

TEACHING GUIDE

Creatures Of Habit

OUTREACH

SERIES OUTLINE

Creatures Of Habit

Write Up: We are all creatures of habit. Each of us has a set of routines which can be helpful, but we can also easily get stuck in ruts that can set us back. The formation of these patterns often happens without us really knowing it. We must be careful: What we believe determines what we do, and what we do determines who we become. Are you becoming the kind of person you want to be? We are creatures of habit... let's choose wisely.

Week 1: Poison vs. Promises

Scripture: Psalm 19:7-14 // Psalm 119:97

Write Up: Habits are a three-step process: cue, routine and reward. In order to change a bad habit, we must replace it with a better routine. Whether it is improving our diet or beginning to exercise, we have to stay consistent in order to see progress. Many of us are in the habit of listening to negative input from friends, family, social media and culture. To reorient ourselves, we should rely on spiritual truths instead. The Bible offers truth that can help our lives. Making studying scripture a steady habit can help us determine the poisonous lies that we tell ourselves. It's our choice to listen.

Think: The Bible is trustworthy and true. I can change a habit of negative talk to a habit of scripture memory.

Feel: The Bible tells me what is true about me, not the world.

Do: Pinpoint some poisons I am allowing into your mind right now. Create a habit of reading the Bible every day and commit to memory passages that make me healthier.

Week 2: Stuff vs. Simplicity

Scripture: Philippians 4:11-13 // Matthew 6:25-27

Write Up: We have a tendency to be so over stimulated with stuff and material things that we become addicted to it. There is health in stepping away and finding contentment as a habit. Developing a habit of gratitude and thankfulness makes our hearts healthy and strong.

Think: My life is not made up of an abundance of possessions.

Feel: I don't need material things to be happy and content.

Do: Simplify my life and focus on the things that matter most by developing a habit of gratitude.

Week 3: Worry vs. Worship

Scripture: Luke 10:38-42

Write Up: We live in a world that offers us plenty to be worried and worked up about. It is easy to develop habits that keep us from putting God first. Rather than allowing our hearts to be distracted, we can choose a routine of worship. Worship is when we give our time, attention, energy and affection toward God. This habit allows us to find peace in His presence.

Think: I can trust God with all of the worries of this life.

Feel: I don't need to feel the pressure to fix everything around me. That is God's job.

Do: Determine areas in my weekly routine where I can rest in God's love rather than trying to earn it. Create good habits of worship through song, service and silence.

Week 4: Conceal vs. Confess

Scripture: Luke 18:10-13

Write Up: One of the keys to a vibrant Christian faith is confession. Having a sober self-assessment and being willing to be open and honest about what needs to be forgiven is a healthy practice. Rather than concealing our mistakes, let's openly surrender them privately to God or publicly with someone we trust. This is an act that can be awkward at first, but can become a regular practice as time goes on. A habit of confession keeps us humble and guards us from falling into sin that holds us back.

Think: I cannot hide anything from God. He knows everything, so I don't need to hold it in.

Feel: I am in need of the forgiveness of God and His mercy every day.

Do: What are some things that I need to confess today? Regularly evaluate my life and privately confess my shortcomings to Jesus. Receive forgiveness and live with confidence in His love.

SERMON WEEK 1

Creatures Of Habit: Week 1

Poison Vs. Promises

Scripture: Romans 12:2 // Psalm 19:7-14 // Psalm 119:97

Write Up: Habits are a three-step process: cue, routine, and reward. In order to change a bad habit, we must replace it with a better routine. Whether it is improving our diet or beginning to exercise, we need to stay consistent to see progress. Many of us are in the habit of listening to negative input from friends, family, social media, or culture. To reorient ourselves, we should rely on spiritual truths instead. The Bible offers truth that can help our lives. Making the study of scripture a steady habit can help us identify the poisonous lies that we tell ourselves. It's our choice to listen.

Think: The Bible is trustworthy and true. I can change a habit of negative talk to a habit of scripture memory.

Feel: The Bible tells me what is true about me. The world does not.

Do: Pinpoint the poisons I am allowing into my mind right now. Create a habit of reading the Bible every day and commit to memorizing passages that make me healthier.

Sermon:

I want to welcome you to church today. I am so glad to be able to open up God's Word together as we allow Him to teach us something new. You came to church on the perfect day because we are starting a brand-new sermon series called *Creatures Of Habit*. Many of us find ourselves in a bit of a rut from time to time. We repeatedly make the same decisions that offer us the same results. We are all creatures of habit. God designed us that way. However, it is important to evaluate the routines we have developed and ask whether they are making us the people God wants us to be. Throughout this series I will be talking a lot about habits and much of what I've learned comes from two different sources: James Clear's book *Atomic Habits* and Charles Duhigg's book *The Power of Habit*.

