



## Ten Habits That Make Your Life Better

### *Habit Six*

Several years ago when our youngest son was eight, I got a message from his baseball league begging for a parent to become the manager of a new team for his age group. They said there were too many children registered to play and needed a third team so that everyone registered could take part. I had never been on a baseball team and certainly never been a coach, but I had helped with the practices of several of the teams our older boys had played on and had watched lots of baseball, both professional teams and games where our boys played. Since not a single other parent volunteered and I believed the Lord might have wanted me to do it as a ministry, I finally agreed to manage a new team. The problem was the selection of players. Earlier in the month the league conducted tryouts and all the children wanting to play baseball participated in drills so the coaches could evaluate the skill level of each player. Then a draft would be conducted, and each coach would pick teams. However, since I came in too late to see the tryouts, I had no idea which players were good and which weren't. To compound matters, I had the last pick in each round so I was almost guaranteed to end up with the worst team. A league official helped me pick players. I needed his help, and it would have been foolish of me to not take from him all the insight he could offer.

Jesus made this powerful promise to you. **Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.** (Matthew 7: 7-8 NIV) Nearly every time this verse is explained, the emphasis is on one or two points. 1. We are to go to God and make requests of Him and look to Him for help. 2. God will give us what we ask. Both teachings are important to realize and put into practice. But there is something else here that must be noted, and it is in fact our sixth crucial habit for making your life better. What good is it to ask and if God gives you what you ask, you don't take it from Him? Or what if He opens the door and you never enter? Sounds crazy doesn't it but we all have made this mistake. We haven't received what God has given us and it reduces the quality of our lives. The sixth habit for making your life better is "take"

You may be wondering if this is a violation of the eighth commandment. **Do not steal.** (Exodus 20: 15 CSB) The sixth habit is not taking from others what is not yours. It is taking what is being offered you. Let me illustrate. After Jesus finished His Sermon on the Mount, He knew that the several thousand who came to hear what He had to say were famished. Children as well as men and women had spontaneously shown up and brought nothing with them to eat. Not only that, there was nowhere for them to go to get food. Jesus told the disciples to go and see what food they could find among the people and the disciples discovered a boy had five loaves and two small fish. Jesus was content with what they gathered and ordered the disciples pass around the bread and fish to provide for everyone. **Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.** (Mark 6: 41-44 NIV)

What if those men, women and children refused to accept the fish and bread the disciples passed to them? They would of course have gone hungry; kids would have been grumpy and probably dads and moms too. It would have been silly to not take the food being offered. Here is another example that maybe hits a bit closer to home. For reasons we do not know, Moses at some point before he and the Israelites left Egypt following the great plague of the death of the firstborn of every Egyptian, sent off back to her hometown his wife along with their two children. Later however, they returned along with Moses's father-in-law Jethro.

Moses seems to have had a great relationship with Jethro and Moses excitedly told his father-in-law all that had happened. The next day Moses went about his duties, the biggest of which was listening to all the issues the people had with each other and settling disputes. **The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening.** (Exodus 18: 13 NIV) Jethro was not happy with what he saw. Why did Moses have to be the only one settling these disputes and explaining God's laws to them? **Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. ... select capable men from all the people — men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain — and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you.** (Exodus 18:17-18, 21-22 NIV)

This turned out to be great advice and it made life much easier for both Moses as well as all the people who were before standing around all day waiting for him to rule on their cases. If Moses was too proud to give thought to Jethro's advice, he would have worn himself out far more than necessary. God puts Jethros into your life because He loves you and He wants you to take from them. Consider these two accounts from the Bible to help you grasp this point. When Jehoash, king of Israel came to visit the prophet Elisha who was on his deathbed, he was worried sick himself. If the prophet died, who would help him overcome the threat of the Arameans? The prophet told Jehoash to take the arrows he had and strike the ground with them. Jehoash struck the ground three times and then stopped. **The man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times."** (2 Kings 13:19 NIV) Many are like that. They only want so much from God and that is enough. Either it is too much trouble to take more from Him or they don't have faith enough to think it matters. As a result, they never reach their potential in life, they never make their lives as good as they could be.

A second account from the Bible underscores this point. A poor widow went to the prophet Elisha for help. **The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves."** (2 Kings 4: 1 NIV) Elisha asked the widow what she had in the house and she told him she had a little bit of oil. Elisha told her to go borrow empty jars from all her neighbors and bring them into her house. He even warned her not to get just a few. When the widow returned, she closed the door and began to pour the small bit of oil into each jar as Elisha had ordered. To her shocked amazement, the oil kept flowing until she had every one of the jars filled and only then, the oil stopped flowing. It was enough oil for the widow to sell and pay off her debts and provide for her two sons and herself. If she had taken only a few jars, she would have had just that much oil to pay on her debt. The more she took, the more the widow received.

Each person God brings into your life has something to offer you. From some you will gain insight. Others will provide support, develop your character, or make you stronger. There are those who will teach you courage, others faith and some determination. Even your enemies have something to offer you if you take from them what God has for you. Each person you come across has something in him or her to make you better if you are ready to change and grow. Consider this often mentioned but rarely grasped statement Jesus made. **Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.** (Matthew 11: 29 CSB) You may think of the yoke as some sort of restriction or limitation. It is not. It is merely a way of giving you an idea of how to make your life better. Let Christ have His way with you. Take everything you can from Him every moment of every day. Rather than passively letting your day pass without giving Christ much thought, look to Him for direction, strength, motivation, wisdom, and help. Stay connected to Jesus and take anything and everything you can from Him. He wants you to have the best all the time.