

# Partners In Courage, December 2012

Sermon by Wes Daughenbaugh

## Give The Gift of a New Habit

**INTRODUCTION: Whether it's a Christmas gift, a birthday gift, a graduation gift or just a friendship gift—if you develop a new “good habit” and give that continually—habitually—it becomes the best of all gifts.**

When the Wise Men from the East came to worship Baby Jesus they opened their treasures and gave Him gifts. That very night God told Joseph to take Mary and the baby and flee to Egypt so that mad King Herod's murderous plan would fail. I'm sure those expensive gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh just kept on giving—because the little immigrant family could have lived on their value for a long time. Joseph would not have known the language and would have needed emergency funds.

This message has been prepared in a Christmas season—where I've been thinking about gifts I could give to others, myself, and to God. It seems to me that the gift of a new godly habit would be the very best give I could give to anyone. However, it's not just a Christmas sermon. IT'S GOOD FOR ALL OCCASIONS.

### 1. GOD COMMENDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD HABITS.

A habit is something we continually practice. The habits we practice lead to the permanent definition of who we are as people. We become our habits.

Phil. 4:9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into **practice**. And the God of peace will be with you.

1Tim. 5:4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into **practice** by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

Matt. 7:24-27 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into **practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Heb. 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the **habit** of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

\*\*\*\* From my song PICK IT UP AS YOU GO.

Once there was a little alligator

He said, “I won't pick it right now, I'll do it latter.

He thought that someday he'd actually do it

But the problem was he just never got around to it.

Whoa!

His dirty clothes piled up in a big hump.  
 His room looks like it is the city dump.  
 He lives in great frustration among the gators  
 He's just the poster child for all procrastinators.  
 WHOA!

So if you would avoid his sorry fate  
 Then pick it up right now 'for it's too late.  
 Cause every habit you form is gonna change you.  
 If you make a good one it will rearrange you.

HOW TRUE. Every habit you form is going to change you. If you make a good one it will "rearrange you."

## 2. GIFT IDEAS TO GIVE TO OTHERS.

### You can ask the Holy Spirit for "habit" ideas.

\*\*\*\* One man asked another man to give him some advice that would improve his marriage. The man who was asked for advice was learning to listen to the voice of the Lord. So he said, "Go get a piece of paper and a pencil and when you come back I'll tell you what to do to heal your marriage."

Then this young man prayed and said, "God, what should I tell him?"

God spoke, "Tell him to go home and make his bed."

When the man came back with the paper and pencil his friend said, "Write this down. This is what God says. GO HOME AND MAKE YOUR BED."

The other man was amazed. He said, "My wife always complains that I don't make my bed. She says it's the symbol of everything that is wrong in our marriage. How did you know that?" He went home in the middle of the day and made the bed. His wife was amazed. His willingness to leave off with a bad habit of inconsideration and practice a good habit of consideration was very healing to his marriage.

What would God say to you? What "habit" would He like you to give to your family?

**Is. 29:13 The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men."**

Don't just honor God by asking Him for "habit gift ideas". Honor Him by DOING whatever He says.

HERE ARE SOME GIFT IDEAS THAT THE SPIRIT HAS BEEN DEALING WITH ME ABOUT MAKING HABITS.

### **THE GIFT HABIT OF "LOYALTY TO THE ABSENT."**

I've read Stephen Covey's famous book SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE years ago. Recently I bought a three CD abridged audio version. One thing he was talking about was what he called "loyalty to the absent". He defined that as never saying anything behind someone's back. If you are going to talk about someone,

he recommended imagining that the person was seated or standing with you. Imagine they are hearing everything you say. Then get in the habit of never saying anything about them to others that would be a violation of their trust. This gives them a great gift of security and helps build great relationships.

It's amazing how we can hear something once, and have it slide off of us. This time I GOT IT. It went deep into me. The phrase LOYALTY TO THE ABSENT just went into me. I immediately KNEW that I could do that. I decided when I was 19 to never eat pork. I'm 62 and I've almost never eaten any pork product. The exception would be if I was served it at someone's house and to avoid embarrassing him or her I would eat a little. Otherwise—no sausage, no bacon, no ham. The habit is deep and may have some bearing on why, at 62, I still have perfect blood pressure. In July of 1991 God gave me a fiery anointing in my hands. I was so grateful that I gave up potato chips as a way of saying THANK YOU.

