

Episode 2-4: Stuck in Bad Habits

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Transcript:

Janet: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Alexandra: I just want to make it as totally simple and no-brainer as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy. Typically, I'll be joined by either Jocelyn or Alexandra, but for our first full episode listen as all three of us discuss the topic of joy.

Janet: Welcome back. Jocelyn and I are here once again. And I am excited that Jocelyn is going to lead us in a conversation that I'm going to guess everyone can relate to. I know I can. Jocelyn, what am I supposed to do when I have this bad habit, and I can't seem to change?

Jocelyn: We're going to talk about that today. One of the things that both you and I love being involved in is biblical counseling. We kind of mention that topic as a side note, from time to time. In reality, of all the things that either of us do, probably what we invest in weekly, biblical counseling probably takes up a big portion of our time and energy.

Janet: It's true. It does. And it's a privilege. But any anyone that I'm meeting with this subject is going to apply.

Jocelyn: Yup. So both of us are ACBC certified biblical counselors. Both of us have a fair bit of experience serving people who in some way need help knowing what to do to solve problems, using the Bible as our source of truth. Just to set the stage for someone who may have never participated in biblical counseling before let's talk about this process a little bit.

Janet: Yeah. So generally somebody realizes that they would be helped by some kind of more formal kind of discipleship. If they're not part of our church, they would contact our church's biblical counseling ministry, fill out some paperwork. That gives me a lot of information on who they are and what's going on and just kind of what help they want.

Jocelyn: Sure. Then eventually the secretary sorts through the applications and makes a counselor match with the applicant, hoping that it's going to be a good relational fit. And then we get a first time scheduled to sit down and talk.

Janet: Which that first session, we don't know each other. So we're now sitting across from each other, trying to get to know each other. I really want to just learn what's going on and not make assumptions based on what I read. So there's just a couple of things we're going to try to work through on that first session. The biggest thing is, I really want to hear their story. I call it like a Reader's Digest version of their life. Like, how did we get here? What's going on? What do they really need help from? Where are they spiritually? And, do they need to understand the word of God, or do they need help applying it?

Jocelyn: So, how often have you ever had someone sit down across from you for counseling and say something along the lines of, I'm stuck. I can't figure out. I don't know how to. It keeps happening. I need help. I want to change, but I don't know how.

Janet: Oh, and I've tried everything else. I've been to all the other counselors that cost a lot of money. So then I thought I'd try here. Absolutely.

Jocelyn: It seems to be a common theme. So a lot of times people end up seeking help from a counselor because they really, really want things to be different, but they really, really don't know how to make changes. Especially, what I find is, changes that will stick.

Janet: Yeah. Because a lot of times it'll be, I got better for a while and now I'm right back where I was.

Jocelyn: Yeah. I can stop anything for a day or two or start something new for a week. But it's the long-term changes that are hard, especially when you're really stuck in a habit that you don't understand. And most people who are stuck in harmful habits, don't realize that a lot actually goes into our behaviors. They don't just happen randomly. The things that we do externally are always the product of our internal ideas. And today we're going to talk about the good news that you really can change habits, if you're able to use God's word to evaluate your beliefs, and what

you think about, and what your perspectives are on things, and your behaviors. So, Janet, when you think about the word habit, what comes to mind?

Janet: I think about things that I do without thinking, like driving the car and my husband would probably like me to think more. But, I do a lot of that without thinking. Getting dressed, brushing my teeth. The things that I've done so much I do it without any thought.

Jocelyn: Yeah. I like to think of a habit as an acquired behavior pattern that I regularly follow until it becomes nearly involuntary. So like the keyword for me is involuntary. I've done that thing so often that it doesn't require me to think about it at all. It's also like a dominant or a regular disposition or a tendency. And I like the word tendency. Cause it helps you to think like, okay, so in a situation like this, I tend to do that. So what are some examples of habits that come to your mind that you might've seen in counseling? And people come because they want to change, but they just really don't know how?

Janet: I think a lot of times there'll be a habit of an initial angry response. Like they'll say to me, I hate that, and I ask forgiveness afterwards, but I don't know how to stop that initial I'm just mad.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Just comes right out of my mouth. I've seen lots and lots of people who struggle with anxiety. I used to struggle with anxiety, so I work with a lot of people who struggle with that too. So like, I tend to be an anxious thinker or I tend to worry first. I tend to be fearful in the way that I think.

Janet: Yeah. Like for me personally, I tend to have a very critical spirit. So what are some habits? If I see something I can easily without giving it any thought be now thinking, they could do that differently. They could do that better. This shouldn't be like that. That just is habitual for me.

Jocelyn: I used to work at several different treatment centers and so a lot of the people that I served in the past needed help changing the use of addicting substances. So they would use alcohol, prescription drugs, illegal drugs, something that did a chemical response inside of their body. And they got addicted to what happened with that chemical that they were using.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: And then some of the other things that people might come to counseling for, like habits that they want to change, are like things like hurting themselves or cutting, stealing without thinking, lying, without thinking, cheating, all sorts of big life dominating habits.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And they're hard to know how to change. So I used to work at Vision of Hope before I stayed home to focus on raising our kids. And I worked with lots of young ladies who were

caught in some super gnarly habits, with some difficult consequences, and often seemed almost impossible for them to figure out, or how to understand their habits. And by the time someone comes to a place like Vision of Hope, she's been living in those habits so long, she almost can't even remember life before them.

