



Transforming Destructive Habits into Positive Patterns: The Role of Persistence, Conscious Effort, and Insights from the Book of Daniel 1 in Character Development

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ABSTRACT

Habit is a recurring human behavior performed without conscious thought or deliberation. A bad habit is one that, when repeatedly indulged, yields adverse effects. Continuation of such habits can be detrimental to oneself and others. The desire for change often arises from the consequences incurred, yet altering these habits is not easily achieved, as it necessitates a strenuous process of struggle. The transformation of habits begins with an awareness of both short-term and long-term negative ramifications and a fundamental shift in mindset towards change. Consequently, this process requires time and repeated action. The Book of Daniel 1 narrates how strong character does not emerge suddenly but rather through a prolonged and arduous journey.

INTRODUCTION

In His glory, God created humanity akin and in His likeness, yet through humanity's fall into sin, this resemblance became marred (Herman & Trifosa, 2023). Human beings traverse life's journey amidst the diversity of their strengths and weaknesses, yet the process of growth remains continuous (Megawaty & Herman, 2024). Each individual experiences a unique life trajectory, influenced by the surrounding environment, circumstances, and conditions encountered.

The existence of marginalized nations entails formidable challenges, often accompanied by the intervention of dominant powers to regulate the lifestyles of subjugated peoples for the utmost benefit of the ruling authority. Practices, customs, and traditions that do not align with the ruler's interests are systematically eradicated, often through coercion, affecting every aspect of the subjugated nation's life (Vucic, 2023). Israel, as a marginalized nation, similarly experiences imposition across all facets of existence, leading to the suppression and eradication of their customs (Cohn, 2018).

Daniel was among those exiled and dwelled in the city of Babylon, yet his customs from his homeland of Judah remained steadfast (Hutabarat, 2021). His experiences served as the finest teacher for transforming negative behaviors into positive ones. Through the lessons learned from destructive habits leading to ruin, individuals find it easier to transition from detrimental lifestyles to ones of improvement. Every individual harbors a desire for a better future; happiness and success stand as the aspirations of all. However, often these hopes remain unrealized due to the suffering caused by entrenched negative habits.

Common habits may seem insignificant and inconsequential, yet they can wield significant influence in one's life, as they contribute to the formation of one's mindset. Habituation is a commonplace phenomenon, and in a deeper sense, it represents a pattern of response to specific situations learned by an individual, repeated consistently for the

same purpose (Clear, 2018). Good habits ultimately lead individuals to great success in their respective fields, while conversely, bad habits cultivated since childhood can wreak havoc on an individual's life, even influencing their family, community, and even national life (Looi et al., 2023).

Bad habits, with their varied backgrounds and resultant consequences, are highly detrimental both personally and to groups. Despite being widely detested, altering these habits proves exceedingly difficult for various reasons. Hence, this research holds paramount importance, as the Bible explicitly opposes bad habits. Consequently, the author formulates the problem: Transforming bad habits into good ones is challenging, and understanding the role of habits in character formation is crucial.

Based on the exposition above, this makes habits intriguing for investigation. Therefore, the author aims to understand the background that drives bad habits and their consequences, as well as to transform these habits into good ones so that strong characters like Daniel and his companions can manifest in individuals' lives. To address this explanation, the author hopes to formulate the problem: What are the backgrounds that lead individuals to engage in bad habits, and how can bad habits be transformed into good ones to develop strong character traits? The purpose of this research is to answer the formulated problem, to gain a proper understanding to leave behind bad habits and take action to cultivate a life of good habits.

Additionally, the author has functional goals: Firstly, for believers to understand that bad habits are not conducive to a good life, both for oneself and others. Secondly, for believers to grasp that strong character can only be built with firm commitment and the habituation of living in virtuous habits. The author also hopes that this research can help individuals understand bad habits and their consequences, or provide strength for individuals who are in the process of habit change and serve as a reference for future

research.

METHODOLOGY

The author employs a qualitative approach in this research, conducting a library study to gather information (Connaway & Radford, 2021). Data are sourced from various books related to good habits in individual and societal life, relevant journals on habits, and other scholarly articles. The author then synthesizes this information into reader-friendly sentences, aiming for the text to make a significant contribution to fostering good habits.

The habits under study are drawn from diverse sources, allowing for the discovery of solutions through comparison of numerous books and journals addressing similar issues, occurrences, and underlying backgrounds. Research findings corroborating the truth of the issues at hand, notably the biblical account in Daniel 1, are paramount. All data are meticulously analyzed, compared, and eventually linked to one another.