So for 21 years I've not eaten a potato chip.

We know someone who has a reputation of saying nice things to our faces but cutting remarks about us behind our backs. I've seen the pain this causes. And so—with God's help—I GOT IT. I know I'll be able to make LOYALTY TO THE ABSENT a habit and avoid talking about others behind their backs as much as I avoid pork and potato chips.

**Ecc. 10:20 Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird of the air may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say.**

The point here is—what you say about others behind their backs has a way of getting back to them—mysteriously—as if a bird of the air carried your words.

Giving this gift to others is really like giving a gift to yourself. If we talk about someone when they aren't present in a way we would never talk about them if they were present—it shows our character to whomever we are talking to. They'll know not to trust us completely. Therefore—this gift of LOYALTY TO THE ABSENT is a gift not only to others, but also to yourself. It builds credibility, trust, character, relationships and dignity.

## **THE HABIT OF SINCERE APOLOGY—AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

To be quick to forgive and quick to ask forgiveness are two great habits. Apologies are more difficult than forgiveness. When we forgive we are basically saying, “You were a jerk but I forgive you.” But when we apologize we basically say, “I was a jerk. Will you forgive me?” That takes much more humility.

\*\*\*\* I was in the Midwest once, holding a revival at a Methodist church. The associate pastor asked me to pray about his relationship with his son. He said, “My son got a divorce and the Sunday after the divorce I was preaching and mentioned what a difficult and painful thing divorce was. My son was in the audience. He became so angry for me saying that and demanded an apology. I told him I could not apologize because the statement was true. We haven't spoken in two years.”

I told him, “Tell your son that the statement was true but that it was insensitive of you to even mention divorce to your congregation only one day after his divorce. Be

sincere and apologize for being insensitive.” It took less than 30 seconds to give that advice. However, the next night he enthusiastically told me that he and his son had two hours together and that everything was now healed. He said what I suggested—and was totally sincere. That sincere apology was a wonderful GIFT.

**James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.**

When we apologize we are confessing that we sinned. It leads to healing of relationships.

\*\*\*\* If the man had faked an apology before he believed he really had done something wrong it would not have worked. The sincerity of admitting, “That remark was insensitive” was the key to the healing of that father-son relationship.

There are times when it takes me a while to really realize what I did wrong so that an apology can be sincere. We can all pray that God will help us see what we did wrong more quickly. Until He does that—never fake an apology.

## **THE HABIT OF SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND BEFORE SEEKING TO BE UNDERSTOOD.**

Stephen Covey told of a man who confided in him that his son was impossible. The boy would walk into the living room and turn off the TV set that his Dad was watching and then walk out of the room. He was filled with anger and resentment. The Dad could only see what was wrong with the boy and could not see anything wrong with the way he was dealing with the boy.

Dr. Covey got him to come to some of his classes and taught him about seeking to understand before seeking to be understood. Previously he only tried to communicate what he wanted his son to understand—that his attitude was rotten, that he was disrespectful, and that what he was doing was wrong, wrong, and wrong!

One night he said to his son, “Son, I want to understand you before I seek to be understood.” His son exploded, “You’ve NEVER understood me!” He ran out of the room. But the father stayed with it—and eventually they were able to communicate. By sincerely wanting to HEAR what his son’s perspective was he was developing a habit of listening, a habit of always seeking to understand first before seeking to be understood. **James 1:19-21 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.**

\*\*\*\* We get angry when we can’t get others to LISTEN to what we are trying to tell them! We act like we cannot HELP being angry—because it’s their fault! If only they would LISTEN then we wouldn’t have to be angry.

The habit of SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND BEFORE SEEKING TO BE UNDERSTOOD is just another way of saying, “**Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.**”

What if you could develop that habit and give it to family members as a gift this Christmas?

Would that be a gift that would KEEP ON GIVING? Of course! Would it be more valuable than some gift you could buy at STUFF-MART? Of course!

## **THE GIFT OF NON-JUDGMENTAL COMMUNICATION.**

We all have heard what Jesus said, Matt. 7:1-5 **“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”**

Often, however, we are completely unaware that we are judging! We think we are stating facts!