Janet: And it can feel so hopeless cause it's like, I don't even try to do this. This is me. It's almost now it's who I am. But if you really could take some time to dissect the situation, you know, sometimes, and I would say most of the time, you might need a little help, but you can walk backwards and go, oh, I see how that started. I see where that came from.

Jocelyn: Totally. Our actions do not occur randomly. And that's such an important thing for us to think about in this context. They're the natural results of our beliefs and our presuppositions. And if that's true, then what we believe and think about really, really makes a difference, because our internal ideas lead to external choices. So the beliefs that I presume to be true affect my perspective on life, they direct the choices I make. And those choices develop into habits that I don't have to think about in order to engage in. And if I repeat them over time, it creates a heritage that I pass on to the next generation, which I'm passionate about passing on a good heritage. The roots of our belief system, and the way we view the world, results in the fruit of our life, our actions, our behaviors. So our worldview develops over a really long period of time, and from lots of different sources. And one of the things to realize is most of the time, we're not even aware of that. We're not aware where our beliefs are coming into our head from. So our society has a particular worldview within societies. Individuals are going to have different worldviews. But our worldview is formed by several things. And it's important to think about this. Our worldview is formed by how we're taught religiously, by the traditions, either of our culture, of our family or even of our church community, our worldview is formed by history and our understanding of it, and things like popular trends. So our parents, our religion, or our faith, our school, the media, even the arts, they're influencing our view of the world and our place in it. And so, if we're going to think about this in the context of habits, what comes out of our worldview? It's important to realize that our worldview is made up of a couple of things, and we're going to be talking about these in more detail today. First of all, it's what we believe. So what do I think is a true thing? It's also comprised of how I think, how I see the world. And those things are going to lead me to do some behaviors that could seem totally just involuntary. Like I don't know where they came from. They just came.

Janet: Right. I don't know why I did that.

Jocelyn: Actually, our worldview determines how I act and those actions result in habits over time. So we can take steps backward to figure out why we're doing the things that we're doing. What we were thinking about. How we see the world. And what we believe.

Janet: And I think that's important because so far as you say all that, we don't even always realize all of the things that are impacting us. And so that in itself can feel hopeless. If I don't even know

what I believe. If I don't even know what's been impacting me, how can I then set myself up for success?

Jocelyn: Well, think about this, helpful fruitful habits. So habits that result in good stuff, they're going to develop out of a godly worldview of life. And that's going to be focused on the gospel. So God's goals for human life-- to visibly represent the invisible creator God-- worshiping him and glorifying him by the way we enjoy our relationship with him, and the overflow of that blessing into the relationships around us. I'm going to have that kind of a life if I'm focused on the gospel. So we're going to start first by thinking, what is a biblical worldview. And then we're going to compare that with an unbiblical worldview. So, first of all, let's talk about our beliefs. In a biblical worldview, we believe in a way that is worshipful. I was created by and for God to worship and enjoy him. I was created to represent him and to bring his blessing into the world around me. We've talked a lot about this in our purpose episodes. I encourage you to go back and listen to that, if that's something that you've not listened to yet. Deuteronomy 30: 20 says that God wants my entire life to be about him. He wants me to love him, to obey him, to hold him close. He wants me to be devoted to him. So the second part of a biblical worldview is our thoughts. So when I'm thinking I'm devoted to thinking about truth.

Janet: So I have to think what God says.

Jocelyn: Exactly. As God is my creator, I'm accountable to him. He teaches us, so this is a true thing. And I am supposed to think, in my life, the things that God has said are true. So I'm not just allowed to think whatever I want. I'm not allowed to ponder whatever I want. I'm supposed to not walk the way that everyone else does with futile thoughts and futile minds. Ephesians 4: 17 says I'm supposed to walk in a different way.

Janet: And I love that because, in conversations, it's easy to say, I know God says this, but. I know he says this, but I just, I know-- it's like, if you know God says it, just stop there.

Jocelyn: That is where you land.

Janet: You don't get the right to say, but I feel like this. And now you are feeding your own worldview something different than God's.

Jocelyn: Right. Yeah. Ephesians 4: 21 has this phrase in it that I just absolutely love. The phrase is, the truth is in Jesus. I love that phrase. It's obviously a phrase taken out of the context of these bigger verses, but it's saying like, Hey, if you're in Christ, you don't get to decide for yourself what is true. You know what is true because Jesus tells us what is true. And when you look in the scriptures, that's the point of looking in the scripture is to understand what God has said is right and good. And then to quickly comply living out that way. 2 Corinthians 10: 3 - 5 is a passage that I really use a lot. We talked about that in the thinking and theology episode, which I

Janet: Yes. So please go back to that.

Jocelyn: encourage you to listen to that. The third part of a biblical worldview is seeing. And it's basically like, how do I respond to this world around me? And if I'm thinking biblically, I remember this, this is God's world.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: He is the king. I'm living in this world for him. He created me for him. And so I don't just get to look at this world and say, ah, this is my place to make a mark. No, I was made to live for Jesus. So Psalm 24: 1 says the earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world and those who live in it. And I've really been thinking a lot about Psalm one and two lately. I love how Psalm two ends. So Psalm one is like, delight yourself in the word. Let it guide your thoughts. Don't follow after people who don't. And then Psalm two is what's up with these people who look at God and say, we don't have to answer to you. And God is up in heaven and laughs at them. And he says, I am the world's creator. I'm the one who dreamed this whole thing up. So yes, you do have to answer to me. And in the end it lands on like kiss the son that he may not be angry and you perish on the way, for his wrath may be kindled quickly, but how blessed are all who take refuge in him. So when I look at this world, I don't look at it as a place where I get to create myself. I get to make a mark. I look at this world as, it is God's and he created me for him.

