

## 5 Habits that will MAKE or BREAK 2026

**Intro:** Everyone has habits. How many habits have you practiced so far today? Many of you have a “morning routine.” You basically do the same thing every morning. (Mine always involves coffee!) Some of you have a habit of sitting in the same seat every Sunday. Some have a habit of Sunday Football. We all have hygiene habits (brushing our teeth – showering – hair – makeup – etc...) We do all these things almost without thinking – deciding or choosing. That’s why they are habits.

- The right habits literally make or break our lives. Developing the right habits is crucial because they automate positive behaviors, they help create consistency, and they empower discipline. Habits create efficiency to help us achieve goals. They improve health by reducing stress and create long-term success.
- Habits essentially shape who you become. Habits reduce the need for constant decision-making, freeing up mental energy for more important tasks. Habits literally are the stepping stones to life change and growth.
- Therefore, as we enter yet another year, let’s forget about New Year’s resolutions. Hardly anyone ever sticks with them anyway. Instead, let’s develop some habits that will make 2026 a better year. Let’s not hope for a better year. The right habits will create one.

5 habits that will make or break 2026.

### 1. The Habit of Forgiveness

*Col. 3:13 “Make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” (NLT)*

- Expect imperfection in your relationships
  - We are commanded to “make allowances” for the faults in others. In other words, “expect them.” We set ourselves up for relational conflict and failure when we think our friendships will never let us down – never hurt us – never offend us – never disappoint us. No relationship is perfect.
  - If we do not build this expectation into our relationships with others, we are going to be lonely people. Sinful, broken people need to have an expectation that sinfulness and brokenness will sometimes manifest itself in our friendships.
  - What keeps us from doing this is a severe lack of awareness of our own sinful tendencies. We hold people to standards we ourselves do not keep – yet we are so blind to our own flaws and inconsistencies.
  - There is a lot of irony in a sinful person expecting perfection from another sinful person. Yet we treat one another like this all the time. It amazes me how disposable we treat people. As soon as they offend us, we discard them as if they are nothing. Standing on our self-righteousness as the reason we are no longer friends.

- Instead of forgiveness – grace – reconciliation – growth – we judge people for their flaws as we remain blinded to our own. Expecting imperfection is not making excuses for wrong behavior. It is simply living in relational reality. Maybe instead of discarding someone this year you could learn to forgive them and grow.
- Practice forgiveness like a relational pressure valve
  - Forgiveness needs to be practiced far more than most people think. There are many annoyances – small digs, wounds, criticisms, unmet needs, misunderstandings that happen in relationships all the time. We typically just blow them off.
  - But when we don't forgive, all these little things add up. The relational pressure builds up over time. It's just a matter of time before there is some type of explosion, fallout, bigger relational wound because the little things were not dealt with.
  - I'm not saying every little annoyance needs to be talked about. What I am saying is that if you don't acknowledge those little things to yourself, God and choose to forgive, they build up. Forgiveness releases relational pressure.
- Practice forgiveness so you have capacity to love
  - Bitterness and unforgiveness take up space in the human heart. Remember, your heart is like a container.
  - Illustrate with container:
  - We simply forget how destructive bitterness and unforgiveness is to the human heart and to our capacity to love others.

If you want to make 2026 a better year, practice forgiveness.

## 2. The Habit of Rest

*Ps. 127:2 "It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones." (NLT)*

*Ecc. 8:15 "So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them under the sun." (NLT)*

This is such an underappreciated and undervalued habit. Yet, it can make all the difference between enjoying life and feeling like life is simply one big treadmill you can't get off. In our culture we value productivity at the expense of our own lives (emotions – souls – our relationships – even our physical health)

- God tells us to have a balanced life
  - Besides these verses, God actually commands rest. In the OT it was called the Sabbath. The Jews were required to have a day of rest. Not only this, but there were also festivals – feasts – times of worship and celebration that were required.

- God wasn't being mean. He showed them how to live a balanced, healthy life that wasn't all about work. This might surprise some of you, but God actually wants us to enjoy the life He gave us. This requires a balanced life.
- We're kind of like a tire. When our lives are out of balance, we don't wear properly. Have you ever seen a tire that has been out of balance too long? **Show pic.** Being out of life balance and out of God's life alignment wears us out prematurely. How do we fix this?
- We learn to balance our lives by managing our energy
  - One of the greatest life lessons I learned years ago is this: Learn to manage your energy not simply your time. In fact, managing energy is more important. If we mismanage our energy, we wear out.
  - HOW? Think of life as a series of sprints rather than one life long marathon. With each sprint of energy, there comes a recovery afterwards. We sprint and recover through life. It's far more manageable and enjoyable. When you know there is a recovery time coming, you can invest all the energy you have.
  - What is recovery time? Rest, fun, vacations, hobbies, relationships, laughter, whatever puts energy back into your batteries. Whatever recharges you. Where are you planning recovery times? Be intentional with them or they will not happen.
  - Put recovery times on the calendar now. Learn to plan ahead. This is what Lisa and I do - Explain

If you can build rest and recovery into 2026, it will be a better year.

