



## **Making A Habit Work For You**

by **Lou Stoops**

We all recognize the power of habit. Tommy Lasorda once commented to Ron Fimrite of Sports Illustrated, about his struggle with bad habits. He said, "I took a pack of cigarettes from my pocket, stared at it and said, 'Who's stronger, you or me?' The answer was me. I stopped smoking. Then I took a vodka martini and said to it, 'Who's stronger, you or me?' Again the answer was me. I quit drinking. Then I went on a diet. I looked at a big plate of linguine with clam sauce and said, 'Who's stronger, you or me?' And a little clam looked up at me and answered, 'I am.' I can't beat linguine."

Habits are forces that drive us. They become autopilots to navigate our days for good or ill. They are comfortable beds that are easy to get into and hard to get out of. The need then is to be very careful how we program ourselves.

In spite of popular belief, we have control of ourselves to the extent that we can make choices that can redirect what we do. Unfortunately, studies have found some people don't even make an attempt until some crisis stirs them to action.

To be successful at changing a bad habit, you must associate pain with it. Pain is a motivator. When we perceive that something will cause us excruciating pain, we are more prone to do something positive.

When you are laying down a bad habit, don't focus on it; rather, replace it immediately with a good habit that you can focus upon. To do so will increase your likelihood of success.

The great key to harnessing a habit is to avoid those things that are harmful to begin with. Years ago in the old West, the roads were narrow and rough and the wagons had many difficulties on those trails. On one of the old roads was a sign that read, "Avoid this rut or you'll be in it for the next 25 miles!" We'd all do well to avoid some of the many ruts that beckon our attention.

Work to replace bad habits with successful habits. Read, listen to motivational and instructional tapes, get involved in an exercise program. Find positive habits that can propel you and lay down those bad habits. Don't get discouraged when you fall back, just get up!