

Rev Rita Message Sept 20 2020

A man hired a pilot to take him and his friends moose hunting. He asked the pilot to land in a remote place. The pilot said, "There aren't any moose in this area." The hunter said, "Yes there are. I was here last year." Sure enough, in a few hours the hunters returned, dragging 2 moose.

The pilot said, "You can't load 2 moose. The plane can't bear the weight." The man said, "Well, I did it last year. Same size plane, same size moose." The pilot finally agreed, and they took off. The plane, however, couldn't carry the load, and crashed into the side of a mountain.

The pilot got angry with the man and said, "I can't believe I let you talk me into this. I knew this plane couldn't carry 2 moose. Now we're stranded on this mountain and no one will ever find us."

The hunter said, "Don't worry, the rescue team will find us in no time. We're just a few hundred feet from where we crashed last year."

Have you ever kept doing what you have always done, it never did work, but you do it anyway and you end up surprised or disappointed when the outcome isn't different?

I have a habit that if there is a Girl Guide Cookie in my home that I will eat it. I always have done that. And always, when I consume too many of them and don't walk enough, I will gain weight. So if I am serious about shedding pounds then that is one old habit that has to change. Simple as that. Otherwise, I'm like the moose hunter. Same plan. Same outcome.

I believe that more often than not we diminish our best selves and we limit who we are because of old habits that aren't good for us rather than new temptations that distract us.

Decades ago there was a popular song about 100 ways to leave your lover. I have no doubt that human beings are creative and imaginative enough to find a million ways to stop ourselves from living a life of meaning and purpose, and to prevent ourselves from enjoying healthy relationships with God, with our family and with our friends.

This morning I'm going to share 5 habits that tend to hinder us from time to time and then I'm going to share 5 habits that may help us. When you read them or hear them, you might say that's me too! I do hope that what I share will encourage you to reflect on what is working and not working for you.

Habit # 1 that may hinder you- Never admit you need help—especially when lost or confused. So often in life we become the preschooler who announces "I can do it myself" The reality is that sometimes in life our choices and/or our circumstances make it impossible to do it all by

ourselves. We need support, encouragement, and a helping hand in order to get through our tough times. Ask for help. If you don't get a response, then ask someone else and keep on asking.

Habit #2- Medicate yourself with alcohol, work, shopping, eating, TV, religion, whatever to avoid making a change that will be positive for you.

Habit # 3- When life doesn't work the way you had anticipated, whenever possible refute, argue, and be sarcastic... or alternatively, delay, block, and be passive aggressive.

Habit # 4- Hear praise in a whisper and criticism as thunder. So often, we hold on to hurts rather than letting go and moving on. So easily, we remember the negative feedback rather than the praise we have received.

Habit # 5- Never laugh at yourself. I'll say more about that a bit later.

Now, I've just listed 5 habits that hurt rather than heal our lives. I encourage you to take some time to think about how you get in your own way, how erroneous beliefs, irrational thoughts, and ill advised actions cause you to repeatedly pursue false paths that lead to dead ends. But don't stay there.

Jesus said, "I have come so that you may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). This message of Christ is clear and direct. The reason Christ came, and his desire for all people, regardless of their particular habits, is that we be filled with life. And that is **LIFE**- capital letters and in bold print, large font.

God's habit is to always be there for us, helping us through the tough times, and guiding us through the difficult times so that we can confront the disappointments of our lives head-on, face the challenges with courage, and learn to respond to circumstances placed upon us.

The Bible says, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:31)

There are faith habits that can help us when we are hurting ourselves or being hurt by what's happening in our lives. Here are just 5 that have been helpful for me. They might remind you of your own faith habits that you have overlooked or set aside.

Habit # 1- Let go. Let go of beliefs, ideas, and actions that are no longer true or may have never been valid. Just as clutter in a home can diminish how it feels as a welcoming space, so does the clutter of how we think and how we act diminish our lives and relationships.

Habit # 2- Accept. Accept that mistakes will happen. Every misstep is not a catastrophe. Some are but most are not. Tempests in a teapot are just that. They are not category 5 hurricanes. The good news is that our God is a God of new beginnings and a God of second chances and, for some of us, third and fourth and fifth changes. Do you get the idea?

Habit#3- Forgive. I talked about this last week. Recognize that your primary distress is coming from hurt feelings, thoughts and physical upset you are suffering *now*, not what offended or deeply hurt you two minutes—or 10 years—ago. Forgiveness helps to heal those hurt feelings. Instead of focusing on your wounded feelings, and thereby giving power to the person who hurt you, learn to look for the love, beauty and kindness around you.

Habit # 4- Pray. Prayer is a way to put our lives into the hands of God and trust the path that opens before us whether we think we want it or not. In her book *The Breath of Prayer*, Joan Chittister writes: *“Morning prayer done every day, consciously and contemplatively, defines the attitudes we will take into the day with us. It gives us a framework for looking at life that gets behind the burden of the day to come and the warnings of impending disaster that come with the mornings news. It gives us a vision beyond the humdrum to the meaning of why we do what we do.”*

Habit # 5- Laugh. Laugh often and, particularly, at ourselves. Comedian Bob Newhart, once observed, that laughter gives us distance. It allows us to step back from an event, deal with it, and move on. One of my favorite Voices United hymns is ‘Give To Us Laughter’ (#604). I especially like verse 4: “Even in sorrow and hours of grief, laughter with tears brings most healing relief. God, give us laughter, and God, give us peace, joys of your presence among us increase.”

Well, no doubt about it, life is always a mixture of blessings and burdens. There are times when we mess up and there are times when we get messed up. Sometimes we get what we want and find out we’re miserable with it. Sometimes, we get what we didn’t want, and finally realize that it was the far better choice could ever have been. I don’t always know why things turn out the way they do. However, I do know this, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that God can always be counted upon to help us let go of the habits that hurt us and God can always be counted upon to guide us to habits that heal.

Thanks be to God! Amen.