Janet: Because it flows from, I believe God is the creator. And therefore, I think thoughts consistent with that. So I'm going to respond with, then I need to live consistent with that.

Jocelyn: Exactly. And so when I think about behaving in a biblical worldview, I'm thinking restraint. My body and my behaviors are a tool that are used to enjoy God and bring his blessing to the world. I don't just live like an instinctual animal. So although the curse of sin affects my experience here, I am still useful on earth, but I'm also really anxiously waiting for the time that I get to be in my permanent, heavenly home. So I'm not just ignoring the fact that I have a body that's cursed by sin or living in a world, that's cursed by sin, but I also don't make this my whole ambition. I don't try to build a kingdom for myself here, and refine my body to its ultimate purpose here on earth. I have bigger things that I'm living for. And so because of that, I use my body to enjoy God and bring his blessing into the world. And I understand at the same time, that like 2 Corinthians 3: 18 says that this jar of clay contains the amazing light of Jesus Christ. He flung his glory into my body.

Janet: Isn't that-- It's so amazing.

Jocelyn: It's so cool.

Janet: I know.

Jocelyn: But at the same time, second Corinthians also says that this treasure is contained in an earthly vessel. It's crumbly. It's falling apart. It's not going to last forever. But it's still useful. 2 Corinthians 5: 14 and 15 says, for the love of Christ controls me. Having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died, and he died for all so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose on their behalf. And so that leads quickly into verses 20 and 21 that says that's why we're ambassadors for Christ as though God is making an appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. So yes, my body is weak, but it is still useful. And I can do a lot of things under the power of the Holy Spirit to promote God's kingdom using this body. So here's how I have to think about habits. Habits are going to form to make it as easy as possible to fulfill this goal, if I'm thinking biblically. So Romans six tells me this, Romans six says you are prone to habits. If you do something long enough, you're going to do it without thinking. And so because that's true, I am going to be extremely careful what I expose myself to. Because if I keep on doing something long enough, it's going to just be something that I do without thinking about. So I don't want to expose myself to things that will make me their slave. Like first Corinthians nine talks about, I strictly discipline my body and I make it my slave so that after I've preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Janet: So I think that's important to just stop and say, okay, Romans six is telling us our bodies are designed to be habituated.

Jocelyn: And that's a good thing.

Janet: It is a good thing, but I've gotta be very careful because you said earlier, the habits are going to make it as easy as possible for me to fulfill this goal. Well, they'll make it as easy as possible for me to fulfill a wrong goal too,

Jocelyn: Exactly.

Janet: if I build them that way. So I've got to be careful what I present myself to.

Jocelyn: Right. And Romans six tells us that basically you're taking the members of your body or the parts of your body and you're presenting it to something to obey. And so if I present my mouth to lying, then I am going to probably build the habit of lying without even thinking about it in the future. So because of that, I'm going to really be a thoughtful person about what I allow my eyes to see, or what I allow my ears to listen to. Because if I present my body to that enough, it will take me over and it will make me its slave. I do not want to be a slave to sin.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: I want to be a slave to things that are right and true and good.

Janet: So on a practical level, that means when I'm tempted to lie, exaggerate, not be quite accurate on purpose. I get, we're not always accurate because we're finite.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Not accurate on purpose. And it's only a little thing. If I understand this principle, I know it can easily become a habit and a big thing. And so I'm going to be very careful.

Jocelyn: Very tough on myself because it's not just a little oopsy, it's a decision, and a decision that will lead down a path. So the reason that we care about biblical habits is because we're creating a culture that's going to be a heritage for future generations. I love this verse. I actually have this as a plaque on my wall, and I have my daughter's graduation picture hung underneath it. Let me read it to you from Isaiah 54, Isaiah 54: 13 says all your sons will be taught by the Lord and the wellbeing of your sons will be great. Isn't that so cool? I want my children to have a lot of wellbeing. I want them to get that by being taught by the Lord. And so a biblical worldview says, I was created by a God for a God. I was created by God for God. And I live in his world for him. And so I don't just get to think whatever I want is true. There are things that are true and I get to align myself with that. And then I understand I'm prone to habit. So I want to continue offering myself to truth over and over, because I want righteous habits to form. And I want to fight against ungodly habits because I'm building a heritage that future generations are going to be able to look at and understand.

Janet: And I just want to stop there because there are many listening, myself included, that would say, well, then it's too late. Because my children are grown and not all of my habits were godly. But God is in the business of breaking generational chains like that. And there is always hope.

Jocelyn: Always hope.

Janet: When you do change that habit, your children get to see that too.

Jocelyn: That's what I was just going

Janet: What a gift.

Jocelyn: Yeah, I was just going to say. If you have the evidence of change, it's going to be so noticeable. If you used to live a certain way, and now you're changing your lifestyle and your children who are grown-ups can look at that and wonder why, what redemptive conversations.

Janet: What a platform.

