

**“Healthy Habits for a Broken Heart”**  
***Surviving the Pandemic: Ancient Practices for a New Normal***  
**Acts 2:42-47**  
**Dr. Mark Foster**  
**September 27, 2020**

**Introduction:** We all live according to specific \_\_\_\_\_, and those \_\_\_\_\_ shape most of our life.  
A Duke University study suggests \_\_\_\_\_% of our everyday actions are not choices but habits.  
A \_\_\_\_\_ habit is a micro shift that brings about macro effects.  
Many of our habits have been chosen for us by people who do not have our best interest in mind.  
Habits are not \_\_\_\_\_.

*“Habits form much more than our schedules: they form our hearts.”- Justin Whitmel Earley*

**Then and Now:** We become our habits.

The early church survived the pandemic of Roman occupation with four holy habits. Acts 2:42  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are two healthy, holy habits that can save us again today. Mark 12:30-31

A \_\_\_\_\_ is anyone and everyone who needs our love.

Education is what you learn and know – things you are \_\_\_\_\_.

Formation is what you practice and do – things that are \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus says, “Follow me.”

If you want to get a grip on who you are \_\_\_\_\_, you need to get your hands on your habits.

A \_\_\_\_\_ of life is how we get our hands on our habits. St. Augustine developed a “rule of life.”

You can’t \_\_\_\_\_ who Jesus is without following Jesus.

A “rule” is a set of habits you commit to in order to grow in your love of God and neighbor.

A “rule of life” is \_\_\_\_\_ with other people.

Change happens within a \_\_\_\_\_ where people support and love one another.

Practicing a “Rule of Life” with others keeps a hard \_\_\_\_\_ from becoming a dangerous one.

**Kneeling Prayer at Morning, Midday, and Evening**

Will you start your day answering to God or your smartphone?

Morning prayers: Lord, have mercy! Your Kingdom come. Please help! Bless my children. Guide my work. Thank you, God, for watching over me through the night. Amen.

Gratitude is the way to \_\_\_\_\_.

Midday prayer: Set an alarm at 1pm or 2:42pm. Work is a gift God gives you to help others.

Evening prayer: Before you turn off the car, or with a child, spouse, or roommate, or before bed.

**Fellowship:** Friendships are born when one person says to another, “What you too? I thought I was the only one.” – C.S. Lewis

A weekly \_\_\_\_\_ where you practice courage and prioritize the time.

\_\_\_\_\_ threatens true friendship because it allows us to create polished versions of ourselves.

**Action Steps:** \_\_\_\_\_ prayer three times a day.

One-hour weekly face to face \_\_\_\_\_ with a friend. “Is there anything you aren’t telling me?”

## Daily Reading & Reflection

### September 28 – October 2

**Monday – Deuteronomy 6:** *“Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.”* (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

According to a Duke University study, 40% of the things we do each day aren't choices, but habits, and as Pastor Mark shared Sunday, habits are not neutral. In the words of author Justin Whitmel Earley, “Habits form much more than our schedules: they form our hearts.” This isn't a new revelation, but instead a reminder of something God has known since creating us. It is why God gave the Israelites such specific instructions for passing their faith down from generation to generation. When we are in the habit of being in communion with God, we will find ourselves more likely to be transformed by God than by the world.

**Tuesday – Mark 12:** *“Jesus answered, ‘The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”* (Mark 12:29-31)

There are a number of spiritual disciplines we can practice to keep us grounded in our faith and our relationship with God. Worship, baptism, and communion are all things we do when we gather together as one. Reading Scripture, praying, fasting, and sharing meals are things we can do individually or with another person. Both corporate and individual habits of faith are essential to the Christian life, but when these seem too daunting, we can come back to two foundational practices: love God, love one another. If we can start there, the others will often follow.

**Wednesday – John 15:** *“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.”* (John 15:4)

“If you want to get a grip on who you are becoming,” Pastor Mark said, “you need to get your hands on your habits.” We are constantly being influenced. Some of these influences are overt – parents raising children, companies and organizations embodying a specific culture, people on Instagram who literally call themselves “influencers.” However, many influences are far subtler. A commercial, a comment you overhear, a song you listen to, or a particular line of dialogue in a movie. These things shape the way we see and interact with the world. For followers of Jesus, our challenge is to remain rooted in Christ—to abide with God—so that Jesus and Jesus' actions are the things that influence us the most. The more we look to Jesus, the more we will look more like Jesus.

**Thursday – Luke 11:** *“He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’”* (Luke 11:1)

One of our action steps from Sunday's message was kneeling to pray three times a day. Prayer doesn't always flow naturally for some people, and for others it's like a native language. At its most basic, prayer is a conversation – a two-way dialogue between you and God. Just as in conversations with friends or family, there may be awkward silences. You may also have moments where you just need to vent and have the other person listen. The challenge is also creating space to hear what God would have you hear. So, if you find yourself struggle with right words or any words at all, pray the prayer Jesus taught us.

**Friday – John 21:** *“Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.”* (John 21:12-13)

Prayer and fellowship are two healthy and holy habits we can incorporate into our daily lives. In the life of the church, from the earliest days until now, fellowship rarely occurred outside of the context of food. We can laugh all we want about potluck dinners of King Ranch chicken casserole or various forms and colors of Jell-O mold, but there is a reason food and fellowship go together so well. When we gather around a shared table, near a campfire, or huddle together in the kitchen, we are reminded that we are a part of one body. In coming together in this way, we are strengthened and reminded of our common bond in Christ. By praying, we enjoy fellowship with God, and in breaking bread together, we enjoy fellowship with one another.