

Formation in
Christian Living
How Shall We Live Now?

Lifelong Faith Webinars



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Resources & PowerPoint
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Christian Living" under
Webinar Menu

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Christian Practice resources



Webinar

Formation for Christian Living



Formation for Christian Living in a New World

People of all ages today are asking the question "How shall we live now?" The pandemic has disrupted our lives in ways that we have only begun to name. We are searching anew for meaning and purpose now in a post-pandemic world. What are the approaches, resources, people, and wisdom we need to address the "How shall we live now?" question? One approach is to focus on formation in Christian practices. We form people in the practices of the Christian way of life by drawing upon the wisdom of the Bible and Christian tradition, and connecting the practices to the "signs of the times" – the struggles, joys, needs, and hungers of people and communities today, and equipping people with the skills and ways to live the practice in their daily life. The webinar will present the vision and tools for design for designing Christian practices formation programs. There will examples of curriculum approaches, program designs, and learning activities that parishes can use.

Webinar Video

[Go to the Video Page to View the Video from Your Web browser](#)

Webinar PowerPoint Presentation

[formation_for_christian_living_webinar.pdf](#)
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Webinar Guides

4-Part Guide to Formation in Christian Practices
[Christian Practices Design Guide.pdf](#)
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Forming Habits of Christian Practice

It wasn't too long ago that children were socialized into the habits of faith by parents, grandparents, and extended family. The daily, weekly, and annual patterns (movements) of families nurtured habits of prayer, Bible reading, celebration, rituals, participation in community life, and much more. Small habits of prayer upon rising, before meals, and closing the day were built into the fabric of daily life. Living in a society that makes our lives much more complex has made sustaining the habits of faith much more difficult. The pandemic has disrupted every aspect of life and disconnected people from the benefit of the habits of faith which give their life meaning.

Formation in Christian Practices

A Guide to Designing Formation in Christian Practices
Learning Programs & Resources for Teaching Christian Practices



An Introduction to Formation in Christian Practices

In my view, an essential task of education in faith is to teach at the basic practices of the Christian faith. The fundamental aim of Christian education in all its forms, varieties, and settings should be that individuals—and indeed whole communities—learn these practices, be drawn into participation in them, learn to do them with increasingly deepened understanding and skill, learn to extend them more broadly and fully in their own time and into their world, and learn to connect them, strengthen them, and improve them.
(Craig Dykstra in Growing in the Life of Faith)

I believe that faith formation (and the whole church) in the emerging post-pandemic world will need to help people of all ages answer the question "How shall we live now?" The pandemic has disrupted our lives in ways that we have only begun to name. We are searching anew for meaning and purpose – now in a post-pandemic world. We are trying to process our losses and the grief that brings. We are struggling to build a world of justice, peace, care for creation, and respect for the dignity of all people. We are starting to rebuild our networks of relationships and our membership in families and communities. We are all looking to answer the question, "How shall we live now?" in a post-pandemic world. What are the approaches, resources, people, and wisdom we need to address this question?

One approach to address the challenge is to focus on formation in Christian practices. We form people in the practices of the Christian way of life by drawing upon the wisdom of the Bible and Christian tradition, and connecting the practices to the "signs of the times" – the struggles, joys, needs, and hungers of people and communities today, and equipping people with the skills and ways to live the practice in their daily life.

This section of the Lifelong Faith website provides you with the vision and tools for designing a Christian practices curriculum in your church, and learning programs and reproducible activities for teaching Christian practices.

Begin by downloading the **Guide for Designing Formation in Christian Practices** for the vision and examples of curriculum approaches, program designs, and learning designs for designing formation programs.

The Guide describes six approaches for developing a Christian practices curriculum.