Jocelyn: Yeah. What redemptive conversations that can happen. So without understanding of a right worldview, let's talk about how bad habits are born. So harmful habits develop from a humanistic view of life. And that's basically saying I'm going to survive this random life as the king of my own domain, and a free agent, independent of any creator or purpose. So imagine all the habits,

Janet: It sounds ugly, and I don't like to think that I'm like that. But I am.

Jocelyn: Yeah. But imagine all the habits that can be born out of that way of thinking.

Janet: Oh, yes.

Jocelyn: I don't answer to anybody. I don't have to give an account to anybody. I do whatever I want. One of my favorite books, Biblical Doctrine, has this quote in it, sin must be understood from a theocentric or God-centered standpoint. At its core, sin as a violation of the creator-creature relationship. Man only exists because God made him. And man is in every sense, obligated to serve his creator. Sin causes man to assume the role of God, and to assert autonomy for himself apart from the creator. The most all-encompassing view of sins mainspring therefore is the demand for autonomy. Isn't that profound?

Janet: Well, and to think our world would tell you, autonomy independence, that is something to be proud of. God says you were created to be dependent on him.

Jocelyn: So I think about all of the bad habits that could spring from a platform of autonomy. I answer to no one. I belong to no one. So let's talk about those same main points that we talked about in the biblical worldview. So with an unbiblical or a humanistic worldview, what you're believing is basically different forms or shadows of idolatry.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: I'm an independent being. I was brought into existence by evolutionary random chance. And if there is a God, he's uninvolved in my life and he hoards all the good stuff for himself. So I create a god that will serve me. And Psalm 14: 1 says, the fool has said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt. They have committed detestable acts. There is no one who does good. So we have this situation where we say, because there is no God, I can do whatever I want. And so I choose to create a god who will serve me the way that I want to be created. And one of the most depressing looks at that descent is Romans 1: 18 through 32, where it just talks about what does life look like when you have all the evidence that there is a God and you say, no, there isn't and I'm going to do my own thing. You end up totally corrupted, with habits that are just horrible. Like in verses 28 and 29, it just says, here's the habits of someone whose life is not focused on worship: unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, and evil, envy murder, strife, deceit, malice. It's just a list of horrible, horrible habits that

Janet: You're headed to your own death.

Jocelyn: They destroy people. They destroy you and others. So let's look at the second part of an unbiblical or humanistic worldview. And that's thinking, so we'd said in the biblical worldview that we think on things that are true, but really what guides a worldview that is humanistic is our

feelings. So I don't really think on things that are true. I just let how I feel about the situation guide me.

Janet: So I can be true to me.

Jocelyn: Right. So I'm the master of my own destiny and my feelings dictate what I think about, and ultimately what I do. I create my own definitions of right and wrong. The truth is completely relative. I'm accountable only to myself. And we can see that started back in Genesis.

Janet: Oh. Yes.

Jocelyn: You know, when the serpent said Eve, did God really say that? Like, come on, you should be able to think through the situation on your own without someone telling you what to do.

Janet: You don't need him.

Jocelyn: Yeah, you don't need his logic. And so, We end up in this place, like Matthew 13 says while seeing they do not see and hearing, they do not hear nor do they understand. And so we have followed these habits of thinking through situations however we want, mostly letting our feelings guide us. And we end up in this place where we're just completely ruined.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: We don't even function well. It's a very dehumanizing situation to be in for most of the habits that people end up in. So with humanistic worldview, then we have to think about seeing. How do we see this world? And in most situations you're going to be reacting.

Janet: So instead of responding,

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Out of truth, I'm going to react.

Jocelyn: I'm going to react. And you can see how quickly and easily a habit could form that is harmful to you, if the way that you see the world is reactionary. I see the world as a place of conflicting, hostile forces, where only the fittest will survive. So that's a very evolutionary point of view. There's no purpose in life other than pleasure. And this is as good as it's ever going to get. So I'm going to work hard to make the most of it. 1 Corinthians 2 says the natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. He can't understand them because they are spiritually discerned. And so, a person who's living in a humanistic way is going to constantly be reacting. And I'll just share briefly. How does one habit on the list of bad habits form? So a lot of people start using drugs because they want to

accomplish stuff, but they can't figure out how to accomplish it without extra incentive or extra chemical motivation.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And so instead of saying like, okay, something tragic has happened and I will respond to that tragic situation. They say, oh, I don't know how to respond. I have no truth to guide me. All I have to guide me is my feelings, and all I want to feel is numb right now. So, I mean, pick from a plethora of chemical

Janet: Right. Options.

Jocelyn: Options, and you can find one that will help you feel the way that you want to feel in response to a situation that you only know how to react to.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So another humanistic worldview point is that we have to examine the way that we behave. And with a humanistic worldview, you behave like an instinctual animal.

Janet: And again, I like the contrast we said before, if I believe in God. And then I think thoughts consistent with that, and then I respond to life in accordance with that, my behavior will be self controlled and I would make choices.

Jocelyn: It should. Right.

Janet: And my behavior would be shaped by that, and it would be logical. And now you're saying, when you think about that, I have now been degraded to where I'm behaving as an animal.

