Breaking Bad Habits

by S.L. Ray

You can’t teach an old dog new tricks. A leopard never changes its spots. Old habits die hard. You’ve heard it before: breaking bad habits is difficult. But what better time than the new year to break a bad habit and start a new one? The calendar starts fresh in January, and so can you!

1. Create a plan. Make a list of triggers and avoid them whenever possible. If your triggers include people, like family members or other prisoners, avoiding them may mean stopping visits and phone calls or putting unhealthy friendships on hold. When you can’t avoid triggers, set a time limit for that triggering situation or ask a trustworthy prisoner to hold you accountable. Before entering the triggering situation, get calm (through things like deep breathing or rubbing a soft piece of clothing) while you’re there. Keep an ongoing journal, writing down things that worked or didn’t work.

2. Change your routine. Shake up your habit loop by altering your schedule. We can actually override brain messages by changing up the routines accompanying a habit. Eventually the brain’s signal pathways will change. Whenever possible, break up habit rituals, like doing a habit at the same time or location, in the same emotional state, or around the same people. For example, smokers have had more success quitting when they’ve stopped going to the

Continued on page 2

Finding Freedom in a Double Life Sentence

by W.M. Thompson

When Danny Duchene was 16, his parents left home alone to travel for business. He expected them to return home to Redding, California, on Christmas Day. But instead of waking up to presents on Christmas morning, he woke up to the shocking news that his parents were behind bars. They had been arrested in Mexico for attempting to smuggle cocaine from Peru.

Danny remembers the pain he felt in that moment. This harsh reality shook his foundation. “My response was, if this is what they’re going to do with their life, then that’s what I’m going to do (too),” says Danny.

He began using drugs and alcohol daily to cope with the stress of his circumstances. Within a couple of years, he was expelled from school, homeless, and addicted.

Danny became desperate for the cash he needed to stay high. One day an opportunity presented itself to make money at the jail where his parents were behind bars. But those messages powerful enough to change his life—if he could just believe it, that is.

From resisting to receiving

Danny faced several decades behind bars. But those volunteers told him that God loved him regardless of what he’d done or whether he was in prison. They said if he accepted Christ as his Savior, he would experience forgiveness. They explained that God had good plans for his life. Danny remained skeptical.

“At the weight of what I did came crashing down on my conscience.”

“It wasn’t an instant hit with me. I was probably the most defensive ... kind of person that you could imagine. I didn’t quite know how to trust,” he admits.

But eventually, Danny let his guard down, seeing how much time and effort the volunteers put into visiting with him. “They were able to get it across to me that ... God had a plan.

At only 18 years old, Danny was sent to prison for two back-to-back life sentences. Devastated and defensive at first, Danny eventually found the key to turning his life around.

Continued on page 2
In a Pit? Stop Digging!

by Dan Kingery

A tried-and-true bit of wisdom says, “If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.” It makes sense, doesn’t it? But most of us don’t stop digging. When we get in trouble, we double down on our strategy for living. If we get caught lying, we tell more lies to cover our tracks. If we feel powerless, we strive even harder for control. But there come moments in life when you can’t strive anymore. It could be at the loss of a loved one, or in the face of overwhelming odds, or in a jail cell. All you’ve been trying to achieve crumbles to ashes, and there’s nothing you can do to try to fix it. As hard as it is to believe, these “holes” can be some of the most helpful, rewarding seasons in our lives. Facing failure is the perfect time to reevaluate who you are, what you stand for, and what you want out of life. It’s a time to test your beliefs and your values and make adjustments. It’s a time to start finding accountability and stop trying to control things you can’t or shouldn’t.

Maybe you’ve had a relationship with God, or maybe you’re not sure He even exists. Either way, now is the perfect chance to ask, “Where is God in this situation?” Could it be that He has something good planned for me in all this?”

You have a future, and in God’s hands, good can come from your current circumstances. You don’t have to repeat the mistakes that get you in this hole in the first place. Stop digging. By making deliberate, productive choices, you begin the path to being a better person with a brighter future. The new you is a step-by-step, moment-by-moment journey — and it starts now.

This edition of Inside Journal is all about a new focus for the new year. Follow the tips for breaking bad habits on page 1. Use the 2020 calendar on page 3 to mark off the days when you remember to do something positive, like pray or journal. Discover the only New Year’s resolution that matters on page 4.

As you enter into the new year, you can use this fresh start to change the way the “old you” handled things and find a more positive, more focused way to handle things. So stop digging and start climbing!

Finding Freedom

Continued from page 1

with me wherever I would live for the rest of my life, however long, or whatever that might look like,” he says.

One day, a volunteer asked Danny if he wanted to pray and receive Christ. He finally said yes. One week later, he took responsibility for his actions and pled guilty to two counts of first-degree murder.

Hurts, habits, and hang-ups

The transformation from addict to Christ follower didn’t happen overnight. Danny would spend the next three decades growing in his faith during his double life sentence. Gradually, he began to see changes in his life. He started to enjoy worship music and understand what he was reading in the Bible for the first time.

