



THE POWER TO CHANGE

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION.** While not everyone will be ready or willing to help lead or answer questions, participating and reading God's word with others will help build confidence in each member and the group. Encourage all members to read sections and/or scriptures aloud for the group.

Week 2: Holy Habits

ICEBREAKER

What is a habit you wish you could begin, or a habit you wish you could break this year?
(Ex. Begin exercising regularly, daily devotions)

INTRODUCTION

Most of us think that we are in full control of our actions and that if we hope for change to occur, our actions will follow to make it happen. However, a study by Duke University found that over 40% of the actions you do daily are not the result of decisions, but the result of habits. Last week, we discussed our spiritual "why". This week, we will be looking at our spiritual "what" (what we do) based on who we want to be and tips to start Holy Habits that fuel our power to change.

READ I

Much of our attempts at change start with an idea of who we want to be. However, it is our actions, which reveals who we are, and the condition of our hearts. If we talk about and hope to change but, continue to do the same old things, it reveals that our heart is not ready for transformation.

*By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.
-Matthew 7:16-17 (NIV)*

Jesus says we will be recognized by our "fruit". This teaches us to look at the results of what we do, and not what we hope for, as the true reflection of our faith and progress. Our outward actions and lifestyle reveal our inward spiritual health. Hope alone does not bring lasting change, but, healthy and holy habits help us produce the "good fruit" that Jesus teaches about and prepares us for spiritual transformation.

What are some hopes you have for this year that you can build habits around to improve yourself and/or relationship with God and others? What is one thing you do regularly that you would say produces "good fruit"?

READ I

To help us change in our faith, Jesus makes it clear who He wants us to be: His disciples. Here at New Hope Windward, we subscribe to five (5) S's that will support you in becoming a disciple of Christ. Two of these Holy Habits are:

Attending Church SERVICES. A habit of attending Sunday services starts by getting excited to hear what message God has for you each week. Make it a priority by setting calendar reminders, blocking out that time in your schedule, and preparing for church the night before. Then build relationships with the people you see each Sunday.

Joining SMALL GROUPS. A habit of small group starts with your desire to build a community around your faith. Eliminate excuses by setting aside time and prioritize meeting with your group. Join or start small groups that meet your needs (growth, fellowship, accountability) and keep open invitations for friends and family.

*Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more...
-Hebrews 10:24-25 (GNT)*

Share about a Sunday message (or a discussion in Small Group) that has made an impact on your life or faith. Are there steps you can take to make a habit of prioritizing church on Sunday and/or Small Group?

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We can supercharge our power to change when we focus on becoming disciples of Christ. The remaining three of the New Hope Windward's Holy Habits (the five S's) that will help you thrive in your discipleship are:

SELF-FEEDING God's Word. A habit of self-feeding starts with being spiritually hungry. On Sunday, the teachings are "fed" to you, but the rest of the week we must learn to "self-feed" on God's Word, the Bible. Like your meals, set times and places for you to fill up on God's Word. Be consistent: try the **SOAP Method** of Devotionals on page 13.

SERVE Sacrificially for Others. A habit of serving others starts with wanting to be like Jesus. Becoming more Christ-like requires serving and meeting the needs of others. Serve in a way that supports your gifts and talents. Start small, and serve with others because serving is more about relationships, than tasks.

STEWARDSHIP of God's Resources. A habit of stewardship starts with gratitude. We are all "stewards" of what God gives to us, and He provides everything we need to be generous with what we have. It's not just about money, but all blessings entrusted to you. Log what you give and what you receive. Share your journey with someone and look for ways to stretch your faith through thankful tithing and giving.

Which of these do you find easiest, and which is hardest for you to do regularly? Share why. How has a *Holy Habit* in any of these three areas impacted your faith?

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Whatever your goals for change are, whatever actions you take to meet them, there are two important features that every new habit should have:

Make it OBVIOUS. When looking to make new habits it should be very clear what we are trying to do. For example, want to do morning devotionals? Put your materials next to your coffee maker. Set a reminder for yourself and share with others your intentions.

Make it EASY: 2 Minutes or less. After you make it known, then you have to make it simple to do. Studies suggest the easiest habits to adopt take two minutes or less to finish. So start small: Set a timer to read the bible, pray, or exercise for two minutes daily.

"If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. -Jesus Luke 16:10 (NIV)

If we are faithful in our easy and obvious little habits, God can work through them to build us up to be faithful in the larger ones that can change our lives.

What is one habit you would like to establish that would benefit from these features? Discuss what it would look like for that habit to be "obvious" and "easy".

READ I

Success isn't usually starting or maturing one big habit that changes everything. Rather, it is often a bunch of small habits, stacking together to build the better life that God wants for you. Stacking may include pairing one habit you don't enjoy with one that you do, or adding a new habit to your morning routine that compliments the growth you want to see. The key is to start one small habit that leads into the next small habit and the next, like dominoes, which allow the changes you are striving for to fall into place.

Do not despise this small beginning, for the eyes of the Lord rejoice to see the work begin...
-Zechariah 4:10 (TLB)

This scripture makes clear that God sees and cares about our faithfulness in small beginnings that will lead us to His big plans (in this case, rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem). Never underestimate how God can start something big through one small habit. So start small, start now, because God can use your "small starts" to build toward His big plans and purposes.

Do you believe that starting small habits in faith can lead to big changes? Why or why not? What are two small habits you are willing to stack together in faith this week?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week pray for God to guide you in putting a game plan behind your "hopes" to start Holy Habits this year. Consider building habits around:

- **Attending Sunday services and small group meetings, weekly/regularly.**
- **Self-feeding on God's Word, daily.**
 - We have provided SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.
- **Serving others in your home, church and community.**
- **Stewarding God's resources including money, time and talents.**

Start a new habit now that helps you become who you want to be. Make sure that it is obvious, easy, and stackable, as you build your life up with healthy and holy habits.

CLOSE IN PRAYER:

God, thank you for creating me with plans and purposes for who you want me to become in this life. Thank you for giving me Jesus to be my guide and mentor, to help discover and uncover who You want me to be. Help me to stay connected to church as I build holy habits around attending Sunday service, participating in small groups, self-feeding Your Word, serving others, and stewarding my resources. Give me the strength to start change now in obvious and easy ways, which will help to produce good fruit to sustain me and bless those around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Make Time to be in God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

- S - Scripture**
- O - Observation**
- A - Application**
- P - Prayer**

Here's an example:

S: *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*

--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

O: Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

A: Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

P: Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings.

--1 Peter 4:10 (GNT)

Day 2:

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

--Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

Day 3:

For, dear brothers, you have been given freedom: not freedom to do wrong, but freedom to love and serve each other.

--Galatians 5:13 (TLB)

Day 4:

How blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and on His Law he meditates day and night.

--Psalm 1:1-2 (NASB)

Day 5:

Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.

--Proverbs 11:24-25 (NLT)