Jocelyn: An animal. A biblical worldview will be shaped by truth, and guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit for someone who is redeemed and is living for the Lord. But someone who's not redeemed is going to be living like an animal that has no control over their impulses and nothing stopping them from doing things that will hurt them. So I'm an instinctual animal. I'm dependent on my urges that are out of my control. I can't decide what my body's going to want. My body belongs to me, and is used to make me happy. I use my power and control to get what I want. And I rebel against authority and scoff at anyone who would try to control me.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So, a humanistic thinker is going to say, I just respond. I can't control myself. And who are you to tell me that it shouldn't be this way?

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So a humanistic thinker is going to think about their body. My body belongs to me, and it's used to further my goals. And those goals are very changeable. They depend on the situation. In some situations you might want to have numbness. In other situations, you might want to have energy. But because your body is inherently yours, you get to decide what you do with it. And my habits are helpful or harmful, only as determined by me and the outcomes they produce.

Janet: Yes. Are they doing what I want them to do?

Jocelyn: Right. A lot of humanistic thinkers will think like, well, it's not really hurting anyone, so it's fine. Go ahead and do it. There's all sorts of countries that have opened up their legislation to include habits that are really not very beneficial because who's to say, if that's going to hurt someone other than you.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And so the culture that my habits create will bring like-minded people around me. And I don't think about the future. I'm just thinking like I'm living in the moment, doing what I want, answering to no one, and no one is going to tell me how I should and should not use my body. So I surround myself with people who think the same way.

Janet: Well, that's kind of depressing.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: But we've just seen the side-by-side view, which clearly a biblical worldview would be one that is far more appealing when we look at it on paper, and we compared that to a humanistic worldview. And then we see out of whichever worldview we're living are born our habits. So one of the things that tells me is I might think I have a biblical worldview, but my habits might say otherwise.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Your habits are going to tell the truth more than what you think

Janet: And so they're helping me. So if I have a biblical worldview, and I'm thinking and reminding myself that my body, my behaviors, these are just ways that I get to enjoy God and bring his blessing to his world. And I'm going to be very aware that I'm weak, that I am also prone to be habituated. And so I'm going to be really careful what I expose myself to, because I know whatever it is, it's going to end up mastering me.

Jocelyn: And if we're following a humanistic worldview, I believe I'm an instinctual animal dependent on whatever urges within me

Janet: I can't help it.

Jocelyn: Yeah. They're out of my control. My body belongs to me, and it's there to make me happy. So I use my power and control to get what I want. And I rebel against authority and scoff at anyone who would try to control me.

Janet: So I would say anybody listening, if we're being honest, we're going to see a little of both as believers.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Absolutely.

Janet: That there are still areas of my life, where I am still living out of an unbiblical worldview. So what do I do when I find that I have these habits that indicate this, and I know it needs to change?

Jocelyn: Yeah. So thankfully the Bible makes it clear that harmful habits can be changed.

Janet: Praise God.

Jocelyn: Isn't that such great news? And the way we change our harmful habits is by having our minds made new by God's word and then starting to practice godly choices on purpose. So behaviors are the fruit that grows from the root of what's happening inside of my heart.

Janet: So what's going to happen because the temptation will be, let's just try to change the habit. When I'm counseling, I'm discipling my friend in my own life. I just want to change my habits. So I focus only on stop doing this behavior and start doing this one.

Jocelyn: So that'd behavior or that habit could disappear because you identified it as a problem. But a new set of wrong stuff is going to pop up over time if the root isn't addressed. So, I mean, we can both attest to that. Like we see something bad. We decided to stop it. Well, because we didn't take care of the heart that motivated it, something new pops up. So in that case, the change is going to be super short-lived and really temporary because I didn't examine what beliefs, or what thoughts were still focused on something other than honoring God. And that's just super defeating. Like when I worked at Vision of Hope and other places, I wasn't just helping people who had been doing really, really dangerous, harmful stuff for a year. It was like they had a track record of seven different, dangerous, unhelpful habits that they just couldn't figure out. And they were running their life and they had been for like 15 or 20 years. It's just defeating if you don't know how to get to the root of it.

Janet: So the other option, I guess, would be, okay, I know that it's got to start with the heart. So what if I only then focus on, I've got to change at the belief level. I've got to read the gospel. I've got to agree that God is a creator, and that's all I do.

Jocelyn: Well, one of the dangers of just changing your beliefs is that you could just grow in pride. Pride might develop because you think that just believing something is true is the same thing as living it out. And learning to live it out

Janet: is what humbles me.

Jocelyn: Right. It's the evidence of what you actually believe. Just like you said, you may think you have a biblical worldview, but your habits may actually tell you otherwise.

Janet: Even if I could pass a theology exam.

Jocelyn: Exactly. You might be able to say all sorts of smart things, but if your life isn't consistent, then you don't actually believe it.

Janet: Okay. So then let's just get practical. Tell us how the Bible teaches us to change in a way that would last.

Jocelyn: Yes. I love the passage in Ephesians four. I love the whole chapter of Ephesians four, but we can't talk about the whole thing. But we'll talk about three verses. I alluded to this earlier. Ephesians 4: 21 says the truth is in Jesus. And then it leads right into this passage that says our actions and behaviors can be changed permanently. If we renew our minds with that truth,

Janet: Yes. That's Jesus.

