

## Banish Bad Habits

Dr. M.W. Lewis

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The subject this morning, "Banish Bad Habits" – banish bad habits.

The Bhagavad Gita, as I have said, speaks about a historical war between two families, the Kurus and the Pandavas. But in reality, it is a perfect description of the psychological battle that goes on in every devotee, whether he is to follow the mental tendencies, which lead to the formation of bad habits. When, I mean "bad habits," because those things of the mind and following mental tendencies will give us those things, are transient and pass away. While those things of the discriminative tendencies, are based on the judgment of the Wisdom of the Soul. They take us back to God. Therefore, they are permanent. And, if we follow those tendencies, we lay up, within us, good habits. It is as simple as that. Although, the battle is very intricate, and we all know from experience how darkening these mental tendencies can be, and how hard it is, sometimes, to be rid of bad habits.

And so, remember, this one thing: following the mental tendencies will help you to lay up undesirable, or bad, habits. Following the discriminative tendencies, or those tendencies based on the Wisdom of your Soul, will help you, twill help me, to lay up good habits, and which will stand us in good stead.

Now, our Master has spoken about habits this way. He says, "Habits are automatic mental machines, installed to exercise economy in the use of will during the performance of action." For instance, take the illustration of walking. If you had to think every time you took a step, just to take that step, we wouldn't get very far. Or any work, ordinary work, which you do in daily activity. If you had to think it out, it would be quite depressing to carry those things into action. But through the power of habit, we can do those things automatically. And therefore, we save on will power. It is an economy of will power.

Take for instance, if one is subject to certain diseases, like multiple sclerosis comes to my mind. And, if you've ever seen a person so unfortunate as to have that, they have to think each step they take. Why? Because the automatic habit of walking, the apparatus is interfered with, and that habit does not take place. So, everything has to be done through will power.

And so, you can see that habits are good. They save us lots of time and trouble, and, especially, when we apply them to the psychological battle going within us. It is wonderful, because, through the power of habit, when we once get over the hump, so to speak, and turn from outward things – evil things, things of mind – to those things of the soul, then those good habits stand us in good stead; just as they stand us the other way, when we follow the evil habits. But the thing is, to change over. And that, in itself, is quite a battle.

And so, realize that the power of habit is supreme in life. They do, that is habits influence us, automatically, to do what we are accustomed to do. That's the important thing to remember in the power of habit. The power of habit is supreme. Therefore, we must watch out what our habits are, because we do automatically the things we are accustomed to do.

Now, if you are accustomed to meditate, and to follow God, and to meet with those people who do likewise, then you'll automatically do it. It'll be natural for you to do it, because you're accustomed to it. While, on the other hand, if you follow those things which take you away from Spirit, and meet and mix with those people, you'll automatically do it. You're an automaton to habit. That's why it's supreme. And following those things, you'll be taken away from Spirit. Why? Because you're accustomed to do it.

So that's what the power of habit is. We must never forget this. We think we do independent action, but we do not do it. You start out in the morning and say, "Now today, I'm going to do just as I please. Just as I please. I'm boss here." But you're not. You do just what these habits within you, and these latent tendencies, will tell you to do. You go down the street, you pass the bakery, and you see a nice big chocolate cake. The chances are a hundred to one, I'll bet, that you get that chocolate cake, and you know better. So realize, that the power of habit is supreme.

Now take for instance the case of anger. We must be very careful, because everything we do, whether it's the action we perform, or the thoughts we think, or the emotions which we entertain within ourselves, they lay up within us these tendencies. And, if we keep on, through automatic action, being one with those tendencies, then that thing becomes fixed within us. For instance, if you give way to anger, after awhile it becomes a natural thing for you, and your temper is something to avoid. And you enjoy, as they say, as a matter of principal, being mad at everybody. Or perhaps you enjoy ill health. Why? Because you're accustomed to do it, that's all. We should remember that. And so habit, habit does govern our lives, and we must realize that if we entertain these things, then they become fixed. A fixed tendency – it is very difficult to break it.

I have a little story about habit. It's quite a nice little story, if I can remember it. There was a woman auto-ist, who was passing through some of the ruins in Greece, and there were a lot of these pillars, temples, that had fallen over. And so, she wanted her picture taken with...by those pillars. And so, this party was taking a picture. This shows the power of habit. And this party was taking a picture and she said, she said, "Don't get the automobile into this picture or my husband will think I ran into the place." So that's the power of habit. She was so used to, you know, blaming her husband for everything. So he got blamed for the ruins in Greece. So we have to realize that the power of habit is tremendous. So the next time you take a picture, don't get the automobile in it, especially if it's destruction.