The author uses the Bible as the standard for shaping habits (Perry, 2020). Thus, all supporting issues align with what is written in the Bible. Ultimately, the culmination of insights from various books, journals, and scholarly writings results in a scientific paper capable of addressing the realities of habits as character formation. The author hopes this work will serve as a reference for academics, pastors, ministers of faith, and congregations eager to cultivate habits that contribute to strong character formation within their communities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Habit

"Habit" is an adjective that signifies frequent occurrence; usual, common, ordinary; as usual; it is something that is inseparable from daily routines, already becoming customary. "Habit" is a noun that refers to something commonly done; customs carried out daily (Agustin, n.d.).

Habit is a behavior or routine performed regularly, often automatically and starting from small actions that can lead to significant outcomes. Human behavior tends to fluctuate from situation to situation, moment to moment, and second to second. A change of just 1% may seem imperceptible at first, yet it holds substantial significance, particularly

in the long run. Conversely, minor regressions can escalate into detrimental outcomes, even severely so, over the years. Hence, the initiation of a victory must be maintained and even enhanced to achieve greater success in the years ahead. Additionally, do not overlook minor setbacks, as they can lead to total collapse (Clear, 2018).

Habit is learned behavior. It can be beneficial and advantageous, serving as a learning process and a driving factor for individual success in life. Failure in the learning process can disrupt good habits and potentially result in the destruction of one's future (Siagian, 2015).

Habit is a series of actions repeated by an individual for the same purpose and continues without conscious thought or awareness. It can be understood as a pattern of thinking, willing, or desiring, or feelings that occur repeatedly in a consistent manner (Andrews, 1903). Habit is a depicts character, a particular position, rank, or function, or patterns of behavior formed through frequent repetition that reflects one's current character (Arief et al., 2022). Habit originates from the word "biasa," which means something commonly done, and so on, or a pattern of responding to specific situations learned by an individual and repeatedly performed for the same purpose (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, 2016).

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, a nation devoted to idol worship, recognized that the people of Judah possessed considerable potential that could be utilized for its political strength. Therefore, he selected young Judeans who exhibited exceptional abilities among their peers. The king sought to diminish the strong sense of Israeli nationalism, as it posed a threat to his own position. Hence, he endeavored to alter the character of the Jewish individuals by changing their customary habits with Babylonian culture.

Daniel, meaning "God is my judge," was renamed Belteshazzar, meaning "Bel, the supreme god of Babylon, protects his life"; Hananiah, meaning "The Lord shows grace," was changed to Shadrach, meaning "Servant of Aku," the moon god; Mishael, meaning "Who is like God?" became Meshach, meaning "The prince's shadow" or "Who is

this?"; and Azariah, meaning "The Lord helps," was renamed Abednego, meaning "Servant of Nego," the god of wisdom or the morning star. Despite receiving new names, they resolved to remain faithful to the one true God.

The moral landscape in Babylon was entirely centered around idol worship, contrasting starkly with the principles upheld by Daniel and his companions, who steadfastly adhered to the laws and truths of the one true God. The food and wine provided to them were likely offerings to idols, thus consuming such fare would constitute a violation of God's law; drinking the wine would dull their minds due to its intoxicating effects.

Their cultural assimilation began with the language used for daily communication and the script employed for study. However, amidst all these changes, the original identity of the Jewish people had to be eradicated. Thus, names like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were changed to Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, respectively. Most importantly, their lifestyles or habits had to be transformed.

The final step was altering the prisoners' lifestyles by providing them with the royal food and drink. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego accepted the new names bestowed upon them and did not reject the education provided, meaning they accepted all the knowledge imparted to them. However, when they were required to change their way of life or habits, they vehemently refused, even at the cost of their lives. They knew that the food provided had already been offered to the gods of Babylon. For Daniel and his companions, this went against their faith! Daniel refused to compromise with sin, let alone engage in anything that would cause him to violate God's commandments. He had to be more obedient to God than to man.

Daniel's resolve not to defile himself with food commonly offered to the king was tantamount to defying the king's command, risking death. His love for God and His law was deeply ingrained in him since childhood, driving him to serve God wholeheartedly. This habit was practiced daily, shaping his character with a profound love for God. Conversely, if such a habit is not instilled from a young age and does not become a steadfast resolution, boldly deciding to remain faithful to God and His word will

encounter difficulties in resisting sin or avoiding conforming to worldly ways.

The ten-day trial served as evidence of their commitment to God in the end. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood healthy and unshaken before the king. They remained loyal to God, and through the wisdom and knowledge they displayed, they testified to the power of God.

Habit is a process of creative power derived from persistence in life situations, enabling individuals, as habit performers, to habituate themselves to behave according to accepted values at any time and place. This behavior has become ingrained in their character, as it has been internalized and personalized through the process of intervention (Samani, 2011).