“You are so discourteous.” “You are so irresponsible.” “You are so stupid.” All these judgmental statements start with YOU ARE. They are YOU statements. We would be wise to use “I” statements like, “I feel like I’m being talked down to” or “This is the way I’m seeing it” or “I think this is not my responsibility.”

By using words that say what we think, feel or perceive we are basically admitting that the real TRUTH might be something different. It’s not a final judgment. Do your best to avoid making judgmental statements while giving a good effort to communicate your own feelings and thoughts and perspectives.

James 4:11-12 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you **judge** the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and **Judge**, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to **judge** your neighbor?

## **THE GIFT OF CHEERFULNESS AND GOOD HUMOR**

Recently I was talking with a pastor. He told me that a few years ago God spoke to him and said, “You are bringing sadness into your family.” He pondered that and realized that he had been coming home with heaviness and sadness in his demeanor—sort of casting a cloud over his family by his sad countenance.

He entered the door of his home that night, leaned against the wall, took a deep breath and then called out with all the cheeriness he could muster, “HI. I’M HOME.”

From then on he practiced an awareness of his attitude and chose to practice cheerfulness at home. He said it made a great difference in all of his family relationships. In other words, his new habit of being cheerful was a real gift to others that kept on giving.

He was also telling how just recently he was helping someone put on a roof and felt so tired he didn’t think he could go on. While they paused for a moment in the work someone told a funny story and they all got to laughing. He said he laughed really hard and deep and long. Afterwards, to his amazement he was full of energy and worked the rest of the day with no sense of weariness.

We've all heard stories of people with fatal diseases who rented funny DVD's of old slapstick comedies and laughed their way back to wellness. Our bodies release powerful chemicals that promote health when we are cheerful and when we laugh.

This pastor had to make a real choice and a real EFFORT to be cheerful at home but now it has become a habit. His story made an impression on me. I thought to myself, "Why is he telling me this? God hasn't said to me, 'You are bringing sadness into your home.' He said that to him." But I listened. And afterward I thought a lot about it. Here's what the Bible says about cheerfulness.

Prov. 15:13 A happy heart makes the face **cheerful**, but heartache crushes the spirit.

Prov. 15:15 All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the **cheerful** heart has a continual feast.

Prov. 15:30 A **cheerful** look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones.

Prov. 17:22 A **cheerful** heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

2Cor. 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a **cheerful** giver.

If God LOVES it when we are cheerfully giving money—then He must LOVE IT when we are giving cheerful service, giving cheerful greetings, telling cheerful stories, and having a cheerful outlook.

### 3. GIFT HABITS TO GIVE TO YOURSELF.

\*\*\*\* Recently I started drinking coffee. I never liked the taste—and so I've been drinking energy drinks—usually one a day. I read recently that men who have one sugary drink of 16 oz a day have 40% more chance of prostate cancer! I've also read that the corn syrup that sweetens those types of drinks is very destructive to the brain as we age. I need to drink something with caffeine in order to stay away driving. As an evangelist I often have to drive long distances to get to meetings. So now I'm drinking coffee instead. I'm starting to enjoy it. Diet sodas have artificial sweeteners that eat holes in the brain and regular sodas have corn syrup that basically rots the brain. So this new habit of avoiding them and drinking coffee instead will probably serve to prolong my life and help preserve the quality of health and mental clarity I enjoy.

\*\*\*\* This year I developed a habit of cleaning our floors. I listened to an audio book about creativity and the introduction talked about the development of the Swiffer and how it's changed mopping floors. I bought one—and now I am the one who takes care of the kitchen, bathroom, entryway and laundry room floors. I like my Swiffer and feel a sense of empowerment. I always hated mopping floors. But this is fun. So this is a new habit I give to my family.

\*\*\*\* It's been several years now that I've practice the habit of "pick it up as you go." I see that this has really become a part of me—and I enjoy the sense of order, neatness, and empowerment over clutter and disorganization. I'm not perfect, that's for sure! But the habit is well implanted and is a nice gift to others, God, and myself.