“It took a number of years of discipleship... for me to relax and fully believe that regardless of [if I] attempted to do good or continue to fail, that God loved me just as I was,” Danny recalls.

In 2003, he reached out to Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in California to see if Danny could use church resources from Rick’s book, “The Purpose Driven Life,” for his church inside the Sierra Conservation Center. Rick said yes and eventually connected Danny to the resources he needed to lead Celebrate Recovery, a Christ-centered program for people struggling with “hurts, habits, and hang-ups.” This would be the first time this program was taught in a California prison.

“You can go to Bible studies and church services several times a week and still remain very surface level,” Danny says. But Celebrate Recovery gave him the safe space to really open up and face the unresolved issues that trigger relapses and unhealthy behavior. Danny and the men in his in-prison church talked about their pasts and the ways they needed help. Through Celebrate Recovery, they saw lives transformed. “It was a huge success,” Danny recalls.

But Rick didn’t just help him with teaching materials over the years. In 2014, Rick sent a letter to the parole board asking for Danny’s release — on the condition that he could immediately hire Danny as a pastor on the outside.

The plea was granted, and Danny was released after 32 long years in prison. Today, he is a pastor and national director of Celebrate Recovery Inside at Saddleback Church. Danny’s team equips and encourages the 30,000 community Celebrate Recovery programs to volunteer in their local jails and prisons. There are currently more than 7,000 Celebrate Recovery inside prison programs in correctional facilities, but Danny says “with more than 2.2 million prisoners in the U.S., we’re just getting started with our mission.”

These days, Danny is once again behind bars, only this time, it’s as a free man. Through his ministry and his Celebrate Recovery role, he uses the insight gained from his own personal experience to encourage believers to face their pain and grow in community.

“My life is involved with ministry because of outside volunteers,” he says. “To come back inside and go through the process of getting you little tag and signing in and signing out... it’s very moving to me to be in that position and signing in and getting approval and all of those pieces, because now I’m the one that gets to go in and help someone else.”

Danny is proof that God can transform the lives of those who allow Him into their hearts—no matter who you are or how many decades you spend behind bars.
“For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.” – Isaiah 43:19 (NLT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>CALENDAR</th>
<th>HOLIDAYS</th>
<th>MY IMPORTANT DATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JANUARY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEBRUARY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARCH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APRIL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUNE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUGUST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEPTEMBER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCTOBER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECEMBER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOLIDAYS**
- January 1 – New Year’s Day
- January 20 – Martin Luther King Day
- February 14 – Valentine’s Day
- February 17 – Presidents Day
- April 12 – Easter
- May 10 – Mother’s Day
- May 25 – Memorial Day
- June – Ask your chaplain for an Angel Tree prisoner participation form.
- June 21 – Father’s Day
- July 4 – Independence Day
- August – Don’t forget to submit your Angel Tree prisoner participation form!
- September 7 – Labor Day
- November 11 – Veterans Day
- November 26 – Thanksgiving Day
- December 25 – Christmas Day
The One New Year’s Resolution That Matters

by Grayson Pope

Every year wants a fresh start. That’s why we come up with New Year’s resolutions—commitments to leave behind our old ways and begin a new chapter. That’s no less true for people in prison. A couple years ago, a former prisoner asked his buddies on the inside what New Year’s resolutions they planned to make. “I want to eat only health food...to be as healthy as possible [when I go home],” one said. Another man wanted to get his estranged family back together, and yet another wanted to tap into his true potential. Good resolutions—but for all of us, resolutions are easier to make than keep. Even Paul, the New Testament writer, said, “I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it” (Romans 7:15). He couldn’t change his nature. Neither can I. And neither can you.

The power to change

You might have made resolutions to lose some weight, cut back on TV, or be more productive, but—as anyone who’s ever made a New Year’s resolution will tell you—your willpower can only take you so far. At some point, you realize that your will is not enough, and you need something more.

The Bible talks about this in the book of Hebrews. In a verse that reads like a New Year’s resolution, it says, “Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). What’s weighing you down and making your life harder? What’s slowing you down and tripping you up? Is it anger? Resentment? Jealousy? You probably know exactly what it is. You’d like to be free from it, to push forward and move on with your life, but how? What do you do?

Fortunately, the Bible tells us more. After the verse above, it says, “We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who perfects our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

First, we find there’s more to faith than willpower alone. There’s a power we need to tap into, and it’s a power we can find in Jesus. Hebrews says, “Think of all the hostility [Jesus] endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up” (Hebrews 12:3).

Second, Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us that Jesus “understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Knowing that Jesus faced the same types of struggles and earthly temptations you face can help you keep the strength and determination you need to persevere.

And because Jesus never failed or sinned, that means He has power we can’t even understand—power we could never get for ourselves, no matter how strong our will and determination.

By fixing our eyes on Jesus, we can see life in a new way. Spending time with Him, in prayer and reading the Bible, strengthens and encourages us to try a best “new you” we can be, this new year and beyond.