1. **Engage in the Christian Practices of Your Community**

A Guide to Designing Formation in Christian Practices (Free Download)

[Designing Formation in Christian Practices.pdf](#)
Download File

Christian Practice Learning Programs & Reproducible Activities

Click on the title to access the resource:

- [The Practice Caring for the Body](#)
- [The Practice of Celebrating](#)
- [The Practice of Discernment](#)
- [The Practice of Eating Well](#)
- [The Practice of Forgiveness](#)
- [The Practice of Keeping Sabbath](#)
- [The Practice of Managing Household Life](#)
- [The Practice of Participating in Community](#)
- [The Practice of Prayer](#)



www.pcusastore.com/FollowMeCurriculum

Chart of Practices

YEAR 1 PRACTICES (2021-2022)	YEAR 2 PRACTICES (2022-2023)	YEAR 3 PRACTICES (2023-2024)
Fellow Jesus Welcome All Confess	Honor Sabbath Pray Forgive	Take Up Your Cross Worship God Feed Others
Hope Repent Live in Community	Go Tell Lament Do Justice	Do Not Fear Renounce Evil Comfort Those Who Mourn
Practice Spiritual Disciplines (six sessions, ideal for Lent) Practice Joy Honor God's Diversity	Love God, Neighbor, Enemy (six sessions, ideal for Lent) Celebrate Communion Break Boundaries	Use Spiritual Gifts (six sessions, ideal for Lent) Share the Good News Serve Others
Sing a New Song Make Peace Practice Generosity	Make Disciples Care for Creation Walk Humbly	Heal the Sick Practice Gratitude Speak the Truth

Preaching Guide
Download the Preaching Guide which has focus scripture texts suggested by the Foundational Essays here.

Components



ADULT
LEADER'S GUIDE



ADULT REFLECTION
GUIDE



YOUTH
LEADER'S GUIDE



MULTIAGE CHILDREN
6-12
LEADER'S GUIDE



YOUNG CHILDREN
3-5
LEADER'S GUIDE



CONGREGATIONAL
GUIDE

How Shall We Live?

The Dynamic of Coming to Faith

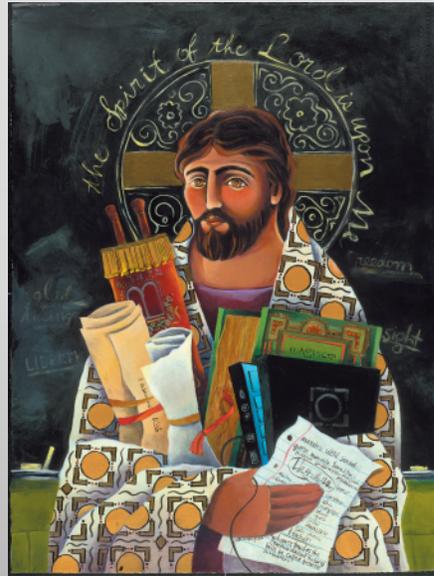
What are Christian Practices

Formation in Christian Practices

- Formation Process
- Program Models
- Curriculum Approaches

Examples of Formation in Christian Practices

Forming Habits of Christian Practice



What are people searching for today?

What are their hungers?

What do they need from a church?

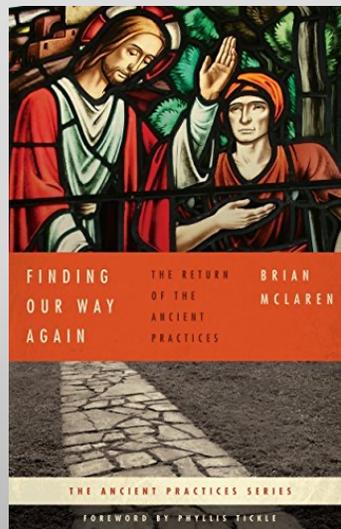
How Shall We Live Now?

. . . . the central challenge for pastoral ministry today concerns the most important mark of good ministry: the ability effectively to mediate faith as an integral way of life to persons, communities and cultures. This has been true throughout history, in every culture and for every community of faith. In our time, however, communities of faith seem to be falling short precisely at this point. . . . the main problem is that the communities of faith have not found effective ways to offer a compelling vision of an integral way of life that is worth living. Many people are seeking precisely that.

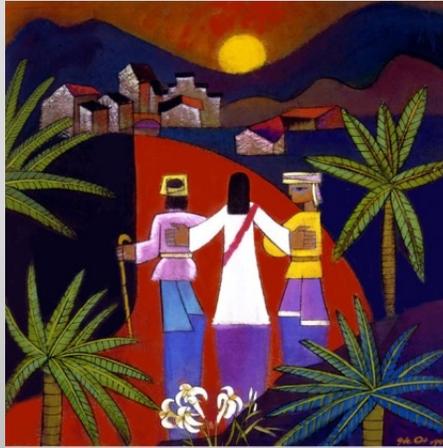
Miroslav Volf

How Shall We Live Now?

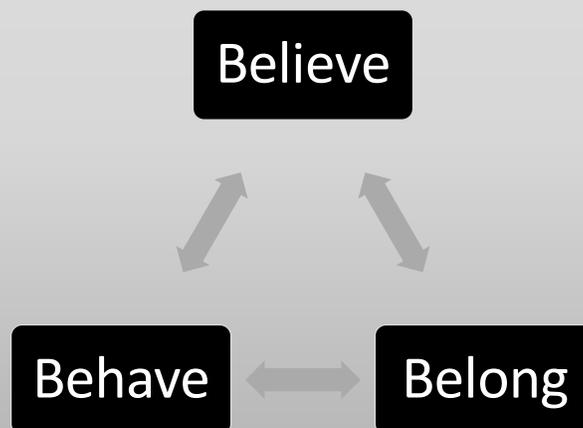
A Story



*How Do We
Guide People
in Living the
Christian
Way of Life?*



Dynamic of Coming to Faith



Dynamic of Coming to Faith

Jesus & Early Church

Belonging → Behaving → Believing

Reformation

Believing → Behaving → Belonging

Modern Era

Belonging → Behaving → Believing

Post-Pandemic

Behaving → Belonging → Believing

Practice leading to Belonging and then Believing

We would begin with **Behave** and formation in the Christian practices that speak especially to our lives today as the primary content of faith formation for all ages, and engage people in learning and performing these practices.



Practice leading to Belonging and then Believing

We would build supportive communities of practice (**Belong**) in age groups, families, and all ages together that provide the environment for learning, developing skills, performing, and reflecting.



Practice leading to Belonging and then Believing

We would engage in thoughtful reflection on the Christian beliefs (**Believe**) that inform the Christian practices. Engagement in practices helps us see how core beliefs are to be understood and applied to living as Christians in this ever-changing world.

“In most cases, Christian practices come first and Christian beliefs follow—or rather, beliefs are already entailed in practices, so that their explicit espousing becomes a matter of bringing to consciousness what is implicit in the engagement in practices themselves.”
(Volf)

Teaching Christian Practices

In my view, an essential task of education in faith is to teach all the basic practices of the Christian faith. The fundamental aim of Christian education in all its forms, varieties, and settings should be that individuals—and indeed whole communities—learn these practices, be drawn into participation in them, learn to do them with increasingly deepened understanding and skill, learn to extend them more broadly and fully in their own lives and into their world, and learn to correct them, strengthen them, and improve them.

Craig Dykstra

Christian Practices

- Caring for Creation
- Discernment
- Doing Justice
- Dying Well
- Eating Well
- Embracing Diversity
- Finding God in Everyday Life
- Forgiveness
- Healing
- Honoring the Body
- Hospitality
- Household Economics
- Keeping Sabbath
- Praying
- Peace and Reconciliation
- Reading the Bible
- Saying Yes and Saying No
- Serving the Poor and Vulnerable
- Shaping and Forming Communities
- Singing Our Lives
- Stewardship and Generosity
- Testimony
- Worship

What Are Christian Practices?

.... a set of activities Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in the light of and in response to God's active presence for the life of the world in Jesus Christ .

....the short definition of practice is "embodied wisdom" – a certain knowledge of the world is embodied and engendered by the way we go through our daily lives.

(Dorothy Bass)

What Are Christian Practices?

What does it mean to love God? We all know that both the Hebrew Bible and Jesus commend and command us "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your life force, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Indeed, it is the "greatest commandment." But what does it mean to do this? In a word, it means "practice." Loving God means paying attention to God and to what God loves. The way we do this is through "practice."

(Marcus Borg)

What Are Christian Practices?

- Christian practices are the ways by which we live the Christian way of life and deepen our relationship with God.
- Each practice addresses a basic area of human need, and is something we learn from and do together with other people.
- Each practice has taken shape in Christian communities throughout the ages and around the world today. Participating in these practices is a way of responding through action to God's love for us.