Habit, as a moral behavior, arises from actions frequently performed. Good character is possessed by individuals who act "wholeheartedly," "with sincerity," "with courage," "with genuine love or willingness to give generously," and "with honesty." Therefore, individuals exhibiting such good behavior are those with good habits (Sudrajat, 2011).

The New Testament uses the Greek word "manthano," which means "to learn" or "by any means, or has become habitual. The Old Testament employs the Hebrew word "derek," translated as "path" or "way," which means "customs or habitual behavior." Thus, it can be concluded that habit is behavior performed by individuals or groups, which is done repeatedly or automatically without thought regarding an activity (Hunt, 2015).

Bold Stance

Daniel and his companions courageously take a stand to abstain from indulging in the luxuries provided, opting instead to live in truth. While Daniel's circumstances allowed him to comply with the king's orders, he boldly chooses not to submit to the king but rather to submit to God, who truly protects and provides wisdom for his salvation.

Daniel refuses to compromise even in the slightest when it comes to violating God's commandments. He must be more obedient to God than to man. The steadfastness exhibited by Daniel and his four friends is a result of their upbringing, instilling a fear of God from an early age and fostering small

habits of integrity and dedication in their work. Everything they do is done as unto God. Thus, when faced with a dilemma, as a minority group, they boldly determine their way of life and proclaim the truth.

The steadfastness demonstrated by Daniel and his companions serves as an example, but it does not happen instantly; it involves a process built through daily habits, particularly in their relationship with God, others, and themselves. Habits such as prayer, reliance on God, early rising, and study are cultivated. Strict self-discipline, avoiding laziness, and having strong self-confidence based on trust in their God are crucial. Habit is an activity or task performed automatically, repeatedly, regularly, and without conscious thought, thus trained and formed into a habit (Wurarah, 2022).

Basic Tendency

A tendency is a natural inclination that drives individuals to perform certain actions in specific circumstances. If negative tendencies of the heart cannot be controlled, they may become habits, and if done without self-control, they can lead to addictions that endanger the soul (Anda, 2015).

Some of these impulses include: Impulse, a sudden and spontaneous desire to act hastily without calculation. Habit, a repetitive pattern of behavior performed without the need for conscious thought. It can be a response or reaction to an event. Obsession, a persistent and distressing desire or drive towards an idea or object that is irrational. Compulsion, an urge or desire that arises suddenly, cannot be resisted, and is unreasonable to act against one's own will. Addiction, a compulsive and strong dependence on an object, activity, or feeling, leading to serious problems or events in life (Anda, 2015).

Habits can be malevolent and destructive. Human behavior tends to fluctuate from situation to situation, moment to moment. A change of just 1% may seem imperceptible, yet it can hold significant implications, especially in the long term. Conversely, minor setbacks can escalate,

worsening over the years. Hence, the onset of victory must be upheld and even enhanced for the years ahead. Disregarding minor setbacks can lead to total collapse. Negative habits entail patterns of human behavior performed without cognitive processing. They stem from a negative assessment of one's experiences, such as laziness in learning, working, thinking, socializing, or exercising. These habits arise from reluctance to engage in activities or a lack of willingness to undertake tasks. Misconceptions contribute to the development of negative habits.

Characteristics of individuals with negative habits include a lack of time appreciation, often procrastinating tasks under the misconception of having ample time. Recognizing the irreplaceable nature of time serves as a pivotal means for transformation. They tend to confine themselves, finding solace in solitude and resisting constructive habits due to a fear of change. Despite being social beings, fear inhibits their ability to engage with others. Fear of risk hinders their willingness to embrace change, anchoring them to their negative habits. An apathetic outlook, characterized by pessimism and doubts about success, pervades their lives (Musman, 2021). They habitually postpone tasks, offering myriad excuses, often attributing laziness, thereby perpetuating their negative habits. They are reluctant to initiate change, often blaming circumstances or others for their predicament (Saman, 2017). Half-hearted endeavors yield little success, underscoring the necessity for wholehearted commitment to break free from negative habits. Additionally, their inability to socialize exacerbates their isolation.

