



# Margin and Habits Module



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## Introduction to the Margin & Habits Module

**Synopsis of the Margin & Habits Module:** In this module, we will share with you some very practical advice on how to carve out “margin” in your life so that you can slow down and actually enjoy life. We will also talk about developing “systems” so that you can protect the most important things in life from being neglected. We will also discuss prioritizing our lives so that at the end of each day, we will have accomplished the will of God. And finally, we will speak of the *Tyranny of the Urgent*, how not to allow the immediate to crowd out the important in our lives. We will also answer the following question once and for all: “What is the meaning of life and what is the best way to spend your time on earth?” The content of this module may revolutionize your life!

This MD<sup>5</sup> Module focuses on the subject of “time.” Leadership and management books often speak of “time management.” However, if we were perfectly honest, we would admit that time manages us better than we manage it.

How we spend our time is important for the simple fact that it equates to how we are spending our lives. The instant we were born, God deposited into the bank of life his allotted time for each of us on planet earth. There are withdrawals made to that account every day but there will never be another deposit. Other than our soul, time is the most precious commodity that we have—therefore, we must spend it wisely!

In this module, we want to discuss the concept of “margin.” In his book entitled *Margin*, author Dr. Richard A. Swenson clearly defines what he means by “margin”:

Margin is the space that once existed between ourselves and our limits. Today we use margin just to get by ... Overload is not having time to finish the book you're reading on stress. Margin is having the time to read it twice. Overload is fatigue. Margin is energy. Overload is red ink. Margin is black ink. Overload is hurry. Margin is calm. Overload is anxiety. Margin is security. Overload is the disease of the [age in which we live]. Margin is the cure. Margin is ... something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations ...

Andy Stanley defines “margin” as, “The amount of time available beyond what is needed.” In other words, “margin” is when we have more time than we have activities on our schedule rather than more activities than we have time.

In this fast-paced world in which we live, it is particularly important that we build “margin” into our lives or we will burn out quickly. The natural tendency is to cram our lives so full of activities that we have to break the speed limit to keep all our appointments. Let us ask you, “When was the last time that you had nothing to do?”

The simple truth is that the abundant Christian life occurs within the “margin” we have built into our lives. By abundant life we mean we have the time every day to “... love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37 ESV) and your “neighbor as yourself.” (Matt. 22:39 ESV).

We must plan for “margin” as it will **not** occur in our life without planning. And then, once you achieve “margin” in your life, you will not keep it unless you build “systems” in your life to protect it.

In the Margin & Habits Module, we will discuss prioritizing our lives so that at the end of each day, we will have accomplished the will of God. We will answer the following question once and for all: “What is the meaning of life and what is the best way to spend your time on earth?” We will talk about how habits are formed and why we need to develop “systems” that when practiced daily over time, will shape you into the man of God that you desire to be. And finally, we will speak of the “Tyranny of the Urgent,” how not to allow the immediate to crowd out the important in our lives.

This Module could be the very help you need that will transform your life into becoming what God created you to be!

## **Introduction to the Margin & Habits Module**



# At Capacity

## Time of Your Life Series

### Session 2: At Capacity (34 minutes)

**Presenter: Andy Stanley**

**[www.rightnowmedia.org](http://www.rightnowmedia.org)**

**Synopsis of this Session:** Most of us are busy—too busy! In fact, if we were honest, we would exclaim like Steve Martin’s character in the movie *Parenthood*: “My life is just one big ‘have to!’” In this session, Andy Stanley focuses on prioritizing our lives in order to accomplish God’s will for our lives on a daily basis. His thesis is that what we prioritize determines the capacity for our lives—how much we can accomplish for God, our families, our church, our employer, and our friends.