### 3. The Habit of Connection

*Gen. 2:18 "Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." (NLT)*

*Col. 3:14 "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony." (NLT)*

*1 Thess. 5:11 "So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing." (NLT)*

*Gal. 6:2 "Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ." (NLT)*

Every verse tells us the importance of relational connection. We are designed by our Creator for it. We are made to experience life in the context of loving, supporting, encouraging relationships. HOW?

- Put yourself in relational environments
  - Often it is our isolation that keeps us from developing these types of relationships we desperately need. Sometimes we think that they naturally find us. (Yes, this can happen) But they happen mostly because we put ourselves in environments where they can happen.
  - This is the value of belonging to a church that values relationships. We try to create environments where these types of relationships can begin and be fostered.

- Sundry mornings, although important, is not the best environment to develop these life giving relationships. We all need to connect at a smaller level so we can be known.
  - Connection groups / Classes / Mentorships / activities / serving together /
  - Even something like “The Well” is an attempt at creating an environment where deeper connections can happen (explain) – We must do more than Sunday mornings.

- Invest the time and energy required to connect

- Healthy relationships take time and energy. Connection just requires time. Often, we are simply too busy, too tired and too distracted to develop the type of relationships the bible describes.
- We literally need to develop the habit of connection. We must make a time and energy commitment to relationships because they require both. The reason we don’t is we simply undervalue the significance of these kind of connections. Often, we have never experienced the power and influence they bring to our lives.
- Here is an assignment: I want you to think about something called ROI (return on investment) Where are there areas of your life where you are investing time and energy where the ROI is either negative / nothing / or minimal return? – emotionally – relationally – spiritually – encouragement – hope – joy.
- Can you make some time and energy changes so you can invest in relationships. How can you make some changes this year to develop the habit of connection?

If you connect deeper with people this year, it will be a better year.

#### **4. The Habit of Health**

*1 Cor. 6:19 “Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?...” (NLT)*

*1 Tim. 4:7-8 “Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. <sup>8</sup> “Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.” (NLT)*

Our physical bodies are literal containers of the Holy Spirit. Paul didn’t say physical training is worthless, He simply said spiritual training is better because it benefits now and in eternity.

That being said...

- See yourself holistically

- What do I mean? Western culture can overemphasize the spiritual at the expense of the physical. In fact, many Christians tend to devalue the physical as if it is not important to the life of faith.
- This is a gross error. It’s actually a heresy that began in the first Century. It was called Gnosticism. - Explain
- Your body – mind – spirit – emotions are all interconnected. They all influence one another. To neglect any of them is to limit or hinder who you are actually

made to be. We must stop compartmentalizing how God designed us. We need to value the whole.

- God values the physical so much He is going to resurrect us physically someday and recreate a physical world for us to enjoy. The physical is valued by God and should be valued by us as well. Because of this...
- Make your physical body a priority
  - Why? If I can keep my body strong and healthy I can enjoy everything in this life more. I can enjoy ministry more – relationships more – time off more – my grandkids more – my hobbies – God’s creation – I can fish more!
  - Prioritizing the one body God gave you is not pride or arrogance. It is being a good steward of the resource that God gave you to function in this life. We need to get past this shame the church puts on the human body. God doesn’t! The physical bodies God designed are amazing creations!
  - Learning to care for and cooperate with the way God designed your body to function is actually a way to honor God with your body. Learn to be a steward of your own body.
  - This does not mean we are trying to look like / be like the images on social media / celebrities / or whatever false narrative the world feeds people about body image to make them feel less than. Our value does not come from our looks but from who God says we are! (We are sons and daughters made in the image of God!)
  - We can’t control everything regarding our bodies (can’t change genetics) but there are some things we can. Here are two simply things you have control over this next year.
    - You have control over what you eat (explain)
    - You have control over how much you move. (explain)

If you change these two things, 2026 will be a better year.

## 5. The Habit of Growth

*2 Cor. 13:11 “Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity...” (NLT)*

How do we grow? What does the habit of growth look like? How do we grow to maturity? How do we cooperate with God working in us? In order to make growth a habit we must...

- Grow in your knowledge of His word
  - This is the habit of increasing your biblical and spiritual understanding.
    - Develop the daily habit of reading God’s word
    - The habit of learning on Sunday (notes – outlines – questions) Choose to be a learner not simply an attender. Learn something today!
    - Pursue other learning opportunities – Life group – classes – make pursuing biblical knowledge normal – make it lifestyle – make it a habit.

But PLEASE don’t stop there. Too many believers do. One more thing you need.

- Grow in your application of His word
  - This is the habit of application. This is the habit of doing the word of God. Without application the word of God does not transform you. God's word grows you towards maturity only as you apply it – live it – obey it. The power of God's word is in the doing not simply in the knowing.
  - BUT, this requires risk. It requires the unfamiliar. It requires you to leave your comfort zone so you can experience God and His word in real life. It is this experience that results in growth.
  - If you want the habit of growth you must become a habitual doer. (explain)

Prayer time: