peter says, "You are a slave to whatever has mastered you."

Some are a slave to work, some to jealousy, gossip, and some are a slave to other people's opinions.

1. How Do We Identify A Negative Habit?

A negative life controlling habit is something you find yourself doing that is destructive either physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally or spiritually. Or you consistently do something you wish you wouldn't do, but find yourself doing it any way.

Listen to Paul's words found in **Romans 7:15**

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." (NIV)

The apostle Paul understood his dilemma; after all he had good intentions. You must understand good people are bound by bad habits.

Some reason in our minds, if I admit we have a habit then we are less than spiritual. Denial is not the way to deal with the problem.

Be honest, look at your life and like Paul, evaluate the things you find yourself doing that you hate. Also, you may go to God and ask him to reveal those things that you do which stand in the way. Then take a moment and write down the habits in your life that you want to see victory in.

2. Why Are Habits Powerful?

They slowly bind you; life controlling habits are formed at a snail's pace almost unnoticeable. Usually the person doesn't even know they have formed a habit in their life. And if someone asks, they say, "This isn't a problem." But ask yourself,

How many marriages have been lost to habits?

How many families have been divided because of habits?

How many jobs lost, relationships destroyed, minds wasted because of habits?

Habits big or small are like a cable. Each day we do something in a pattern, we intertwine one thread with another. As the threads are woven together a cable is formed. On any day, the threads we add were too small to be noticed. But, many threads have been woven in; we find that together they have become an unbreakable cable.

3. How Can You Come Clean?

How can you break free from the grip of a bad habit in your life, from the smallest to the largest? First you must understand what God's word says in:

1 Cor. 10:13

"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."

A. Admit you have a problem.

Everything starts with confession, **1 John 1:9** say's;

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

True healing starts with confession. Many people give in to a state of denial, they never admit they have a problem therefore they never break free. Recognizing you are bound and have a problem is the first step in breaking free.

However, God tells us what is absolutely essential for your healing. We are healed by admitting our faults to one another.

Why do I need to tell another person? Why can't I just admit it to God? Why don't I just prey about it, make a list and talk to God about it? Why do I need to tell another person?

The apostle James understood the WHY'S.

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

We must recognize that the root of our problem is relational. We lie to each other. We deceive each other. We're dishonest with each other. We wear masks. We pretend we have it all together. But we don't, and we deny our true feelings, and we play games. We end up living with shame and it makes us insecure. If they really knew to truth about me, they wouldn't love me.

B. Depend on God's power to combat bad habits.

Philippians 4:13

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Isaiah 41:10

So 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.

When it comes to being set free from habits that bind, Jesus can do more in a moment than anyone else can do in a life time.

C. Bad Habits must be replaces by good ones.

Numbers 33:51-53

"Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. Destroy all their carved images and their cast idols, and demolish all their high places. Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess.'"

Numbers 33:55-56

"But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live. And then I will do to you what I plan to do to them."

Like the Israelites moving into the promise land, we can destroy the wickedness in our life, or we can settle down and live with it. To move in and possess the new life, we must drive out the sinful thoughts and practices to make room for the new.

4. New Habits To Replace The Bad Ones

Spend time in God's word:

Hebrews 4:12

For 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.

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 119:165

Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.