

life group study guide

“This is Home – Breaking Cycles”

June 9, 2013



Galatians 4:8-5:12

In Life Groups, kids, youth and adults study God's Word together and discuss the issues and challenges of life.

Break the cycle of the way your family used to do things.

Introduction

Upon walking into the kitchen, a man saw his wife slice off the end of a ham and throw it into the trash. He asked, “Why throw away a perfectly good piece of meat?” She replied, “Because my mother always did.” Curious, he dialed up his mother-in-law, and asked her the same question. Her reply: “Because my mother did.” He then called Grandma and asked why she always cut off the end 3-4 inches of ham before baking. She explained, “My pan wasn’t big enough.”

- What “unusual” traditions did your family observe when you were a child?
- Do you have any unique traditions in your family today (especially around holidays, birthdays, or vacations)?
- How did these traditions begin?

Traditions can be wonderful remembrances providing stability and continuity for people. We often continue traditions without understanding why. Tendencies, habits (and even prejudices) established over generations are often adopted without reflection. Paul wrote to the church at Galatia which had a challenge is letting go of old habits, traditions and beliefs and celebrate the freedom found in Christ. This can also be true for each of us individually, or as a family. We will look at some ways to break any negative cycles and move toward growing more like Christ—especially in our close family relationships.

Bible study

The problem

Matt 23 is an entire chapter with the words of Jesus directed at the Pharisees, a group of Jewish leaders who held closely to tradition and the past—often with improper motives.

Matt 23:23-24

- What tradition does Jesus speak to in these verses?
- Was this tradition wrong?
- What was the problem Jesus identified?
- Why do you think one tradition was followed and the other command(s) neglected?
- How does Jesus describe their problem in verse 24? What does He mean by this rebuke?

Matt 23:25-26

- In what ways would the Pharisees’ traditions be like cleaning the outside of a cup?
- What is Jesus’ remedy in verse 26?
- What is a practical way to “clean the inside of a cup” for the Christian today?

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Matt 23:29-33

- The Pharisees revered the past through attention to monuments and tombs. These can be good things. Where does Jesus say the Pharisees went wrong in this regard?
- What are the pitfalls in having a backward focus (as in verse 30) or comparing ourselves to others?

Proverbs 26:10 As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly.

- What does this crude analogy say about old habits?
- How can something so obviously distasteful continue to have appeal and be repeated?

1 Cor 15:33 Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”

- How do our choice of friends and associates affect our habits?
- How does this process occur?
- How can we disassociate with “friends” who are destructive to our character?

The solution

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

This verse contains the word “if”. Transformation and change begins when we recognize our brokenness, repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness and rebirth. When we place our faith in Jesus, accept His grace and relinquish control to the Holy Spirit, true change can occur.

- In what ways has “the old is gone” been reflected since you became a Christian?
- What negative habits have been removed or reduced?
- What new habits have you adopted?

One of the best ways to eliminate a bad habit is to replace it with a good one.

- What positive traditions can you begin this week to transform your family?
- What ideas can you adopt from fellow believers?

The soul attracts that which it secretly harbors; that which it loves, and also that which it fears; it reaches the height of its cherished aspirations; it falls to the level of its unchastened desires. Every thought-seed sown or allowed to fall into the mind, and to take root there, produces its own, blossoming sooner or later into an act, and bearing its sown fruit of opportunity and circumstance. Good thoughts bear good fruit; bad thought, bad fruit. (James Allen)

Romans 12:2

- According to this verse, where does change begin?
- How do we renew our minds?
 - As an individual?
 - As a family?
- How can new positive traditions help reinforce change in the family?
- Other than reading the Bible, how do we transform our minds?
- How do we avoid “being conformed to this world”?
- Which is easier—conforming or transforming? Why?

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- What does this verse indicate is the goal of our renewal?
 - How might the accomplishment of this goal change your family for generations?

Application

Develop habits that focus on Christ.

Heb 10:25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

This verse discusses the habit of meeting regularly with other believers.

- What are some of the reasons giving for meeting together?
- Key words in this verse are “love”, “good deeds” and “encouraging”. How can we form traditions and habits around these words?

Heb 10:25 can be applied to a Life Group or corporate worship on Sunday. I tell those who do not attend church regularly that there will be 2-3 sermons each year that will profoundly affect you and set a positive direction for your life. But I cannot tell you which 2-3 weeks those will be. Do you want to risk that transformation by missing a few weeks?

In seeking change for you and your family, be proactive:

- Seek the advice of others—borrow their traditions and adapt them for your family. For example, we have a tradition on each birthday—after the candles are blown out and before the gifts are opened—that each person in the family must say what they love, admire and/or appreciate about the person whose birthday we are celebrating. This has been a wonderful and affirming tradition in our family. (I am sure we borrowed this from someone else.)
- Seek someone to hold you accountable for a decision to make a specific change.
- Take the leadership. If you are the only one in your family committed to making a change, do so without complaint or grumbling. Set the example. Express joy in new habits. Make them fun. The birthday example (above) is affirming to anyone—and can heal wounds and build trust and unity.