Jocelyn: That's in Jesus that we find in God's word, so that what we believe is true. And then when what think about, and how we see the world, it's going to start being in line with what God says is true. So our behaviors and habits can be trained to be in line with what God says is true, but that has to flow out of our beliefs, thoughts, and perspectives that are actually in line with God's truth. So let's just look at this the three verses Ephesians 4: 22 through 24, it's called a basically a three-step growth process where it says, first of all, put off the behavior that's not in line with truth that is in Jesus, and then have your mind renewed, and then put on the new behavior that is rooted in righteousness and truth. So to know how your mind needs to be renewed with truth, you'll have to really think carefully about where you're not thinking true. And that's probably going to be seen looking backwards from the habits that you're really stuck in. So, Ephesians 4: 22, through 24, the three-step process, you rid yourself of the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit. So I wanted something and I was very convinced it would make me happy. So I went after it

Janet: and I was deceived

Jocelyn: and I was deceived. Then the second part of this process is that you're renewed in the spirit of your minds. You allow God's word to re-teach your mind how to think about that topic, and then see you put on the new self that was created in righteousness, a holiness of the truth. So,

Janet: which is all very active.

Jocelyn: Very active.

Janet: I'm hearing a lot of active verbs, not just wait.

Jocelyn: So practically also I really like to use a passage like 2 Corinthians 10: 3 - 5. And that really helps me learn to evaluate conclusions that I've made about life. So we're talking about what do I believe, and what do I think, and what do I want. That passage teaches me basically, my job is to form a conclusion, and then it's to hold it up to the knowledge of God. And I learn about God from the scriptures, the truth that's in Jesus is found in the scriptures. So if my conclusion about life, something about life matches the knowledge of God, then I'm allowed to keep thinking it. Yay. And I foster it to keep growing. But if it doesn't, I am told to destroy it. So I'm like annihilate it. Not just be like, oh, I should probably put that out with the trash. It's like, no. Murder it.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: So take that wrong thought and make it not capable of being thought about anymore because you've retrained it using what God says is true.

Janet: So this all sounds like a lot of effort.

Jocelyn: A lot of effort.

Janet: And I'm going to have to start asking myself some really hard questions. And it's going to take a lot of work if I'm going to be reflecting and thinking and evaluating and not just reacting.

Jocelyn: Yeah. We talked about forming things, believing, thinking, seeing and behaving as what goes into making up a habit. So when you're thinking about believing, you've got to ask yourself, what wrong beliefs fueled those harmful habits. So think about an actual harmful habit, like an eating disorder habit.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So a wrong belief might have fueled my anorexic behaviors because I believed that when I was a certain degree of skinniness, then I would actually be beautiful or desirable or good enough or whatever it is.

Janet: I think that's really important because your habits are so helpful in your growth. Because I've talked to people who've said, well, what I really believe, and they give me truth. And I'm able to show them from scripture, if that's what you believe, this is not what would be coming out.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: So I have to be honest with myself, if this is my habit. What is it I really believe?

Jocelyn: Yes. Using the eating disorder problem, you can see how, if you don't address what you believe, then the eating disorder behavior is never going to go away. It's just going to look different over time.

Janet: It just may be controlled.

Jocelyn: Right. And so a lot of people, if they go to a secular eating disorder treatment center, they're going to end up being told the amount of calories that they have to eat in one day and they're going to comply, because they want to go back to their normal life. They want freedom. No one wants to be enslaved to something that kills them. But if you don't examine, what were the beliefs that led you to want to restrict to that degree, then you may eat enough calories, but your mind is constantly going to be searching for other ways to make sure you are enough, or

Janet: Whatever that belief is.

Jocelyn: Whatever your thing is. So when you're thinking about thinking, you've got to ask yourself what wrong habits of thinking are, fueling those harmful habits. So I'm just going to follow the eating disorder example. When I've worked with people with eating disorders in the past, especially with anorexia, they spend a lot of time judging their body according to other people's bodies. And so they'll look at someone else's perfect shoulder and they'll think why did they get to have a perfect shoulder. That's my version of perfect shoulder. Why don't I get to have it? And so part of learning to change the actual habits that end up getting you into trouble are thinking, what are the actual thoughts that are going on inside of my head, and then learning to evaluate them about whether they're good thoughts or not. And that's definitely not a good way of thinking, like thinking covetous thoughts would not honor God. That's not the truth that we find in Jesus.

Janet: Right. And it's finding your value very differently than where God says.

Jocelyn: Yes, totally. So when you're thinking about seeing, you've got to ask yourself, in what ways are my wrong perspectives, encouraging me to formulate harmful habits. So if I'm seeing that this world is all that there is, and I've got to make the most of it, and I'm an instinctual animal that can't control myself, then I'm going to be really allowing that to shape what I eat or don't eat, or how I schedule my meals, or how I think about other people, and whether I serve them and love them, or see them as something that's tripping me up from getting what my goals are. When I'm thinking about behaving, you've got to ask yourself, how are my harmful habits the natural byproduct of my beliefs, thoughts and perspectives. I'm not just an animal. I don't just do things based on instinct. A lot of thought goes into the decisions that I make and I can't just

chop off the behaviors and expect a new godly behavior to take their place, if I haven't put time into thinking about what beliefs led me there, what thoughts was I thinking, how do I see myself fitting into this world?

Janet: So how can we get a little practical? Like, what are some tools you can use if you're listening to all of this and saying, I don't disagree with this, but like

Jocelyn: How?

Janet: How. Where do I start to work on this?