By Grayson Pope

“Slam Dunk Artist” Shows Kids How to Soar

This past September, Prison Fellowship partnered with Hilllong NYC, a large New York church, and Kenny Dobbs, considered by many to be “the best slam dunk artist in Harlem.” To host an Angel Tree Sports Clinic™ in Harlem for 200 children with an incarcerated parent, Dobbs started using drugs, dropping out of school at 15. By 17, he had gotten involved in more serious trouble. After some drug dealers shut up his family’s home in Phoenix, he decided he needed a change. Instead of trying to find strength within yourself to fight them or run from them—which will eventually lead to lasting change—“Think of all the hostility [Jesus] endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up” (Hebrews 12:3)

FIRST STEP Act Results in Releases

The FIRST STEP Act (FSA), federal prison reform legislation that passed in late 2018, has resulted in the release of more than 11,000 prisoners. The releases, announced by the Department of Justice in July 2019, are a result of the laws that provide for increased good-conduct time. In addition, the law made the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 retroactive, leading to 1,691 sentence reductions. While not all parts of the law have been fully implemented yet, FSA also allows them to say, “OK, I’m being given a second chance. Society deserves better of me, and I need to do better myself, that I learn a trade. I may have siblings or a wife to return to, so I want to be able to show them that I’ve changed, as well as be able to get a job that allows me to make a living wage so that I can support them upon my return.”

“The Bible talks about this in the book of Hebrews. In a verse that reads like a New Year’s resolution, it says, “Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). What’s weighing you down and making your life harder? What’s slowing you down and tripping you up? Is it anger? Resentment? Jealousy? You probably know exactly what it is. You’d like to be free from it, to push forward and move on with your life, but how? What do you do?

Fortunately, the Bible tells us more. After the verse above, it says, “We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who perfects our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

First, we find there’s more to faith than willpower alone. There’s a power we need to tap into, and it’s a power we can find in Jesus. Hebrews says, “Think of all the hostility [Jesus] endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up” (Hebrews 12:3).

Second, Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us that Jesus “understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Knowing that Jesus faced the same types of struggles and earthly temptations you face can help you keep the strength and determination you need to persevere.

And because Jesus never failed or sinned, that means He has power we can’t even understand—power we could never get for ourselves, no matter how strong our will and determination.

By fixing our eyes on Jesus, we can see life in a new way. Spending time with Him, in prayer and reading the Bible, strengthens and encourages us to try a best “new you” we can be, this new year and beyond.

By Grayson Pope

“Slam Dunk Artist” Shows Kids How to Soar

This past September, Prison Fellowship partnered with Hilllong NYC, a large New York church, and Kenny Dobbs, considered by many to be “the best slam dunk artist in the world,” to host an Angel Tree Sports Clinic™ in Harlem for 200 children with an incarcerated parent. Dobbs, a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, has toured the world showcasing his talents. Through a combination of good genes and hard work, he developed a 48-inch vertical jump and claimed titles at high-profile dunk contests.

But his success wasn’t always certain. As a boy, Dobbs started using drugs, dropping out of school at 15. By 17, he had gotten into more serious trouble. After some drug dealers shut up his family’s home in Phoenix, he decided he needed a change. Instead of trying to find strength within yourself to fight them or run from them—which will eventually lead to lasting change—“Think of all the hostility [Jesus] endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up” (Hebrews 12:3).

FIRST STEP Act Results in Releases

The FIRST STEP Act (FSA), federal prison reform legislation that passed in late 2018, has resulted in the release of more than 11,000 prisoners. The releases, announced by the Department of Justice in July 2019, are a result of the laws that provide for increased good-conduct time. In addition, the law made the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 retroactive, leading to 1,691 sentence reductions. While not all parts of the law have been fully implemented yet, FSA also allows them to say, “OK, I’m being given a second chance. Society deserves better of me, and I need to do better myself, that I learn a trade. I may have siblings or a wife to return to, so I want to be able to show them that I’ve changed, as well as be able to get a job that allows me to make a living wage so that I can support them upon my return.”

© 2019 by Prison Fellowship
INSIDE JOURNAL™ is published four times a year by Prison Fellowship, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20147-1790. prisonfellowship.org 703.478.0100

Managing Editor: M.M. White

Editors/Designers: W.M. Thompson, N. Schmidgall

Printed by: S.L. Ray

Graphic Designer: W.M. Thompson

© 2019 by Prison Fellowship
INSIDE JOURNAL™ is published four times a year by Prison Fellowship, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20147-1790. prisonfellowship.org 703.478.0100

Managing Editor: M.M. White

Editors/Designers: W.M. Thompson, N. Schmidgall

Printed by: S.L. Ray

Graphic Designer: W.M. Thompson

© 2019 by Prison Fellowship
INSIDE JOURNAL™ is published four times a year by Prison Fellowship, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20147-1790. prisonfellowship.org 703.478.0100

Managing Editor: M.M. White

Editors/Designers: W.M. Thompson, N. Schmidgall

Printed by: S.L. Ray

Graphic Designer: W.M. Thompson

INSIDE JOURNAL | Winter 2020