

Patterns that Drive Our Actions, and How to Change Them

Mika and Abe Deshotel

March 5, 2017

Sunday Message at the Family Church of Connecticut



It's Spring, so let's explore the idea of growth through self-reflection and re-commitment. In considering this topic, the hope is that each of you can walk away truly having connected with something inside of yourselves. Some new thing you never knew about yourself, or maybe always knew, but never truly acknowledged.

What Kind of Thought Patterns Do You Have?

We want to look at the ways in which our patterns of thinking and habits can be productive for us, and how at times, they can be downright destructive and limiting to our growth.

Being able to discern healthy habits from negative ones is extremely important to become the people we are seeking to be.

So, first let's look at what can trigger negative thought/behavior patterns, and what we can do about it. From what I've observed, it boils down to circumstances in our lives that are either:

1. totally unexpected or,
2. everyday chronic stress.

Unplanned events include new things that can be either good or bad. Take for instance, new opportunities: getting engaged or married, pregnancy, mission or work initiatives, a surprise guest. Unplanned events can also include things being taken away, like the loss of a job or a loved one.

And then there are the everyday things that happen in our lives, the 9-5 daily grind. Sometimes home and family life can be stressful. Life can seem monotonous and boring at times, but it can also be chronically stressful. What can we do about the experiences life offers?

The key question to ask is whether our thoughts and behaviors are truly leading us in the direction we want to go, or whether they are pulling us away from that.



Reflecting on Typical Habits and Thoughts

Times Magazine came out with an article early in the 2000's addressing the #1 killer of our time as chronic inflammation. From a health point of view, we can ask ourselves whether our actions and thought patterns promote inflammation or reduce inflammation. For example, eating a ton of sugar or processed food, often as a stress response, will promote inflammation, while eating a balanced diet rich with nutrients, will reduce inflammation. Allowing the body to rest deeply will help reduce inflammation so it can restore itself each day. Whereas, a chronic lack of sleep can promote inflammation.

We can also look at our emotional/mental state to see the differences in healthy versus unhealthy attitudes. Do you have an overall positive self-image, or a negative one? Do you see yourself in only one limiting way, or are you free to explore various roles and experiences? Are you generally optimistic

about the outcome of your circumstances, or do you tend to worry excessively?

In a stressful situation, are you often overtaken by the situation, feeling like you have no choice in the matter? Or do you feel powerful enough to set your own boundaries of who and what you will be affected by?

We can also look at our lifestyle as a reflection of our choices, and the people that we allow to be around us. Do you associate with people who lift you up, and who carry themselves in a high accord as well? Or do you tend to associate with people who drag you down, who are unhappy in their own lives and

complain to you about it?

Self-reflection, can help to identify negative and unhealthy attitudes that develop over time within ourselves. Keeping a daily or weekly journal, and regular prayer, is one way of doing this.

Identify, Let Go and Replace

Personally, I've identified some of my most destructive thought patterns, and know when to look out for them. If I get into a state of self-hate, especially in terms of body image, I know to stop and observe what is causing me to have such feelings. Usually it's when I'm facing a situation where I feel completely out of control, and this causes me to react in a way that makes me feel like I have some semblance of control over myself – through self-criticism. Sometimes it will come out in the way I try to control and reprimand my husband and kids.

Knowing my patterns, I can acknowledge the negative/destructive ones and be honest about what stressors are affecting me. Then I can let them go and replace them with more loving thoughts and kinder feelings. This process creates a greater perspective of my innate value and worth, despite the situation.

Break the Cycle with God's Perspective



So, how can we get out of our negative thoughts and behaviors? How can we break the cycle? Just as Andrew Love mentioned two weeks ago, in explaining about neuroplasticity, it's about strengthening the thought patterns that help us be more productive, and happier. Letting go of negativity; training the brain to adopt a new go-to thought or behavior. But I also want to emphasize it's about connecting to our Heavenly Parent.

It's about crying out and asking God for help to love yourself and others beyond your own ability. It's about seeing your innate beauty and goodness, from God's perspective. Only God can help you

see and let go of the parts of yourself that are not rooted in your original self, as God designed you.

It's about tapping into our original nature, which God lovingly crafted within us, and having the confidence to tackle this world, hand in hand with our Heavenly Parent.

I'd like to end by sharing some excerpts from a speech given by Rev. Moon on the 2nd of March, 1975:

“Opportunity for Happiness or Unhappiness.”

“Your way of thinking determines whether you are happy or miserable. There are many ways to think of yourself as being happy. If we know that every moment of our life is that singular opportunity to separate happiness from unhappiness, we must change our philosophy. We must always think of that one moment.

We are always at a point where we can easily fall into unhappiness, while we can also steer our way to the side of happiness. So, be patient. Don't allow yourself to be made unhappy by another person. Be determined not to think of things in that way. Always think of yourself as being the cause, not other people. Another thing: even though you may have come into a situation which other people would define as unhappy, you make yourself happy and feel the value of being in that position so that you can be trained to create joy.

It is ideal, of course, to go straight on the road to the goal of happiness. But it is very difficult for us to go the straight and narrow way. For example, even God has not been able to go the straight way to straighten people out. Even God has come zigzag in the course of restoration. So, it is natural that human beings go the same way or even a more zigzag way.

Even when you go the zigzag way, you must draw a straight line in your mind. You must know clearly where the goal is. The question is where to go: from right to left, or from left to right? In between? You might sometimes fall into a low atmosphere or come under a lot of pressure. But always take advantage of the bad moments, and through that kind of experience, you can train yourself to be unaffected.

When you feel unhappy, don't ever think that you are headed for unhappiness. Rather, keep open the possibility to shift the direction to one of happiness. If you have had experience steering a

ship along a different course, you know that the ship will go very swiftly to the different angle set. So, whenever you are in a difficult situation, you must think deeply about how to get to the right side.

When you are sunk in despair, it means that you have been self-centered. Then it is natural for you to be disappointed. At that moment, you must remind yourself of your parents, who are always praying for your success. And think of the fact that there are friends, relatives, and your own country praying for you to be successful, for the sake of the nation and themselves. And if there be a God at all, God is blessing you with happiness every moment. If you are not apart from God, you will always be successful.” – SMM