Jocelyn: Yeah. So I have a lot of tools that I use in the context of counseling, and I'm sure you do too. We can't discuss all of them here because they probably work best in that kind of a setting.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: But I would start by saying that most people don't spend much time investigating what they think about.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I think that we just think as a matter of course, and never think about thinking. And that's not

Janet: That's dangerous.

Jocelyn: It's not necessarily a good place to be. A lot of time people don't think about what they want. They just go after what they want.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And they couldn't maybe even name what they want. And also a lot of people don't think much about what is motivating them. So, if you could carve out some time and energy to do a couple of things, here are a couple of things that I would recommend. My top two are thought journal and the think, do, want worksheet? So the thought journal basically is just for some period of time, journal every single thought that comes into your head. And that's a lot of work. And so when I've worked with people in counseling with this, I'll say like for one day, I want you to journal literally every thought. And so that looks like carrying around a notebook with you. And as soon as you have a thought, writing it down. All day long. And what you're trying to do is you're trying to find themes that need to be addressed. So you might say, wow, I didn't realize that 545 times a day I thought about food.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Or 500 times a day I thought about bodies. Like not as in how can I use my body to serve others and be fruitful, but it's like, I want my body to look a certain way or function a certain way.

Janet: So shorthand one that I've done for that is to just make a list of like five times of the day when you're typically are not thinking intentionally about something else, and have them do that.

Jocelyn: Awesome.

Janet: When you wake up in the morning, write down the first things you're thinking about. When you're brushing your teeth, what are you thinking about? When you're making dinner, what are you thinking about? Because, you're right. Doing it all day long,

Jocelyn: That's cumbersome.

Janet: It is, but it's very valuable.

Jocelyn: It's very valuable. And sometimes like if you really, really, really want to change and you have never thought about thinking before, it's sometimes helpful to have a little bit of self-imposed silence that goes along with that, because sometimes we talk a lot so that we don't have to think about what we're thinking about. And so being quiet helps you to be able to listen to the thoughts inside of your head. The other tool that I use is called the Think/Do/Want worksheet. And we're actually gonna link that in our show notes so that you can have a PDF copy.

Janet: Oh good.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Use it. Do whatever you want with it. I have found it very helpful. And it's basically just a worksheet that asks you a couple of questions and then you think about them and then you assess the situation. So it starts off with asking what was the situation? So you just write down what happened. The next question is, what was I thinking? And so you write down in that situation, what were the thoughts that were happening inside of your head? Thirdly, you ask, what was I wanting? And you really have to think hard about that because sometimes it's not really clear what you were wanting. And then you evaluate, what was I doing? So in that situation, what were the behaviors that I participated in? What was I thinking? What was I wanting? And then to finish the assessment, you say, how does God say that I should handle that situation?

Janet: I hold it up to the knowledge of God, like you were saying earlier.

Jocelyn: Right. Exactly. How can I grow and change the next time I faced a similar situation? Because habits are usually going to be happening in similar situations. Habits flow out of us not thinking about what's going on.

Janet: Excellent.

Jocelyn: You can also use some relationships within your church community to build godly habits. The older I am and the more I follow Jesus, the more, I am just so absolutely convinced that we are not capable of being Christians in isolation or as individuals. Because when we were brought to new life in Christ, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Jesus raised us to new life in Christ in him. So we were united with him. And then immediately we were also united with every other believer. So we are in union with Christ and in union with other believers.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And their investment in our life really would be helpful as you try to work on growing godly habits.

Janet: And we can do that in a variety of ways.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: So, I mean, one can just be accountability, not just in part of your daily life. If I'm just thinking, I'm going to grow, so I look for some support. I look for a relationship where I can let a friend know this is what I'm working on. And one of the things that I like about that, you can attach to that intentional behaviors. And by that, I mean, so we've talked about getting this thought journal, what have I been thinking. Another step would be, okay, I know now I tend to think that satisfaction would be if everybody liked me, or if everything were about me, or if I was good at everything. So knowing that, I'm going to ask you to hold me accountable this week, that three times I'm going to do something to love someone that I'm not typically very good at,

Jocelyn: Exactly.

Janet: Or that nobody will know about, or I'm going to do it anonymously. So I'm feeding the truth by choosing that. But it's hard to do that without accountability.

Jocelyn: A lot of people think that accountability is only, I'm going to answer for you that I didn't do the bad thing.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: But what you're pointing out is, accountability is really helpful in building the new godly habits.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So not only are you not doing the wrong thing, what are you doing that is practical application of biblical truth?

Janet: Because I've been renewing my mind. How am I choosing to act on that? Because habitually my body doesn't do that. So now I have to choose it while I build the new habit.

Jocelyn: And one of the reasons I think accountability is so important is because of 2 Corinthians 5: 9, and 10. 2 Corinthians 5: 9 says we have as our ambition, whether at home in the body or absent from it to be pleasing to him. The very next verse tells us why. Because we're going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ and we're going to receive the compensation for the deeds done through our body, in accordance with what we've done, whether good or bad. And so it's really beneficial for us to live as if accountability to Jesus is going to happen someday.

Janet: Right. By practicing it with each other.