### Session Introduction

Moses penned these words:

“Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” (Ps. 90:12 TNIV)

This verse of Scripture is actually a prayer. Moses realized that God has allotted a certain number of days for each of us to live and that no one, other than God, knows how many days we have left to live (cf. Job 14:15; Ps. 39:4; 139:16; Ecc. 8:8; Eph. 5:16). Therefore, Moses asked for God’s help to make the best use of every day.

Andy Stanley began his message with the “jar” illustration. The **jar** represents any amount of time that we have (a day, week, month, year, or a lifetime). The **small**

**pebbles** in the jar represent all the things we do every day. These activities are **not** wrong—they just do **not** add value to our lives (i.e., time spent on social media, surfing the internet, driving to a car lot shopping for a car you cannot afford, driving through a neighborhood of houses you cannot afford, watching television, hobbies, watching or participating in sports, etc.). The **larger rocks** represent the things in our lives that are important (daily quiet time, your spouse, your children, attending and serving thru your local church, your job, exercise, leisure, etc.)

What we learn is that **not** all the larger rocks (important activities) will fit in the jar if we fill it with pebbles first (things that do **not** add value to our lives). The application is that there is not enough time in the day to get everything done that we would like to get done!

On the second attempt using the jar illustration, we learn that everything can fit in the jar (our lives) if we make one change—we put the big rocks in first (life's most important tasks).

## Prioritizing Our Lives

The key to accomplishing more with your life is not simply adding more things to our “to-do” list. The key to accomplishing more is prioritizing the things we are doing.

### 1. \_\_\_\_\_ determines capacity.

What you put in the jar first determines the capacity of your life—how much you can accomplish. **Why do we allow ourselves to stay so busy all the time? Why don't we put the big rocks in our lives first? What is the solution?**

### 2. Busyness destroys \_\_\_\_\_ at every level.

Because we keep adding more things to do in our lives—we actually destroy intimacy with the people who are most important to us. The solution to building intimacy with the people who are most important to us is to prioritize the activities of our lives.

### 3. The \_\_\_\_\_ questions we must ask ourselves are:

- **What** really is most important to me?
- **Who** is most important to me?
- What do I need to **change** to ensure I prioritize the things in my life correctly?

## The Priority of Our Lives

For those of us who are Christ followers, we are commanded to put God in the jar first (Mt. 6:33). If the God rock goes in the jar first, it becomes the organizing \_\_\_\_\_ of our lives and then everything else in our lives falls in place.

The psalmist asked:

“For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God? (Ps. 18:31 TNIV).

The Bible does **not** use the words “priority” or “prioritize” but it does use an equivalent word—“\_\_\_\_\_.” This was the way that the authors of the Bible stated that we should put God first in our lives. For example, David declared:

“You, God, are my God, earnestly I **seek** you ...” (Ps. 63:1 TNIV)

You can only “earnestly ... **seek**” one thing in life—let it be God!

The psalmist also prayed:

“I **seek** you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.” (Ps. 119:10 TNIV)

You can only “**seek**” one thing “with all your heart”—let it be God! King Solomon made the following observation:

“Evildoers do not understand what is right, but those who **seek** the Lord understand it fully.” (Prov. 28:5 TNIV)

The most well-known statement in the Bible concerning “**seeking**” God came from the lips of our Savior:

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we **eat**?’ or ‘What shall we **drink**?’ or ‘What shall we **wear**?’ For the pagans **run after** [“**seek**”] all these things and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them.” (Mt. 6:31-32 TNIV)

Jesus continued by declaring:

“But **seek** \_\_\_\_\_ his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Mt. 6:33 TNIV)

As Christ followers, we have been called to first and foremost “**seek**” the will of God for our lives and to the best of our ability, obey God’s will for our lives as we understand it. So, how can we do this in a practical way? Simply devote to God the first few minutes of every day as a way of saying to God that he is the “priority” of this day (Today, I am putting the God rock in first).

Reformer Dr. Martin Luther is quoted as saying, “Pray and let God worry.” On the days he had the most to do, Luther got up earlier and spent more time in prayer to ensure he actually accomplished the will of God during the day that lay before him. There is no better way to declare the greatness of God in my life than to begin my day in his presence!

