

Ten Habits That Make Your Life Better

Habit Ten

Defeat often seems inevitable. I have mentioned my failed attempt to make my high school basketball team as a senior. I gave up all studying and worked out day and night, playing basketball seven days a week in my effort to play varsity basketball. Looking back, I knew I had no shot at it. The team was established and no one new was going to be added. When the head coach pulled me aside after a week of tryouts and told me I didn't make the team, I was devastated. I had sunk all I had into the effort. And yet, in the attempt, I honed my skills in a way I hadn't realized. I developed the ability to discipline myself and give all I had to achieving goals. I learned how to work hard and sacrifice in order to pursue dreams I had and dreams given to me by God. Some would say I failed and yet, in a manner I could not explain until perhaps now, I developed habit ten of "Ten Habits that Make Your Life Better". Reject Defeat.

There is a difference between being defeated and feeling defeated. When you are defeated, it is in fact a temporary setback that does not have to define you or your purpose in life. It can be an opportunity to grow, to mature, to become better not only at what you do but who you are. Feeling defeated is different. Feeling defeated can lead to depression, anxiety, hopelessness, high blood pressure, sleeplessness, the loss of motivation to keep trying, alcoholism, drug addiction and suicide. Feeling defeated can ruin your relationships and damage your health. It can keep you from reaching your potential and stop you dead in your tracks as you pursue your goals in life. That is why it is crucial that you make it a top priority of yours and a habit you do your best to develop, "Reject Defeat"!

There are plenty of critics willing to put you down, criticize your efforts, remind you of your faults and previous mistakes, tell you that you aren't good enough or make you feel like your goals aren't achievable. When Job was at his lowest point, having lost his wealth, his children, and his health, he turned to his friends for support. They accused him of being an evil doer, of deserving the pain and suffering he was enduring. This is how one so-called friend "gave it to him". **"Should your babbling put others to silence so that you can keep on ridiculing with no one to humiliate you?"** (Job 11: 3 CSB) When young David was considering fighting the giant Goliath, his older brother Eliab mocked him. **"Why did you come down here?" he asked. "Who did you leave those few sheep with in the wilderness? I know your arrogance and your evil heart—you came down to see the battle"** (1 Samuel 17: 28 b CSB) Ruth, the young widow loved her mother-in-law, also a recent widow, but Naomi was a real Debbie Downer. When Ruth and Naomi arrived at Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem to start over with their lives, Naomi was excitedly greeted by her old friends who hadn't seen her in decades. Naomi, however, was not exactly enthusiastic about being back or seeing them or anything else. **"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."** (Ruth 1: 20-21 NIV)

It can be depressing to be around depressing people. I imagine it wasn't easy for Ruth to keep her spirits up having Naomi as her closest friend. Perhaps you have had someone like Tobiah or Sanballat around you who made you feel like quitting. Nehemiah had left his comfy home in Susa to try and help the Jews in Jerusalem rebuild the protective wall around the city. It was destroyed by the Babylonians but was needed to keep the people of Jerusalem protected from roving bandits and invading armies. Restoring it was a ton of work and it took as many of the people as possible working day after day to try and rebuild it. **When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble — burned as they are?"**

Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building — if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!" (Nehemiah 4: 1-3 NIV)

I could warn you about staying away from discouraging or depressing people but that would be of little help because they could be your family members, co-workers, friends or even churchmates. Habit ten is tough to develop when you are around people like that but honestly it is mostly up to you whether you will reject defeat because it is how you think about things that determines the sort of life you have. It is easy to fall into the trap Elijah did who got so discouraged that he started to believe he was the only one left in the world who still loved the Lord. God confronted Elijah about his acceptance of defeat, but Elijah had a comeback. **He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."** (1 Kings 19: 10 NIV) Perhaps you have felt like that. "Defeat is inevitable and not even God can help me with what I face."

Let's consider a few facts. The Bible says this of you. **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** (Romans 8: 37 NIV) Just change that statement up a bit so it's more personal and repeat it. "No, in all these things I am more than a conqueror through him who loved me." Here is another fact. The Bible says this of you! **I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.** (Philippians 4: 13) In other words, you can do it if God has put that matter, that task, that great endeavor on your heart to do. You have the backing of heaven itself in what you are attempting! I don't think about this as much as I ought and perhaps you don't either, but we should think about it more, you should think about it more. Jesus said this about His people, those who have put their hope in Him for eternal life. **And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.** (Matthew 16: 18 NIV) You are the church if you are born again, or at least a part of the church that cannot be stopped by Satan or any of the resources Hades can bring against you.

The LORD said this to Joshua and the people of Israel as they began what could have been viewed as the impossible task of conquering the land of Canaan. **Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.**" (Joshua 1: 9 NIV) He is speaking to you too. There is a caveat here that the LORD included so take note. **Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.** (Joshua 1: 8 NIV) Make the Bible your rule of life for the way you set about what is before you and take on the challenges, problems and even crises you meet, and you will have the power of God going before you. Reject defeat. Reject it regardless of what difficulties you face, what trials are before you. Trust the LORD God Almighty to bring you through them, who will not let the gates of Hell keep you back.

Perhaps you have not heard the end of the speech Sir Winston Churchill gave to the nation of Great Britain on the days of an impending invasion by Nazi Germany. It was a time of great fear and anguish for many and Churchill spoke clearly of how they as a people would respond. "Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old." And so it was. Nazi Germany was stopped, and God intervened. We must not go about as those who have no hope because we have the power of Christ for us. Take hold of the admonition

of the Scripture and make it your mantra for this year and the one coming. **Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.** (Romans 12: 12 NIV) Believe that God is for you in this!