

HABIT AUDIT EXERCISE



**"YOU ARE WHAT YOU LOVE BECAUSE YOU
LIVE TOWARD WHAT YOU WANT."**

- James K. A. Smith

This booklet provides easy to understand steps to help us recognize the habits and patterns ingrained in us. **The things we do also do something to us.** In fact, in one sense, we are the culmination of the effects of our habits. Habits are the outworking of that which we love, and the answer to 'what do I love?' is revealed in the things that we do.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Please keep in mind that this is merely a tool to help us get started in understanding ourselves and the habits ingrained in us. Our primary goal is to simply create additional space in our lives to live in a deep, abiding relationship with God and others.

Remain centered around these values:

- Love God
- Learn the way of Jesus
- Live with purpose

WHEN TWO DISCIPLES HEARD HIM SAY THIS,
THEY FOLLOWED JESUS. TURNING AROUND,
JESUS SAW THEM FOLLOWING AND ASKED,
"WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

JOHN 1v37-38
NIV

WHAT DO I WANT?

"What do you want?" is the most fundamental question of Christian discipleship. In fact, it's the first question asked by Jesus in the four Gospels (John 1v38), and it is the question buried under almost every question he asked.

This question is incisive and piercing because **we are what we want.**

As James K.A. Smith put it in his book *You Are What You Love*: **"You are what you love because you live toward what you want."**

What are the habits that shape my life? What patterns do I find myself locked in? What actions or thoughts do I find myself repeating? In what direction are they aiming my loves, longings and desires?

More importantly, what do these habits, patterns, actions and thoughts say about who I am becoming?

For us, understanding our habits is a key to unlocking an understanding of the existential chambers of our hearts. Yet, some of these habits are so woven into our days that they are as natural as breathing or blinking.

As you complete this exercise, continue to ask yourself:

What do I want and who do I want to become?

**"IF THE HEART IS LIKE A COMPASS, THEN WE
NEED (REGULARLY) TO CALIBRATE OUR
HEARTS, TURNING THEM TO BE DIRECTED TO
THE CREATOR, OUR MAGNETIC NORTH."**

- James K. A. Smith

WEEK 1: AUDIT

WEEK 2: REFLECT

WEEK 3: REPLACE

WEEK ONE: AUDIT

I perform a habit audit of my life.

For one week, I keep a short journal (either paper or electronic) of the habits that make up my week.

In doing this exercise, it's important that I am honest with myself about the patterns that shape who I am. I avoid writing down things that are untrue or are simply a reflection of my ideal self. Honesty is key here. Instead, I focus on writing about the habits that are already there, ingrained in my daily rhythm. In doing this practice, I avoid passing judgement on myself.

When recording my habits, it's necessary that I record the amount of time, energy and money I'm spending on each thing. For instance, maybe I find this to be true: *I'm spending one hour a night on social media, \$100 on coffee and fast-food per week, and I spend time working on my spiritual formation once per week.* These are just a few simple examples of how I might be spending time, energy and money. Start with the obvious, surface level habits and work your way down to the less obvious habits.

Some areas of life to consider include, but are not limited to: eating habits, exercising habits, lifestyle habits, mental health habits, social habits, and any habit that bring me closer or further from God's presence.

WEEK ONE: AUDIT

I can ask myself a series of questions before beginning:

How much sleep am I getting per night?

What's the first thing I do when I wake up?

What type of food am I consuming?

How many drinks am I having per week?

How much time do I find myself sitting per day?

When do I go outside?

What am I doing to stay in shape?

Where am I spending my money?

What am I trying to accomplish?

What is capturing my attention?

How often do I find myself worrying about life?

How much time am I spending on my phone?

What shows am I watching and how often?

When do I pray?

How often do I read my Bible?

Where do I notice God's presence?

Who do I spend time together with and how often?

When do I sit down for dinner with someone else?

How do I respond when I'm angry?

How often do I try and change another person's opinion?