Now, bad habits, bad habits; people who yield to bad habits are so accustomed to them that they cannot get out of their predicament. This is a very important little point I'd like to bring to you. They're so accustomed to it, that they cannot get out of the predicament. And, therefore, they cannot compare the lasting, or good results, as against these temporary results of worldly things. That's a very important thing. Like, if you have a car, and you think it's a wonderful automobile, but you ride in some of the newer ones, and then you can compare.

And so, those who follow bad habits are denied the privilege of comparing the Peace and Bliss, which comes like following a good habit of meditation. So realize that, if you follow bad habits, you don't know what the good habits are like. How can you judge, until you sit down and meditate, and make God contact? Then you'll know whether meditation is a good or a bad habit. And that's what the bad habits do. They deprive us of that ability to compare, or that privilege rather, of comparing the good habits with the bad habits. Now those who follow good habits naturally, although in the beginning they do not perhaps give the glamour of following the bad habits, but in the end, they give lasting Peace, and Harmony, and Bliss, and Joy. So we must compare the habits to understand them, and realize the marked difference between the bad and good habits.

And so, Master has this to say. I'd like to read, at this time, from one of his books, The Master Said, about good and bad habits, and about comparison; and he says this, "The little child thinks, it's fun to play with mud pies, but when he begins to grow up, it will not satisfy him anymore." "And so," he says, "When you grow up spiritually, you will not miss the false pleasures of the world. But unless you meditate, and mix with those who meditate regularly, you will not understand that, because the world, in the beginning, and its pleasure, seems very alluring. But when you taste the other, and finally become fixed in it..." stayed in the Consciousness of God, "whose mind is stayed in Me," as we read in Isaiah, "then you understand the difference between the ordinary worldly habits and those good habits, especially of meditation."

Now, guarding against bad habits; a few things to remember is this. First: bad company, or bad people. If you mix with them, due to that bad habit which they have, you also invite such bad habits. On the other hand, if you mix with worldly people – now, worldly people are perhaps not bad, in the sense of the world. But you will become like them, because they have made the habit of worldly consciousness dynamic to them. They may be good, they may be honest, but they are not religious, necessarily, and that's the important thing. I've seen people mix with worldly people, good people perhaps, after they've been in the work for a while, and they change. Why? Because those worldly people are not religious people; they're not people who have made God-contact. And whose mind is bent on contacting God. That's why you change. And we should realize that.

But those who mix with meditative people, who have meditative habits, then the result is wonderful, because then the end is God-contact, and with God-contact all things come. That's why Self-Realization Fellowship is so wonderful. It has its faults, but those who persevere, and overlook the faults, and keep at it, and join with those people who have meditative habits, they will feel the Bliss of God, and God will cease to be just an idea. He will become a reality. Because the teachings of Self-Realization are founded on Truth, and the techniques, and the techniques which we are given, and which we follow, lead us to God contact. Not just an idea about God. So, it's very important to understand that it is well to mix with those people who have meditative habits. And I can assure you those in Self-Realization Fellowship do have those habits.

It's most wonderful, I see we have with us this morning the Reverend Bob Raymer, who I am happy to say, now, has come to live in La Jolla, and Mrs. Raymer. And he is one of those who has inculcated in his life the meditative habit. We meditate together in the desert, and other places, and I'm sure, if you ask him, and speak to him after the service, he will tell you what he thinks about it.

But these are things which cannot be denied, and those who try it, those who differentiate between the ordinary worldly habits, and those habits which lead to God contact, they know, and they will tell you, and they will speak with conviction.

And now, going on; practice self-control. How beautiful it is to practice self-control. You won't lose anything. I used to think, when I met the Master, "Boy, I'm going to lose everything." But, I found that you enjoy even the simple pleasures of life, like a little eating together, and things like that, a hundred times more than when you were engrossed and attached to the food. So practice self-control. And how beautiful it is, and it is the source of all happiness and true tranquility, as you feel right now, the peace of this place. Practice that in your lives.

Master often said to me, he said, "Saints never lose their calmness." "Saints never lose their calmness." That's it! That's reality. You may have a million dollars, or twenty-six houses. That doesn't make any difference. If you don't have peace, and quiet, and tranquility, you've got nothing. But, if you have nothing, and have the Presence of God – His Great Light and His Love – you have everything. Whether you haven't a place to crawl into even, or a friend left. Who cares? God is with you. Having Him, you have all things.

And so, the man of self-control, he is not attached to the objects of senses, that's all. He enjoys them, but the minute you become attached, then you'll lose your peace. You'll lose your tranquility. But without attachment, you can enjoy those things. But it must be done in the proper way, with the proper perspective, and especially with contact with God while you're enjoying them. That's all there is to it. If you do not have that contact with God, you're apt to be snared in the alluring senses. We must understand that.