The root causes of negative habits encompass various factors. Stress often triggers negative habits as coping mechanisms in response to stress and boredom (Musman, 2021). Moreover, a lack of confidence can overshadow potential solutions, leading to a lack of belief in one's ability to effect change. Perfectionism fosters habits driven by unrealistic ideals, while a

lack of motivation inhibits individuals from initiating change. Additionally, failure to recognize divine intervention and the potential for personal growth can lead to a sense of inadequacy and passivity (Musman, 2021, p. 26). Comfort zones, although desirable, can become excuses to avoid change, contradicting the natural order of growth (Musman, 2021, p. 21). Haphazard lifestyles rarely yield success, as negative mindsets breed despair and undermine belief in the possibility of transformation (Musman, 2021, p. 25). Uncontrolled emotions hinder self-control, emphasizing the importance of emotional regulation for moral well-being. Furthermore, habits can be inherited across generations, highlighting the significance of instilling positive habits that reflect godly character and strengthen individual resolve (Suharyanto, 2015). Ultimately, good habits are not only choices but also manifestations of character and contributors to personal development and success.

Negative habits disrupt the current life trajectory and can impede aspirations for the future, such as achieving goals and fostering better prospects. While these habits may provide immediate gratification to the individual, awareness of their detrimental consequences prompts a desire for change. However, the reality of altering long-established habits, ingrained almost automatically, is far from a simple task—it requires a significant effort and perseverance (Musman, 2021).

Habit is an activity performed by humans in response to an event without undergoing a thinking process. It is also a response given by others or a pattern of behavior in response to everything and usually arises in daily life. Not all behaviors classified as habits are good because there are habits that are not good which can affect someone's life in the present and future (Febrianto, 2018).

The cultivation of new habits for a better life should ideally be continuously practiced in society by every individual, thereby becoming a new social norm and individual norm in everyday life. Old habits that are

often practiced, such as laziness, selfishness, a desire to win alone, and apathy, should be abandoned as they can hinder an individual's productivity. Culture is the result of continuous interaction processes in communal life. Individuals who are members of society always experience change, which is a cohesive movement or part of the fluctuation of cultural waves in the community environment over a certain period, also known as cultural dynamics. The process of development, creativity, and the level of cultural civilization in communal life as cultural progress reflects the progress of civilization in that society. The fundamental difference of humans as the highest beings is that humans have reason, making them capable of creating something useful to sustain their lives (Teng, 2017).

Responses and reactions are manifested through various changes in individuals, such as sadness, anxiety, fear, frustration, worry, anger, but also calmness or maintained confidence. These changes in attitude and behavior of society require effort in the form of adaptation or adjustment. Individuals in society are always prepared for changes in their living environment, thought patterns, and actions (Rohmah, 2021).

Positive thinking can effectively transform negative habits into positive ones. By correcting every wrong thought, word, and image, and cultivating correct thinking from a different perspective, namely positive thinking, focusing on self-confidence, peace, happiness, joy, success, and supportive situations towards success. Consequently, these positive thoughts will encourage individuals to generate good thoughts and images, automatically igniting the spirit to think realistically and optimistically, thereby manifesting the existing images into a good reality. As normal human beings, thinking is an essential activity. Positive thinking is beneficial to support good actions or decisions, not only for oneself but also for others and society as a whole (Elfiky, 2013).

Positive thinking empowers individuals to overcome stress by providing the strength to seek solutions and the best way forward.

Understanding the fundamental values of correct thinking, such as optimism, willingness to help, perseverance, respect for God's creation, nurturing friendships, and relying entirely on the strength of God, can shape individuals with good habits (Shofia, 2009). Optimism allows individuals to view every challenge as an opportunity for future improvement, turning weaknesses into strengths to achieve their aspirations. Being willing to help stems from the awareness of being social beings, appreciating the support of others in achieving success. Perseverance, diligence, obedience, and dedication characterize those with good habits, as they avoid laziness and utilize their time to produce positive outcomes. Respecting God's creation involves valuing oneself and showing appreciation for the beauty of nature and fellow beings. Maintaining friendships entails supporting others in times of need, adhering to the principle of "sharing burdens lightens the load." Lastly, complete reliance on God's strength reflects both surrender and awareness of human limitations, acknowledging a higher power that governs all things.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

There is no single way to create better habits, but effective approaches can be a precise strategy in changing a habit for the better. Improvements in health, finances, productivity, relationships, and all aspects related to desired change. Bad habits may be comfortable, but the resulting consequences are unpleasant for both oneself and others. Hence, bad habits must be eliminated and transformed into good habits. Strong character cannot occur without a struggle that requires every ounce of effort, time, energy, and thought, along with patience and perseverance being crucial. Awareness that bad habits have negative impacts fosters motivation or belief to change the habits. Determination to abandon bad habits, remaining consistent despite obstacles, striving to leave behind destructive old habits. Starting small but steadily, rather than aspiring for grand changes that are never acted upon. Despite experiencing failures, one should never cease doing what needs to be done. Patience knows no bounds, and one

should continue striving until the desired change is achieved.

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