Formation in Christian Practices

People come to faith and grow in faith and in the life of faith:

...by participating in the practices of the Christian community.

...in the context of these practices as they themselves, participating in them actively, actually doing what the practices involve.

...not only through experience but through the guidance, mentoring, and teaching where people learn how to live these practices.

Formation in Christian Practices

Consider what it takes to be an actor, singer, musician, artist, dancer, writer, or athlete. They all require actually performing, developing skills, thinking, and practicing over and over again in order to do it well.

While singers and musicians must learn music theory, that is not enough. They have to actually play the instrument and practice. An artist may know art history and the different forms and styles of painting, but the artist must actually paint and continue to do so to master her or his craft.

Formation in Christian Practices

- The goal is not to read a book, the goal is to *become* a reader.
- The goal is not to run a marathon, the goal is *become* a runner.
- The goal is not to learn an instrument, the goal is to *become* a musician.

- Each time you write a page, you are a writer.
- Each time you practice the violin, you are a musician.
- Each time you start a workout, you are an athlete.

Formation in Christian Practices

We form people in the practices of the Christian way of life by. . .

drawing upon the wisdom of the Bible and Christian tradition

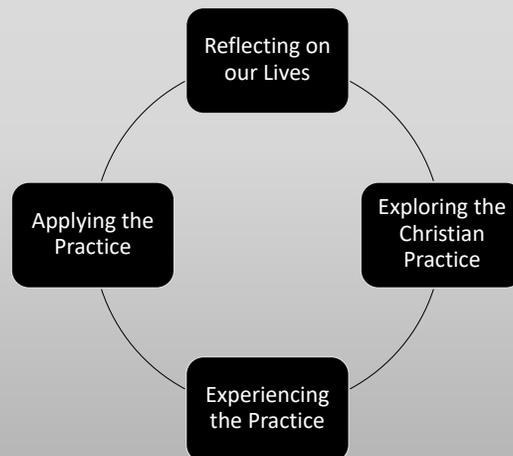
and

connecting the practices to the “signs of the times” – the struggles, joys, needs, and hungers of people and communities today

and

equipping people with the skills and ways to live the practice in their daily life.

Formation Process



Formation Process

Reflecting on Our Lives

- Awareness of the basic human need in this particular aspect of their lives
- Reflection on the hunger for the Christian practice and how people may already be living this practice.

Exploring the Christian Practice

- In the Bible and Christian tradition
- In the lives of people through history and in the community
- In its connection to the basic needs and hungers of people today
- In its importance of the practice for life as a Christian

Experiencing the Christian Practice

- Immersion into the practice

Applying the Practice to Life

- Ideas and strategies to integrate the Christian practice into daily life

The essential element in formation programs is for people to experience the Christian practice, to be immersed in the actual experience of doing the practice.

Program Models

- Intergenerational programs
- Family-centered programs
- Families at home activities (print or digital)
- Children's programming: classes, vacation Bible school, parent-child, grandparent-child
- Adolescent programming: classes, youth gatherings, and retreats
- Adult programming: independent, small groups, retreats, and large gathering settings
- Online playlists of prayer experiences for different age groups published on a website

Curriculum Approaches

1. Engage in the Christian Practices of Your Community
2. Embed Christian Practices into Existing Faith Formation
3. Develop an Annual or Season Christian Practices Plan
4. Align Christian Practices with the Lectionary
5. Connect Christian Practices to Milestones, Sacraments, & Life Transitions
6. Create Christian Practices Apprenticeships

Curriculum Approaches

#1. Engage in the Christian Practices of Your Community

- How is your community already participating in each practice in its life together? Are some of the practices done especially well?
- Select one or more practices that can be integrated into current faith formation programming or that can form the basis for new programming with children, youth, adults, families, and all ages.
- Design “practice learning modules” to integrate into programming using a method such as:
 - *preparing* people with the biblical and theological knowledge
 - *engaging* people in hands-on experience of the practice
 - *reflecting* on the experience and its meaning for them
 - *integrating* the practice into daily life

Curriculum Approaches

#2. Embed Christian Practices into Existing Faith Formation

- A service program or mission trip is an opportunity to teach Doing Justice, Serving the Poor and Vulnerable, and Hospitality.
- A program preparing for First Communion could embed Eating Well, Praying, Reading the Bible, and Keeping Sabbath.
- A Christian initiation or new member formation program could incorporate many of the practices such as Discernment, Doing Justice, Keeping Sabbath, Reading the Bible, Praying, Stewardship, Testimony, and Worship.

