

build keystone habits

Our lives are the sum of all choices and decisions that we make repeatedly and unconsciously. Our small actions over time turn into habits that eventually impact our life and the kind of person we become. In 1 Timothy 4:7-8, we are reminded to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness. We are to live by a system of habits that ultimately bring the best results to glorify God. These keystone habits or routines carry over and affect the other aspects of our lives in a positive, productive, and meaningful way.

Daniel is an example of someone who exhibited keystone habits that protected him and allowed him to face external pressure and life-threatening tactics of his enemies. What was the K.E.Y. to Daniel's firm example?

K know your why and who (Daniel 6:1-5)

What distinguished Daniel from the commissioners over the entire kingdom of Babylon? He stood out for his extraordinary spirit which flows from his intimate relationship with GOD. Daniel understood the WHY (his purpose) and WHO he is (his identity) which impacted the way he lived; his choices and his behavior. From the beginning of his captivity in Babylon, he made up his mind not to be defiled (Daniel 1:7-8) and continued to set himself apart for God. He was motivated to live for and please God in all that he does because he knew he belongs to God, and he is accountable to Him. Just like the Apostle Paul, the why of his life was clearly to please God (2 Corinthians 5:9-10). Our identity is linked to our reason for living, and God has purposed for us to live a life that reflects His values, His grace, and His holiness!

E employ a system (Daniel 6:6-10)

Daniel had a system which helped him hold on to his convictions despite opposition and challenges. He prayed, studied scriptures, and obeyed God's Word faithfully and consistently, regardless of circumstances (Daniel 6:10). Daniel prayed according to God's will, proclaiming God's promises and prophecies in his prayers (1 Kings 8:48-49, Jeremiah 25:11-12). Daniel had a consistent high view of God (Daniel

this week's memory verse

discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life to come*.

1 TIMOTHY 4:7-8

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9:4). All of these contributed to a firm faith that Daniel had even in the hardest of times. To develop a good system, we must understand how habits are developed: it begins with a CUE, which triggers an ACTION, and eventually yields a REWARD or an effect. CUES must be visible and obvious so that we will be reminded to act. ACTIONS must be simple and easy at first to build consistency. Both good and bad habits have end results. Bad habits often give immediate gratification (like the dopamine effect, which makes certain habits addictive and harmful); yet while the rewards of good habits may take longer, it delivers best results when done repeatedly.

Y yield the rewards (Galatians 6:7-9. Luke 18:1-8)

Galatians 6:7 reminds us that what we sow, we shall also reap. Reaping is not always immediate, so the encouragement in Galatians 6:9 rings true: we must not grow weary in doing good. Daniel did not become the man that he was overnight — it was a consistent, daily act of submission to his convictions and his faith that ultimately protected him throughout his reign in a foreign country. So it is with the keystone habit of persistent prayer. We may not see God's answers right away, but we must not lose heart in asking, seeking, and knocking, which Jesus encourages us to do in Luke 18:1-8, where He shows the contrast between the evil judge who gave in to a persistent woman's request and a gracious Heavenly Father who hears our cry and brings justice quickly.

God is our Loving Heavenly Father who listens and answers our prayers. As we pray for God to help us determine keystone habits to develop, may we approach His throne of grace with vibrant hope and expectant persistence that He gives wisdom to those who ask for it — and may our keystone habits lead us to a superior worship of Him!

discussion questions

Do you know your WHY? WHY do you want to develop certain habits?

Do you know WHO — WHO do you want to become?

What new KEYSTONE habits do you want to develop?

Can you give examples of answered prayers based on your spiritual journey?

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