Jocelyn: Right. And when we are accountable to other people, we're just getting in the groove for when we're going to answer to Jesus for how we have lived our life. One of the other things that I like is mentoring. And that would practically look like a kind of a time-defined and a goal-oriented relationship where the mentor demonstrates how to do that thing that I'm trying to grow in. And so, when you think about mentoring in a business, a junior member of the corporation would be assigned to a senior staff member who is more experienced in that area. And they would basically give them the help and the advice that they needed to get to that next level. So think about that in the context of our church community. Titus two talks a lot about that, but essentially it's like a mature believer is showing a younger believer the how, in how to obey. Because we can agree philosophically that we should be, but it's like, but I don't know what that looks like.

Janet: Yup.

Jocelyn: And those kinds of mentoring relationships are really, really beneficial. And I would say that mentoring is not counseling. It's just showing how to do the thing that you both agree is right to be working on.

Janet: Right. And so if accountability is friendship, mentoring, there's someone that's really taking the lead and helping me in an area I need to grow in a little bit, and maybe I need a little more. Then counseling is an option. We will have in our show notes the ACBC counseling website referral. How to find a counselor in your area. Certainly start with your church, and start with your pastor. But on a practical level, when I need a little bit more than a mentor, when I'm really struggling, this will be an interaction that is formal, that is structured, that's going to help me learn my own thinking and my own beliefs, and then it's going to help me with how to build some of those new habits.

Jocelyn: Yes. So counseling we're now, like we started at accountability. We went to mentoring. Now we're at counseling. And so there does come a point in time when sometimes even meeting with someone on a formal basis is not quite helping you.

Janet: One hour once a week is just not enough.

Jocelyn: One hour, once a week is not enough because you know what, there's a lot more hours than that in the week. And it's easy to just be tripped up all the time. So I want to recommend something that would help you to really be able to see your habit with more eyes looking at them and that is rehabilitation. So, often rehabilitation with isolation can happen when someone goes away to get help somewhere with a group of staff that is basically it's their job to look at their life and help that person figure out, so what is going on? What are the habits that are tripping this person up and how are they maybe blind to them? That's one of the benefits of rehabilitation with isolation, is that you have someone else that's looking into the situation, and then can help you to really see specific areas where you can make changes, and then give you accountability in the moment, on the fly, for doing what you know is right in a way that shows that you honor the Lord and want to obey him.

Janet: And that can be, you know, secular. There's so many options out there that we want to link in our show notes. We have a Restoration Men's Ministry that is exactly for that. And we have Vision of Hope women's ministry, both residential facilities for people that for a variety of reasons need more than one hour once a week. And this is a structure that can help them because we want them to be somewhere where they're learning biblically exactly what we've been talking about today.

Jocelyn: Exactly. In Mark nine, the scriptures teach us that sometimes it's better to make some radical changes to your life and be able to live for the Lord than to continue in your more easy way of life and make it easy to do sinful things. So when we put ourselves in a situation that's radically different, it sometimes cuts off our access to the habit that was tripping us up. Because honestly, if you're living with drugs controlling your thinking, you're going to have a really hard time figuring out what you believe,

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And what your thoughts are, because your thoughts are clouded. If you're struggling with an eating disorder, when you're not eating, you cannot think clearly. And so sometimes you need to be removed from the access to the things that you've been using, the tools for your habits. It's just as important to understand why we're behaving, as it is to change our behaviors.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And you've got to remember,

Janet: Cause our goal is to please God, not just to change a behavior.

Jocelyn: Right. And we've got to remember that our actions are flowing out of what we believe.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Our actions are flowing out of our thoughts. So we really have to think about what is it that I believe? What is it that I believe is true? And then what am I thinking about all the time, and how do I see myself fitting into the world? And is all of that biblical? Not just my behaviors, all of it. Am I believing right things? Am I thinking right things? Am I seeing the world accurately? And then, as we work on addressing the sinful habits that we see, and renewing our mind with God's word, and then putting on biblical habits, there's going to be a lot of ways that you can grow in increasing levels of intensity, really through the services and the ministry of your local church.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Seek out accountability.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Find a mentor. Ask your pastor to assign one if you don't have a mentoring program in your church. Seek counseling, either through your pastor or your deacon or your small group leader or at the ACBC website. And if you really just can't kick the habit, then get someone else to look into your life in a way that your habit, your access to your tools, are restricted. And you can maybe see the situation a little bit more clearly, and get some traction on habits of obedience.

Janet: Excellent. Well, I know this is heavy. I think it's also incredibly hopeful because we all have those habits that are stubborn. And whether that's, we need to end up going to a residential facility, or whether we just need some accountability, and anywhere in between. I love that the word of God has answers for all of that. And I would encourage anybody listening to just know that there is hope, whatever the habit is, you have a savior that's bigger. And if you don't know him, what a great reason to decide to know him today. You need his help to change.

Jocelyn: We've talked about some resources already, and there are going to be lots of links in the show notes. We're going to link the Think/Do/Want worksheet, which you'll find in the show notes. We're also going to link the ACBC website, where you could find a counselor in your area. And we're going to link Vision of Hope, which is the lady's residential treatment center that Faith Church offers to our community. And I want to talk about that in two formats, you can use Vision of Hope to get help for your own wrong habits as a resident, or you can use a Vision of Hope as training as an intern, so that you can learn to help other people.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And so you'll find information for both of those at the link in our show notes. And we're also going to give a link to the Restoration Men's Ministry that is also available to serve men who are trying to kill bad habits and grow in godly ones.

Janet: Thank you Jocelyn, for sharing that with us. I pray that that is encouraging and challenging to others as it is to me. And I hope you guys will join us again for our next episode.

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