

Develop Great Habits

Study Guide for Small Group Discussion and Personal Application
Lynn Haven UMC – January 5, 2020 – Pastor Craig Carter
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Introduction:

Exercise daily in God — no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever. You can count on this. Take it to heart. This is why we've thrown ourselves into this venture so totally. We're banking on the living God, Savior of all men and women, especially believers.” (1 Timothy 4:7b-10 MSG)

Can you identify with the term “spiritual flabbiness” used by Eugene Peterson in his modern paraphrase of Paul’s first letter to his young friend, Timothy?

The solution is to exercise daily in God by living a disciplined spiritual life. And like an athlete in training, we are to “throw ourselves totally into the venture.”

Great Christians don’t become great in God’s eyes by accident or wishful thinking. Great Christians develop great habits that enable them to reach the target of becoming like Christ.

Digging Deeper

What are the habits that lead to spiritual greatness? There are many of them – they are what are commonly referred to as the spiritual disciplines. A few of the most basic ones are: **Give**, **Pray** and **Study**. Think of it like a spiritual GPS system.

A GPS device is useful because it shows your current position in relation to where you want to be and then gives you a path to follow. In a similar way, great habits enable us to get to where we want to go – spiritual greatness. When put into practice on a regular, consistent basis they promote spiritual growth.

What the great philosopher, Aristotle, once said of life in general applies to the spiritual realm: “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.” The person you and I will be in the future will be determined by the habits we practice today. Do we want to be fit or flabby? Healthy or sick? Great or merely good Christians?

Discuss/Share:

- What’s a habit you need to break and a habit you need to start?

- In his sermon, Pastor Craig stated, “In general, when in doubt, get it out (of your life). More specifically: ask God and He’ll let you know what needs to go.” Have you asked God to show you what he wants you to get out of your life?
- Is there anything that is getting in the way of your relationship with the Lord and preventing you from becoming the person He wants you to be? What habits do you have that are technically “good” but still may be getting in the way of your spiritual greatness?
- What great habits do you have (or aspire to have) related to sharing your time, talents and treasures?
- What strategies or disciplines have you found to be effective in your prayer life?
- What are your Bible study habits like? Could they be called “great?” Good? Fair? Poor? Non-existent?
- J.D. Walt (former Dean of the Chapel at Asbury Theological Seminary and current director of their publishing arm, Seedbed), in his January 1st devotional suggested that the two most important words of the day are the first and last. Then he asks, “Who gets the first and last word in your typical day?” Are the words of God the first and last word each day in your life? If not, how can they become that for you?

Conclusion:

We have at our disposal a Spiritual GPS System that can guide us toward greatness because great Christians develop great habits in terms of giving, prayer, and study. In order for that to happen, some of us need to get rid of some misguided habits. The 16th Century Dutch theologian, Erasmus, described it this way: “A nail is driven out by another nail. Habit is overcome by habit.”

To assist you in this process we suggest you engage in a little exercise: Take a notecard or sheet of paper and write down the habit(s) you need to break and the habit(s) you need to develop. Place it somewhere where you will see it every day.

It’s commonly held that it takes about 21 days to develop a habit. So over the next three weeks, with God’s help, attempt to break a habit and develop another one. We’ll be praying for you along the way.