

START HERE #3

Why You Won't Fail This Year - The Habit Fix

Chris Fluitt

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Key Scriptures: John 15:4-8; Matthew 26:40-41; Hebrews 10:24-25; Daniel 6:10

Big Idea: You do not change by trying harder. You change by realigning your life around Jesus.

Start Here Bumper

****Handouts****

Welcome to Redemption Church in Plano Tx. My name is Chris Fluitt... That is who I am... but I am really excited about who you are and who God has called you to be.

Let me start with a confession.

I have failed at change more times than I can count.

I have made promises to God that were sincere, and then quietly broken them by Tuesday.

I have started strong, felt hopeful, and then drifted right back to old patterns.

Not because I did not love God.

Not because I did not want to grow.

But for other reasons...

I failed because my habits were pulling me in a different direction than my prayers.

Can you relate?

We have good intentions but bad results.

Good Intentions but Bad Result Stats

- Only 9% of Americans actually achieve their New Year resolutions.
- 27% of adults said lack of willpower was the biggest obstacle.

- Intentions account for only about 28% of our behavior. In other words, 72% of what we do is shaped by something other than willpower and good intentions.

I want to introduce the title of today's message.

Why You Won't Fail This Year - The Habit Fix.

And it is so good that you are here today, because this is one of those messages that really can change how you see yourself and how you move forward.

The issue has **never** been that you are dumb, weak or lazy.

It is **not** that you haven't read enough books or listened to the right podcast yet.

The issue is alignment.

And if we work on our alignment today,
something changes.

We become stronger people.

We become healthier people.

Our families get better.

Our faith gets deeper.

Not because we worked harder,
but because we aligned our lives with the
purpose God already has for us.

God has a lot to say about this topic...

Jesus was deeply realistic about human
weakness.

This happens the night before the cross.
Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. He
asks His disciples to stay awake and pray
with Him. They fall asleep. Jesus comes
back and says:

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

(Matthew 26:41, NIV)

That is not condemnation.

That is compassion.

Jesus understands our weakness.

Jesus assumes weakness, and then He builds practices around it. He says...

- “Abide in me.” (John 15:4)
- “Watch and pray.” (Matthew 26:41)
- “Follow me.” (Matthew 4:19)

He is not telling you, “Summon more willpower.”

He is inviting you, “Stay connected.”

That is why Jesus used everyday pictures like vines and branches, daily bread, seeds in the soil, a lamp for the next step.

He is showing us...

Real change happens through slow, ordinary, repeated steps in the same direction.

When you keep taking those small steps, something happens to you.

You become a faithful person.

You become an aligned person.

That is alignment.

Your heart is pointed toward your goal, and your life is set up to follow.

Jesus came to invite you into alignment with Him.

Alignment with His peace.

Alignment with His presence.

Alignment with His love.

Alignment with His way of living.

That is what Christianity is about.

Christianity does not point you to a principle.

It points you to a person.

Jesus keeps saying, "Follow me."

"Abide in me."

"Come to me."

Not so you can be more religious,
but so you can be more alive.

And when your life is aligned with Jesus,
Strength shows up when you need it.

Peace shows up when anxiety hits.

Wisdom shows up when decisions get hard.

That is alignment.

You see this in people like Daniel.

Daniel Here is Daniel is known for...

- He prayed regularly.
- He paid attention to God's word.
- He obeyed even when it was costly.

- He fasted and humbled himself before God.

Daniel is a prophet in the Old Testament. He is part of God's people who were conquered and taken away from their homeland. That is what exile means. He is living in a foreign empire under pressure to fit in, to compromise, and to bow to other gods.

In other words, Daniel lives in a crisis.

Here is what Crisis Daniel looks like.

Crisis Daniel

- He prayed regularly.
- He paid attention to God's word.
- He obeyed even when it was costly.
- He fasted and humbled himself before God.

Daniel & Crisis Daniel look the same...

Daniel had a pattern.

But then the crisis intensified.

In Daniel 6, a law is passed: you are only allowed to pray to the king, not to God.

Super Crisis Daniel (Same ole Daniel!)

Daniel keeps praying to God anyway. He is arrested. And as punishment, he is thrown into a den of lions. Literally. A pit where lions are kept. The expectation is that he will not make it out.

And this is probably the worst moment of Daniel's life.

So what does Daniel do?

Does he say, "Oh my goodness, I need more willpower"?

Does he say, "I need to intensify my faith"?

Does he say, "I need to work harder, try harder, be stronger right now"?

No.

Here is what he does.

Super Dooper Crisis Daniel

He simply stays aligned.

As boring as that sounds, that is what he does.

He did in the lions den what he had already been doing in ordinary life.

And we know about Daniel because he made it through the lions den.

God shut the mouths of the lions. Daniel walked out alive.

That is what alignment does.

Alignment prepares you before the pressure hits.

Now bring that into your world.

Imagine being the kind of person who does not fall apart when life hits hard.

Not because you are tougher than everybody else.

Not because you have superhuman faith.

But because you already have a pattern.

You already have a plan.

You already have a system.

You already have habits that hold you up when emotions get loud.

So when the diagnosis comes, you do not collapse.

When the marriage gets strained, you do not drift.

When the temptation shows up, you do not get taken out.

When the pressure hits at work, you do not self destruct.

When anxiety spikes, you do not spiral.

Because you are not trying to become strong in the moment.

You have been aligning for weeks.

For months.

For years.

And that is what makes you steady when everybody else is scrambling.

Life will bring a lions den moment.

And what you do in that moment will be shaped by what you have been practicing in the ordinary.

So the question becomes, how do we actually live aligned like that?

Not in theory.

Not in church language.

But in real life, on Monday morning, when stress hits and old habits start pulling.

Modern habit research has discovered something Jesus has been teaching all along.

James Clear (Atomic Habits) describes habits as a simple four part loop. Whether you notice it or not, this loop is shaping your life every day.

1. Cue - what triggers the habit

This is the signal.

It might be stress, boredom, a certain time of day, a place, or a feeling.

2. Craving - what you want from it

Not the habit itself, but the feeling you hope it will give you.

Relief.

Comfort.

Control.

Escape.

Belonging.

The question is not if you crave.

The question is what you crave.

3. Response - what you actually do

This is the behavior.

You scroll.

You drink.

You snap.

You overeat.

You avoid God.

4. Reward – the payoff reinforcement

This is what keeps the loop going.

These are 4 steps to a habit...

And here is where most of us mess up. We try to rip out the habit, but we never address the reward.

Here is the shift.

You do not just break habits.

You replace rewards.

Jesus offers better rewards.

Rest for your soul.

Peace that lasts.

Joy that is not fragile.

A clean conscience.

Real connection with God.

It is like that song “Your Way’s Better” by Forrest Frank.

Listen to it this week. Sing it. Declare it.

“Your way’s better.” I hope you start to believe that.

musician

Here is the framework we want everyone to use this week.

We will put this on the handout so you can write it down.

PRACTICAL HABIT FIX

When I notice (cue) _____,

I will choose (new response) _____,

because I want (better reward) _____.

To make this easier, I will change my environment by _____.

This is not about perfection.

It is about alignment.

Jesus is inviting you to arrange your life so that following Him becomes normal, not heroic.

So here is the invitation today.

Not to promise God more.

Not to feel guilty about the past.

But to build one pattern with God.

Before you leave, do these **3 Action Steps**

1. Identify one habit you want to change.

2. Write the cue, response, and reward on your handout.

3. Right now - seek God in prayer and worship.

- **New cue. New craving. New response. New environment.**