Curriculum Approaches

#3. Develop an Annual or Seasonal Christian Practices Plan

- Develop a church-wide annual plan focusing on a Christian practice each month (“30 Days of Practice”) through formational programs in the church and integrating the practice of the month into Sunday worship and preaching, church ministries and projects, and even church meetings. The practice of the month can also be a focus on social media through e-newsletters, Facebook posts, Instagram images, YouTube videos, etc.
- A variation on the monthly approach is to go more in-depth on a Christian practice over multiple months, such as a practice each quarter, and focus on four practices each year.

Annual Plan “30 Day Immersions”

* Connect to Life Issues, Events, Seasons, Lectionary, Society *

September	Hospitality (welcoming back)
October	Stewardship (Stewardship Sunday)
November	Reading the Bible (prepare for new Cycle)
December (Advent)	Finding God in Everyday Life (incarnation)
January (ML King)	Doing Justice
February (Lent)	Praying, Fasting, Serving, or Forgiveness
March (Holy Week)	Dying Well
April (Earth Day)	Caring for Creation
May	Peace and Reconciliation
June (Pentecost)	Embracing Diversity

How Shall We Live? A Year of Living Well

1. How to Care for Your Body
2. How to Celebrate Life
3. How to Make Tough Choices (Discernment)
4. How to Eat Well
5. How to Forgive Yourself and Others
6. How to Keep a Sabbath Day of Rest
7. How to Manage Household Life
8. How to Pray Well
9. How to Read the Bible and Enjoy It!
10. How to Serve Others

Quarterly Plan

Fall	Reading the Bible
Winter	Prayer
Spring	Transforming the World: Doing Justice, Serving the Poor and Vulnerable, Caring for Creation
Summer	Finding God in Everyday Life

Curriculum Approaches

#4. Align Christian Practices with the Lectionary

Review the Lectionary readings and determine a Christian practice that emerges from the readings and make that the focus for the month. For example: In Cycle B (Mark's Gospel) the August through November readings provide opportunities to focus on several Christian practices in worship, preaching, and formation:

23 rd Sunday (B): Mark 7:31-37	Healing, Honoring the Body
24 th Sunday (B): Mark 8:27-35	Testimony
28 th Sunday (B): Mark 10:17-30	Discernment
29 th Sunday (B): Mark 10:35-45	Doing Justice, Serving the Poor
30 th Sunday (B): Mark 8:27-35	Healing, Honoring the Body

Curriculum Approaches

#5. Connect Christian Practices to Milestones & Life Transitions

Marriage:	Household Economics, Finding God in Everyday Life, Forgiveness
Baptism:	Honoring the Body, Celebrating Life
Eucharist:	Keeping Sabbath, Eating Well, Reading the Bible
Confirmation:	Serving the Poor and Vulnerable, Doing Justice, Caring for Creation, Keeping Sabbath, Praying, Reading the Bible

Curriculum Approaches

#6. Create Christian Practice Apprenticeships

Identify “Practice Teachers” in the congregation and structure learning programs around these teachers in individualized and small group settings.