\*\*\*\* The habit of daily exercise is one I'd like to give myself this year. I used to walk early in the morning, but because I live on the west coast it's not conducive to

phoning churches in the Eastern of Central time zones. I need to start my day with early prayer—and then make my phone calls. When I travel I usually take walks from 3 to 4 PM. I'm going to try to make myself walk in the late afternoons—when phoning can no longer be done.

**1Tim. 4:8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.**

The Bible comments the doing of good. We should do good to others—but also do good things for ourselves. As you hear or read these verses about doing good—think of what would be the very best habits you could give to yourself this year. Then do good—as you practice them!

**1Tim. 6:18 Command them to **do good**, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.**

**Heb. 13:16 And do not forget to **do good** and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.**

**1Pet. 3:11 He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.**

**1Pet. 3:13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?**

**1Pet. 4:19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.**

So I lovingly *command* you to think of a good habit and develop it. Don't forget to practice your good habit today. Turn from bad habits and choose good ones. Be eager to develop these good habits. Then continue to practice these good habits. Gifts that you receive from others will never bless you as much as the gift you give to yourself when you develop a new good habit.

#### 4. A GIFT HABIT TO GIVE TO GOD.

I've been enjoying the prophetic writings of Annie Schisler. She is caught up in the Spirit very often and shown great mysteries. I get some revelation from God but she seems to be in another league, so to speak. In other words—I would like to learn from her the secrets that help her come into God's presence so deeply and frequently.

From book One, page 80 of I SAW THE LORD she writes, "On the 4<sup>th</sup> of October I had a most difficult battle to be able to draw near unto Him in prayer because I was filled with great discouragements and gripped by thoughts from the enemy which I could not shut out. Suddenly He came to me in tender love covering me inside and outside with that sweet love. He did not scold me for my discouragements but just told me He loved me very much and that I need not fear at all. He said that when I would listen to Him and to what He said that He was there Himself present whether I saw or felt Him or not. He had listened to all the fightings within my mind and even to my desperate thoughts of flight to escape from the battle and from my feeling of much nervousness. He told me that I needed to be still. When I would become really still within, then I could enter into Him immediately."

**This reminded me of a prophetic word my mother-in-law received for me on July 29, 2010.**

“When I was praying for you a couple mornings ago I heard myself praying Ephesians 1:18 for you. I felt I was entering into the Spirit. God is not the author of confusion. 1 Corinthians 14:33.

**Get quiet. Seek Me. Relax in My presence. Hear My voice—and you shall be glad!**

God is wanting to speak instructions to you even more than you desire to hear!”

**Then on August 10, 2011 Mike Kruger sent me a prophetic word he received for me.**

“Mike, tell WD that I haven't forgotten or forsaken him. I have always loved him and continue to love him even now. I have always enjoyed spending time with him, sometimes doing nothing but just quietly sitting with W. In fact, some of the sweetest times with W have been when we do nothing but sit together...striving and struggling get in the way...”

**\*\*\*\* We can make seeking God too hard of a thing—and then we don't do much seeking of God.** It can seem like our efforts to seek and find Him need to be Herculean—as if we would need to jump up to the heavens, fast until we are nearly dead—or rent a cabin in the mountains for two weeks and be totally alone with Him. When we make seeking Him too hard it causes us to avoid it. This new year I'm going to give God a new habit---the habit of quietness and stillness and relaxation in His presence. I'm not going to make it hard. I'm just going to concentrate on finding some quiet time with Him during the day.

Is. 30:15 This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in **quietness** and trust is your strength.

Is. 32:17 The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be **quietness** and confidence forever.

Psa. 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside **quiet** waters,

Zeph. 3:17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will **quiet** you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”

Mark 6:31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a **quiet** place and get some rest.”

**CONCLUSION:** My monthly sermons are usually a little bit longer. But I don't want to make this one any longer. These are the things God is doing in my life right now—and this message is FULL of things to think about, pray about, and start acting upon.

Before I wrote it to teach you I PRACTICED DOING IT by writing two apology cards in which I not only apologized but made a promise to practice some of the habits I suggested giving to others.

**My prayer for you:** “Dear Lord, please give to me and all my friends ideas for habits we can give to others, ourselves and to You. Then help us develop these habits. May all of our lives and relationships be changed for the better as a result. In Jesus Name. Amen.”

