

A POWER STRONGER THAN BAD HABITS

VIDEO TWO

We've seen that, at one level, we may 'know' that a habit is destructive. We may hate it and feel deep shame around it. We may long to be free of it. Yet – consciously or not – our deepest problem is that we believe that surrendering our habits will mean living with more misery, or less happiness.

This is why habits can't be defeated by willpower alone. We must be fuelled by wanting something more than whatever it is we're denying. Wanting to change a habit just because it's embarrassing, expensive or unhealthy will never be enough.

In fact, say the writers of the Bible, our bad habits are ultimately spiritual issues. We're all prone to look for life and happiness in the wrong places.

Sometimes this is a conscious choice. Other times, it's like a fog descends on us, confusing our minds and hearts, and we turn to behaviours we'll later regret.

You may feel defeated by your bad habits. But there is hope and power to change.

Here's how the most famous psalm opens:

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

The psalm writer David is convinced that he lacks nothing – that with God as his shepherd, he has *everything* he needs.

When David is stressed out, he lacks nothing. When he is bored, he lacks nothing. When he feels like the odd one out, he lacks nothing. When it feels like his hormones are raging, he lacks nothing. When he's finding it hard to sleep, he lacks nothing.

Imagine what it would feel like for that conviction to grip you when you're drawn towards a bad habit: the LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

I don't need this thing.

Do you sense the fresh power that comes with this conviction?

David doesn't say that God will take away the moments that trigger our habitual behaviour. He doesn't say that turning to God will necessarily help us feel less bored or stressed, or that we'll sleep well. But he is confident that, even in those moments, God is enough. Knowing him is all we need.

We needn't look for life elsewhere.

Christians hold that, as God in human form, Jesus met our ultimate need through dying for us at the cross. That's how committed to us he is. And if he met our deepest need, he won't leave us lacking in any other way. He won't let us go – even when life is hard. Even when, as the psalm puts it, we walk through the darkest valley.

Jesus is all we need – even when we feel bored, stressed or the odd one out.

Breaking habits isn't easy. Identifying the wrong places we look for life doesn't take away their attractiveness. It can take a long time to unsee wrong ways of viewing the world, and to stop turning to familiar behaviours. It normally takes significant time and effort to see change.

Nevertheless, the more convinced we are that God is good and that, knowing him, we lack nothing – the more power we have to fight our bad habits. Our ultimate happiness is in knowing him, in all of life's ups and downs.

In the meantime, he promises to keep shepherding us, however messy our lives are. His rod and staff comfort us... even as we continue to turn to our bad habits.

We may not be obedient sheep, but he is the good shepherd, and he will never let us go.