WEEK ONE: AUDIT

Habit audit example: "At the end my week, I discovered that:

- I spend \$10 on coffee each day
- I spend 50 minutes on social media each night, before bed
- I wake up and immediately check my phone for messages
- I fall asleep to Netflix most nights
- I spend roughly \$100 on takeout food each week
- I spend an hour shopping online each day
- I pray 2-3 times a week
- I attend church every other week
- I spend a large part of my nights worrying about finances or the future
- I spend \$30 on beer, wine or liquor each week
- I volunteer with my church or a local non-profit once per month
- I spend one night per week having dinner around a table
- I work one hour a week on a passion project outside of my normal job
- I read my Bible only when I need to or when I'm at church
- I become angry when I'm not in control of my circumstances
- I get anxious when I must wait for things
- I touch my phone whenever something is not occupying my attention
- I get outside twice per week for a walk

On the next page, we've included a blank template you can fill out if you choose to. Feel free to keep track of your habits whichever way is most convenient for you (i.e.: journal, diary, digital planner, etc.).

HABIT AUDIT	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

WEEK TWO: REFLECT

I reflect on my habit audit.

By reflecting on the habits that make up my week, I can begin to understand how they are shaping me. Here are four, simple questions you can ask yourself once you've completed the audit:

- (1) What habits and patterns are shaping me?
- (2) What habits and patterns have been shaping me without my knowing?
- (3) What habits are leading me towards Jesus?
- (4) What habits are leading me away from Jesus?

Consider sharing or discussing the results of your audit with your circle of trust or Community. Feel free to share and be honest with yourself and others. What we think, feel and behave like is often inconsistent with who Jesus wants us to become. Yet, our spiritual formation is a journey, and we are all on that journey at different stages. Resist the temptation to feel guilty or ashamed. Instead, use this opportunity to ask Jesus: **who do you want me to become?**

We invite you to spend the next week praying the Examen each night. This form of prayer is a practice for paying attention to our lives.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

A form of prayer emerging in the sixteenth century from Ignatius of Loyola, the **prayer of examen** is the practice of recognizing instances of God's grace throughout our day. The examen is a practice for paying attention to our lives. During this nightly prayer, we discover how God has been present to us throughout the day, as well as examine the areas of our lives where we need healing. We reflect on the day having just ended.

I REPLAY

Replay the key events and emotions from your day, asking God to reveal His presence to you in those moments.

II RECALL

Thank God for the moments of joy within your day. Thank God for His presence and any blessings that come to mind, no matter how small.

III REPENT

Recognize the moments where you veered off track. Were there words, thoughts, desires or actions that didn't look like Jesus? Confess, receive His grace and ask for His spirit to empower you.

IV RENEW

Consider tomorrow with hope, asking God for the strength and wisdom to walk the path of Jesus in the everyday moments of life.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

I REPLAY

Replay the key events and emotions from your day, asking God to reveal His presence to you in those moments. A helpful way of exploring this is by examining key emotions you felt and thoughts you had throughout the past 24 hours.

Ask yourself:

What made me happy?

What made me angry?

What made me anxious?

What made me sad?

What made me scared?

When did I love or feel love?

What thoughts did I come back to again-and-again?

What did I obsess over?

What did I spend my money on?

What did I want to accomplish?

Why did I want to accomplish these things?

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

II RECALL

Thank God for the moments of joy within your day. Thank God for His presence and any blessings that come to mind, no matter how small.

Ask yourself:

What brought me joy?

What moments am I grateful for?

What am I thankful for in the last 24 hours?

What action, mindset or rhythms should I try and repeat with intention?

Are there habits that made me more like Jesus today?

Are there habits that made me take notice of you God?

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

III REPENT

Recognize the moments where you veered off track. Were there words, thoughts, desires or actions that didn't look like Jesus?

Confess, receive His grace and ask for His spirit to empower you. Though we find complete and permanent justification in Jesus, it's still important for us to be honest with ourselves and God.

Ask yourself:

Was there a moment when I acted aggressively towards someone else?

Was there a moment where I might have lacked compassion for someone or ignored a need?