I believe that in the Bible, God offers us new ways of living, new habits, that can help us live healthier lives that honor God and honor others.

God has created each of us as amazingly complex beings who are able to accomplish extraordinary things. Author James Clear, in his book *Atomic Habits*, explains that inside of our brains there are two areas: the basal ganglia and the brain stem. These are the regions where habits and routines reside. These locations in the brain are

closely connected to emotions, memories, and pattern recognition. However, decisions and choices are made in a completely different area of your brain called the prefrontal cortex. When the same decision is made over and over again, a groove in your brain develops and those decisions move from the prefrontal cortex to your basal ganglia. The decision-making area of your brain shuts down and your brain goes into automatic mode.

This is why many of us brush our teeth in the morning and at night... hopefully. It's why we crave ice cream after dinner. Why we hit the snooze button 14 times when it is time to wake up. Why we chew our fingernails when we get nervous.

These things are called habits. We don't even think about them, they just happen. (*Consider creating a graphic to share on the screen that represents the three-part loop described below.*)

Clear introduces the cyclical nature of our habits. It can be boiled down to every habit having a three-step process. There is a **trigger or cue**. Something begins the habit loop. You are hungry, bored, frustrated, sad, or tired. Someone insults you, or cuts you off in traffic. Someone shares some juicy gossip. That leads to a **response**. The response is our decision. We eat too much. We take part in the gossip. We binge watch Netflix. We self-soothe with a substance. This then results in an **outcome**. We feel guilty. We feel too full. We put someone else down to lift ourselves up. The outcome helps us determine whether or not we make that decision again. The key to changing our habits and outcomes is changing our response. With God's help, we can break the loop and start fresh. It all comes down to intentional living and the choices we make.

Charles Duhigg, in his book, *The Power Of Habit*, says:

"The difference between who you are and who you want to be is what you do."

Many of us feel like the person we are right now is not the person we want to be. There is a sense that God wants more for our lives than we currently are experiencing. We have to recognize that our actions and habits originate in our minds.

POINT #1 – A RENEWED MIND LEADS TO NEW HABITS

In the book of Romans, Paul is addressing the early church that was developing in one of the most hostile and difficult areas. These early Christians were living under Roman rule. They were called to live "set apart" as Christians and followers of God, making godly decisions by saying yes to the things they should say yes to and no to the things they should say no to.

Sound familiar?

So, in Chapter 12 Paul is addressing our patterns of living. The choices that we are making.

READ Romans 12:2

Paul mentions something key in this verse. He talks about patterns or habits. If we are going to live lives set apart for Christ, then we have to develop patterns and habits that are different from the world. In order to do this, we have to renew our minds. We must think differently. When we do this, Paul says that we will be able to test and approve what God's will is for our lives. We must develop a sober mind that knows and believes what is true so that we won't act upon information that is misleading or false.

It's really tough these days to discern what is true and what is false. Many of us have developed a pattern of listening to worldly voices. These voices shape the way we think about ourselves. They shape the way we spend our time. They shape the things we value. They often shape the bad habits that we get stuck in. Our minds are infiltrated and our lives follow suit. These lies are like a poison to our soul and we must stop taking them in.

STORY: Years ago, when the western U.S. was being settled, roads were often just wagon tracks. After hundreds of wagons passed the same way, these tracks became deep ruts and grooves in the earth. These rough trails posed serious problems for those who journeyed on them. On one of these winding paths was posted a sign which read: "Avoid this rut or you'll be in it for the next 25 miles!"

Some of us this morning are stuck in a rut. A pattern and habit because of something that someone said to you years ago. "You are a failure." "You are unlovable." "You won't amount to anything." "God doesn't love you."

Whether it was handed to us from friends and family or from the culture around us, we run the risk of never hearing the truth: "You are loved by God." "You are HIS child." "It wasn't your fault". We may need to renew our minds by replacing the old voices and old information with new ones.

POINT #2 – THE BIBLE IS THE SOURCE OF TRUTH

The way to combat a habit of believing lies is embracing a habit of trusting truth. As people of God we believe that the Bible is the source of all truth and authority for our lives -it is the living Word of God. The Psalmist writes about this in Psalm 19.

READ Psalm 19:7-14

(Order the full kit to see the rest of the sermon – visit Outreach.com)