

The founding of this new nation was based on a new form of government and the established of new kinds of freedoms unique to the world at that time. That has led to certain habits for citizens of this nation which were codified by laws and formed the framework for the orderly function of this new society. Our freedom has created new habits.

Habits, lifestyle, and priorities reveal what we believe, not just about the birth of a nation but about every day of life. Habits are so deeply ingrained we don't even realize what they are. We move into routines of doing what we do, thinking what we think, and acting in whatever manner is normal for us without even taking the time to plan or prepare, or realize what we look like. Some habits are helpful. Some are not. What shaped and molded the habits that are yours?

Genesis reminds us God is author and creator of all that is, and his actions are based solely on love. Jesus came to reveal that love in the flesh. God's words, revealed in Scripture and the reality of Jesus' life are not suggestions or good advice, but specific instructions to create new and daily habits of celebration and love. The manner in which we treat friend and neighbor alike is like a mirror which shows the world what love for God looks like. Our habits reveal our priorities; whether we are absorbed by self or free to celebrate love for God in how we share his grace.

Unfortunately, the selfishness of human nature chooses different paths and habits, which always results in questions about why God seems so distant, and life seems so unfair. The habits that have become ingrained in imperfect people are all too often more concerned with wants and needs rather than sacrificial love.

Anytime someone or something is of more value than God, we call that idolatry. If sacrificial, servant love is not our habit, the obvious conclusion is God is not important either. When we adopt habits that ignore or break our relationship with God there is natural habit that grows out of such selfishness called sin. For if I cannot love God, how can I understand the powerful love that could potentially touch the lives around me? Sin is like a privacy fence that blocks God's light from my life and leaves me with nothing to reflect in the lives around me.

Such habits are destructive in so many ways. Broken living brings broken loving. Selfish loving brings selfish living. When selfishness is the seed of life, separation from God and neighbor is the harvest. As we join the demands all around us for "fairness, goodness, and what we rightly deserve," why are we surprised when that is not what we get?

When people ignore God, or fail to love as He has loved, why should we be surprised in the unhappiness and brokenness that results? Einstein famously said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." The brokenness of sinful habits leads to the same selfish things over and over again and expecting different results.

Paul said, "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked!*" For a moment, consider what would be mocking to God? Could it be planting one thing and expecting something else? Might it be complaining when God doesn't give what we want even though we haven't given God what He expects? Have you ever considered that selfish and loveless living is not only a mistake, but making a mockery of what God has created us to be?

Paul suggests considering the habits of farmers. They plant, they wait, and then harvest. Season after season, year after year, they get into the same habit. Plant. Wait. Harvest. It is easy to see why such habits are the only thing that makes sense for farming, right? Now, understand faith living is about the same routine? Plant. Wait. Harvest.

Our self-absorbed habits that lead to disappointment and death are healed with a remarkable gift called grace. At the price of his life, Jesus enables us to refrain from returning to old routines with predictable endings and frees us to embrace new habits of love for God and neighbor that become a powerful witness to a dying world.

Jesus described this new habit as “love God, love neighbor.” It is like our declaration of faithful dependence. Plant, wait, harvest – this is what faith is all about! Remember Paul’s advice not to fool ourselves and believe God is not mocked when we plant anything other than the love He has planted in our hearts. We can only harvest what we plant!

Paul said, “Do not grow weary in doing what is right.” Embrace good habits. Let your lifestyle reflect your faith. Let faith be your life! It is similar to freedom offered by this nation, freedom is not a right it is a gift, won by the sacrifices of others. God’s gifts are not a right but won for us by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And the power of such gifts comes only in how they are opened, and how they are shared.

So, what are your habits? What are your routines? What is it that you plant and what is the goal of your harvest? Do such actions lift up God and serve those around you, or do they mock God and demand that others serve you? Consider the purpose and power of your habits. Practice might not make us perfect, but it helps us become better and doing what is important in our lives. Michael Jordan became a great basketball star, not just through the gift of his talent, but through incredibly persistent practice, practice, practice. He even put a basket and light in his driveway so that he could shoot free throws every night after dinner.

Habit is the root which creates the longer word habitation. A habitation is where one lives, and it is the habits that build such a house. Once we have chosen where to live, we know exactly where our energies will be given, and for what their purpose will be.

By grace, God has done the heavy lifting and offers us the freedom to choose where we live and what we plant. It is about the habits of the heart. We are blessed to be a blessing. Loved to become people of love. Restored to life that we might learn how to live. And when it is faith, hope, and love that we plant, we know exactly what the harvest will bring, and what will be the fruits we are blessed to share.

Our nation’s priorities are written on documents made by man. Our faith priorities are written on hearts changed by the love of Christ. Our lives are called to be guided by these new habits of the heart.