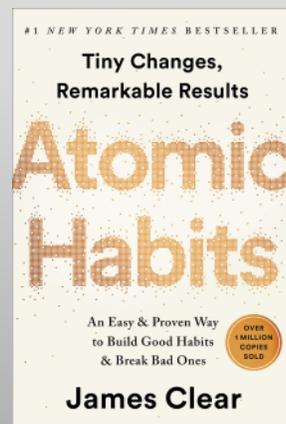
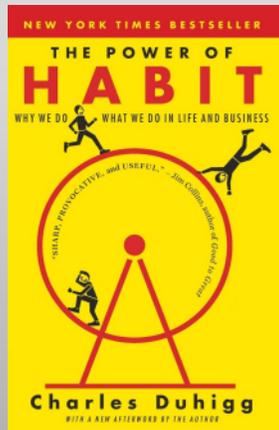
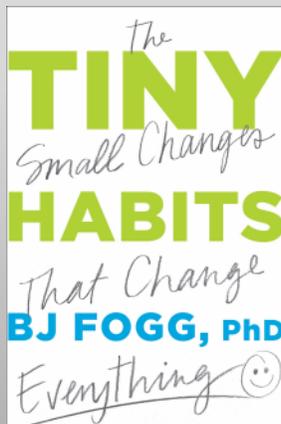
Utilize “Practice Teachers” in learning programs.

Apprentice people with “practice” mentors in the church community and develop apprenticeships around Christian practices in the church.

Forming Habits of Faith Practice

Forming Habits: Essential Resources

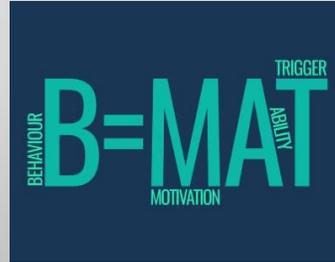
Habits are not born but created.
Charles Duhigg



BJ Fogg Behavior Model

(*Tiny Habits*)

- We can change our lives by changing our behaviors. You know that. But what you may not know is that only three variables drive those behaviors. For behavior to occur, three elements must converge at the same time: **Motivation, Ability,** and **Trigger/Prompt**.
- Here's the simplest way to explain it: Behavior (B) happens when Motivation (M), Ability (A), and a Trigger (T) or Prompt come together at the same moment.



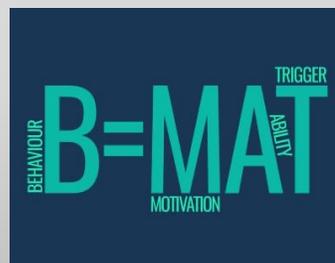
BJ Fogg Behavior Model

(*Tiny Habits*)

Motivation and ability have a compensatory relationship.

- The *more motivated* you are to do a behavior, the *more likely* you are to do the behavior.
- The *harder* the behavior is to do, the *less likely* you are to do it.
- Motivation and ability work together like teammates.
- No behavior happens without a *prompt*.

***We all need to do two things:
(1) Help ourselves do what we
already want to do, and (2) Help
ourselves feel successful.***



Forming Habits of Faith

Habit is a routine of behavior that is repeated regularly and tends to occur subconsciously. A habit is a choice that we deliberately make at some point, and then stop thinking about, but continue doing every day.

In his University of Texas 2014 Commencement Address, Admiral William H. McRaven shared a story from his Navy Seal training about the power of one simple habit.

If you make your bed every morning you will have accomplished the first task of the day. It will give you a small sense of pride, and it will encourage you to do another task and another and another. By the end of the day, that one task completed will have turned into many tasks completed. Making your bed will also reinforce the fact that little things in life matter. If you can't do the little things right, you will never do the big things right.

And, if by chance you have a miserable day, you will come home to a bed that is made—that you made—and a made bed gives you encouragement that tomorrow will be better.

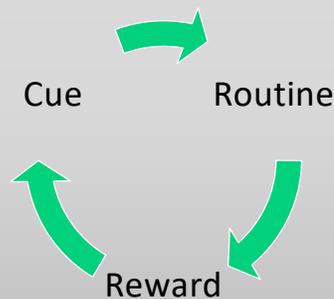
If you want to change the world, start off by making your bed.

Forming Habits of Faith

A habit is a formula our brain automatically follows:

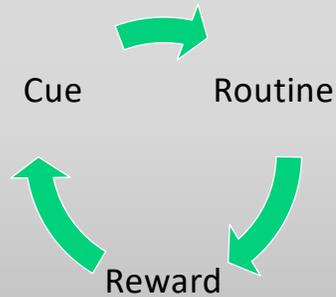
When we see a **Cue** (getting up in the morning), we will do **Routine** (making the bed) in order to get a **Benefit** or reward (feeling a sense of pride and encouragement).