At this time, I would like to read just a few lines from The Song Celestial, The Bhagavad Gita<sup>1</sup>, in which we find expressed so wonderfully, this one point:

"That man alone is wise Who keeps the mastery of himself! If one Ponders on the objects of the senses, there springs Attraction; from attraction grows desire,

Desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds

Recklessness; then the memory - all betrayed -

Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind,

Till purpose, mind, and man are all undone..."

...with nothing left.

Even the mind is destroyed.

The memory of God is destroyed.

We have within us that Divine memory that we are one with God,

but when you follow sensation and outward consciousness,

you lose that memory that you are one with God – that's the worst thing.

And so then it goes on...

“But, if one deals with objects of the sense

Not loving and not hating, making them...”

...but without attachment,

Making them serve his free soul, which rests serenely lord,

Lo! such a man comes to tranquility;

And out of that tranquility shall rise

The end and healing of his earthly pains,

Since the will governed sets the soul at peace.

The will governed is the key. You’ve got to get that will. Make it obey. Follow not sensation, but follow those inner discriminative tendencies which take you to God. When you conquer the will, then you are free. Then you are safe. And so, it says, “Since the will governed sets the soul at peace.” The most beautiful words, and so illustrative of the point.

One other thing that comes to my mind is this: That we must watch during the unguarded state of mind lest we be engrossed in these sense pleasures. And by being so engrossed, the first thing we know, we have a repulsion for good habits. We have a repulsion, for instance, to follow meditation. If you do not watch out, in your unguarded moments, and follow outward things, then that repulsion comes. That repugnance comes for following good things. So watch the unguarded moments. And they are very difficult to keep away from the influence of such things, because we have to live in this world of sensation and outward things. The wise, the yogi, he watches those moments, and he, by following the techniques of one who had perfect tranquility – self-control – by following that one, he is on his guard in those unguarded moments. And these habits cannot influence us. Especially these latent tendencies, which take us away from God, cannot influence us.

And so, another point, watch the unguarded moments. And they just slip in so easily, because evil is organized. The devil is organized evil. Satan is organized evil. It's a conscious Force. So let us watch the unguarded moments that we are not caused to slip off away from our higher goal of oneness with God.

And, finally, above all, we must form the habit for God. That's the only safe thing to do. Form the habit for God. Isn't He, who gives us all things – those near and dear to us, our families, and life itself even – isn't he worth 1/24th of the day? One hour out of the twenty-four hours?

And so, we should, we should, above all, even if we have a few bad habits, forget them. If we form that habit for God, we cannot fail. Because, if we form that habit for God, which means the habit of regular meditation, we will attain God- contact, and having contact with the Master of the Universe, what bad habit can stay? No bad habit can remain.

When people are down in the gutter and need help, when they feel all is lost, they need one thing. And, if they have that one thing, all is not lost. They will be lifted up into the Great Presence of God. Why? Because, He's Supreme.

And so, we can see, let us develop that one habit, especially, and that is the habit for God. Having that, we can overcome all bad habits, and we can rise to the occasion of remembering our Divinity. Our memory will not be lost. Our memory will be sharpened, increased, and we will realize ourselves as a child of God. That's the greatest thing. That's the greatest thing is to create that habit for God.

And it's so wonderful to see, as I have the opportunity to see people in the work, in the Colony. I see them come with all sorts of habits. Everybody comes and wants to change us all over. Make the whole thing over. But then I see them meditating. And finally, I see them change. And it's the most wonderful thing to see the person's face change. Why? Because they are making, creating that habit for God. And as long as they do that, I don't worry how many bad habits they have. We all have them.

I read, and you have read, the lives of the different saints. They weren't any angels. They had plenty of bad habits. But they had one good habit of

perseverance, and sticking to it, until they had God-contact. Then, all things must come. And so, let us realize that one thing: above all we must form the habit for God.

And so, in closing, let me read from The Master Said, a few words of our Master: "We have to turn to God sometimes," he writes, "sometime. Isn't it better to do it now? Just give yourself to Him and say, "Lord, good or bad, naughty or good, I am Thy child, you've got to take care of me. He will take care of you. And, if you keep on and do not stop trying, you will change. Be a sinner who never gave up and become a saint," Master used to always, say that.

When I first met him he said, "You will find that your life is finished." I didn't know what he meant. I didn't want to lose it. He said, "You'll find your life is changed." It wasn't long before I found that, that I wasn't satisfied with this other thing, because he'd opened my eyes, and by regular, diligent meditation I began to find the Reality behind this outward consciousness. And that Reality is God. That's what he meant. You'll find your life is finished. But a greater thing comes. And that greater thing is, the conscious contact with the Master of the Universe, who has made all things, and having all things, can give us all things. And that comes by banishing bad habits; by replacing them with the good habits which lead to God.

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1 Bhagavad-Gita or Song Celestial, Chapter 2, Krishna, Translation by Sir Edwin Arnold, 400 BCE