Was there a moment where I recognized there is something I need to stop doing because it's harming me or the people around me?

Are there habits that made me less like Jesus today?

Always remember that (a) God meets us where we are and that (b) for every three steps forward in our spiritual formation, we often take two steps back. Resist the temptation to feel shame but be prepared to be honest and real with God and yourself.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

IV RENEW

Considering tomorrow with hope, asking God for the strength and wisdom to walk the path of Jesus in the everyday moments of life.

Ask yourself:

What are my plans for the next 24 hours?

What are my hopes?

What are my concerns?

What is God calling me to do tomorrow?

Where do I need to be especially aware of God's presence?

"THE FIRST AND MOST BASIC THING WE CAN AND MUST DO IS TO KEEP GOD BEFORE OUR MINDS... THIS IS THE FUNDAMENTAL SECRET OF CARING FOR OUR SOULS. OUR PART IN THUS PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS TO DIRECT AND REDIRECT OUR MINDS CONSTANTLY TO HIM.

IN THE EARLY TIMES OF OUR 'PRACTICING', WE MAY WELL BE CHALLENGED BY OUR BURDENSOME HABITS OF DWELLING ON THINGS LESS THAN GOD. BUT THESE ARE HABITS – NOT THE LAW OF GRAVITY – AND CAN BE BROKEN. A NEW, GRACE-FILLED HABIT WILL REPLACE THE FORMER ONES AS WE TAKE INTENTIONAL STEPS TOWARD KEEPING GOD BEFORE US.

SOON OUR MINDS WILL RETURN TO GOD AS THE NEEDLE OF A COMPASS CONSTANTLY RETURNS TO THE NORTH."

- Dallas Willard

WEEK THREE: REPLACE

I begin to replace bad habits with grace-filled practices.

Habits are not the law of gravity and *can* be broken. But as we eliminate unhealthy habits from our lives, it's also just as important for us to intentionally replace these old habits with grace-filled practices that draw us closer to God.

If I want to live a healthy spiritual life, I need a mixture of both downhill and uphill practices making up my daily rhythm.

Simply speaking, a **downstream practice** is anything I find to be fun and easy to accomplish that is both life-giving and draws me closer to God. On the other hand, an **upstream practice** is anything that is difficult and challenging at a soul level. It hits me where I am weak and need growth.

I might think to myself:

What practices of Jesus come naturally to me? (*Downstream practice*)

What practices of Jesus require me to put in more effort and intention?
(*Upstream practice*)

It might even be helpful to create a list with your Community or circle of trust of all the practices of Jesus you can think of. We have a short list to get you started in our "Learning the Way of Jesus" booklet.

WEEK THREE: REPLACE

Step 1: I write a short list of downstream and upstream practices of Jesus to share with my Community. Each person will have a unique list of what they experience to be downstream or upstream practices.

Step 2: I take my habit audit from week 1 and pick 2 - 3 unhealthy habits that I would like to see changed in my life this week.

Step 3: I look at my list of downstream and upstream practices, making a commitment to myself to switch out 2 – 3 unhealthy habits with 2 - 3 downstream and upstream practices. I make sure to have an even mix.

Here are some simple examples:

- Instead of scrolling through my phone when I wake up, I spend 10-15 minutes each morning reading a Psalm and praying.
- Instead of spending my weekend watching TV or doing online shopping, I have dinner with my Community or a close friend each Saturday.
- Instead of spending money on fast food each week, I eat at home and save the extra money in order to give generously to the people around me.

Step 4: I share my plan with my Community. The journey of a disciple is not meant to be spent alone, but rather in the deep web of community that Jesus called family. I begin, with their support, to intentionally try new ways of living within my body. With each practice I commit to, I also commit to sticking with it. Formation comes with repetition.

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

WE INVITE YOU TO CHECK
OUT OUR BOOKLET ON
DEVELOPING A RULE OF
LIFE.

**YOU CAN FIND THIS AND
OTHER DISCIPLESHIP
RESOURCES AT
happychurch.ca**