The process within our brains is a three-step loop. First there is a **cue**, a trigger that tells your brain to go into automatic mode and which habit to use. Then there is the **routine**, which can be physical or mental or emotional. Finally, there is a **benefit** or reward, which helps your brain figure out if this particular loop is worth remembering for the future.



Forming Habits of Faith

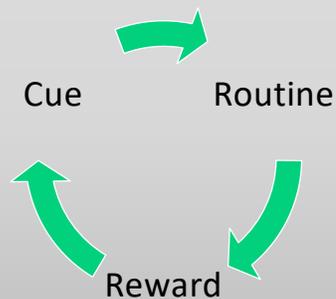
Over time, this loop—cue, routine, benefit; cue, routine, benefit—becomes more and more automatic. The cue and benefit become intertwined until a powerful sense of anticipating and craving emerges. Eventually, a habit is born.



Forming Habits of Faith

If you want to start reading the Bible each morning, it's essential that you choose a simple **cue** (like making a cup of coffee, listening to instrumental music) and clear **benefit** (quiet, reflection, inspiration or encouragement for the day).

But countless studies have shown that a cue and a benefit or reward, on their own, aren't enough for a new habit to last. Only when you brain starts *expecting* the benefit—craving the endorphins or sense of accomplishment—will it become automatic to make a cup of coffee and then read the Bible. The cue, in addition to triggering a routine, must also trigger a craving for the benefit to come.



Forming Habits of Faith

The Cue

Each habit has a trigger:

- What time will this habit occur?
- Where will you be?
- Who else will be around?
- What will you have just finished?
- What emotion do you think you will be feeling?

Forming Habits of Faith

The Benefit or Reward

What reward will you give yourself at the end of the behavior?

- Do you actually enjoy this reward? (If no choose a new reward.)
- After a few days, ask yourself: Do you crave this reward when you are exposed to the cue?
- After two weeks ask yourself: Do you crave the intrinsic reward of the habit (how it makes you feel more than the extrinsic reward (What you give yourself as a treat)?

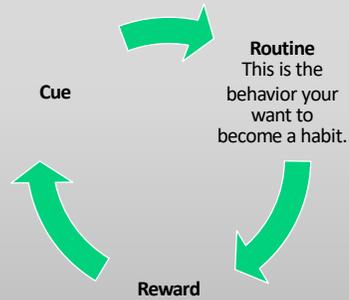
If yes, you have a powerful habit!

Forming Habits of Faith

Studies show that the easiest way to implement a new habit is to write a plan:

When _____ (Cue),
I will _____ (Routine)
because it provides me with _____
(Benefit/Reward)

Post this plan where you will see it. Try it for a week. Eventually, studies say, the new behavior will become automatic.



Application

James Clear in *Atomic Habits* presents “The Four Laws of Behavior Change” as a simple set of rules we can use to build better habits.

- How can we make it obvious?
- How can we make it attractive?
- How can we make it easy?
- How can we make it satisfying?



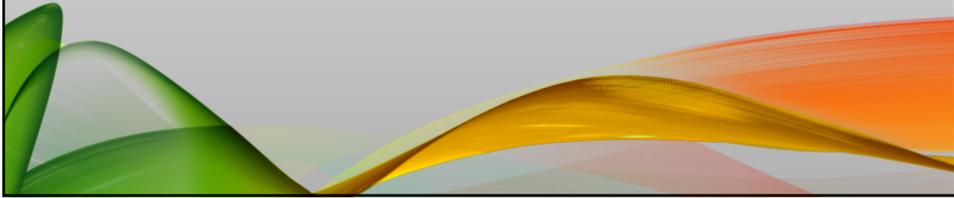
Application

Habits

- Suggest times (day, week):
 - Alone times, mealtimes, car times, morning and bedtime, sharing times, waiting for... times, and more
- Script the moves (“how to”) for living the practice
- Describe possible benefits that will come to the people

Activities

- Easy to do
- Short: 5 – 10 – 15 minutes
- Beginning – Moderate - Advanced menu of practice activities
- Intensives: 30-days, 7-days



Examples of Formation in Christian Practices

(www.LifelongFaith.com)