Andy Stanley described how he personalized the “Lord’s Prayer” (Matt. 6:9-13) as a daily spiritual exercise to start his day:

- ◆ You are the great God!
- ◆ What else could I do but serve you today?
- ◆ I want to know your will and do your will – this is the priority of my life.
- ◆ At the end of this day, the most important thing is not that I get everything done, but that I honored you with the time you have given me.
- ◆ Lord, please grant me protection, provision, and pardon for my sin.

When it comes to time, if we put the God rock in first on a daily basis, it reorients our thinking, our lives, and our \_\_\_\_\_ to revolve around God’s will for our life.

There is something we are all “**seeking**” first every day. If you do **not** know what that is, then ask the person you spend the most time with. They can tell you what you “**seek**” first (what you talk most about, worry most about, spend the most money on, focus on the most, etc.—those are indicators of what we are “**seeking**”). It is okay to “**seek**” other stuff – just do **not** “**seek**” it first. Do not let these other things become the organizing factors of your life.

When we prioritize the things in our lives correctly, we will be more productive, and thus have a greater \_\_\_\_\_. To put God first will **not** decrease your daily productivity—it will actually increase your productivity! You will accomplish far more on a daily basis.

God does **not** force His way into your jar. God will not kick down the door to your heart. In the book of Revelation, Jesus said:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. **If anyone** hears my voice and **opens the door, I will come into him** and eat with him, and he with me.” (Rev. 3:20 TNIV)

Christ desires to be invited into our lives! He wants to be the “big” rock that is put in first in our jar (our lives) every single day! With your schedule, personality type, temperament, spiritual gifts, etc.—**what would this look like in your day?**

### **Priority determines capacity!**

- ◆ **What** is most important to you?
- ◆ **Who** is most important to you?
- ◆ **What** would happen if we gave God the first few minutes of our day?

If we put the God rock in our lives first each day—it becomes much easier to prioritize the other things in our lives.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. **How does the jar illustration apply to you personally?**
  
2. **Frequently the scriptures mention to start daily, or first thing, or early in the morning. Why do you think God (and Andy Stanley) put so much emphasis on this?**
  
3. **Why is prioritization so important? What will you do with more capacity?**
  
4. **How do we get this routine started in our daily lives?**

## **At Capacity**





# Under the Sun

## Time of Your Life Series

### Session 5: Under the Sun (40 minutes)

**Presenter: Andy Stanley**

**[www.rightnowmedia.org](http://www.rightnowmedia.org)**

**Synopsis of this Session:** In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon repeatedly describes this life as “meaningless.” This cryptic word has baffled many students of the Bible over the centuries. In this session, Andy Stanley states that after a lifetime of living, Solomon realized that the purpose of the emptiness of this life is to drive our hearts toward God. God’s purpose for life “under the sun” is that we would live for the next life.

### Session Introduction

Moses prayed these words:

“Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” (Ps. 90:12 TNIV)

This verse of Scripture is actually a prayer. Moses realized that God has allotted a certain number of days for each of us to live and that no one, other than God, knows how many days we have left to live (cf. Ps. 39:4; Eph. 5:16). Therefore, Moses asked for God’s help to make the best use of every day. It is important to realize that how we spend our time every day is actually a spiritual decision with eternal consequences.

## Only God Is \_\_\_\_\_

Moses also stated:

“Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, **from everlasting to everlasting** you are God.” (Ps. 90:2 TNIV)

Only God is eternal—we are all finite which means that our lives had a beginning point and will also have an ending point. In fact, in this verse of scripture, our lives are sandwiched in between from “everlasting **to** everlasting.” (Ps. 90:12) That small word “to” summarizes all of our lives. How you spend your “to” matters to God and should also matter to you.

## “Everything Is Meaningless”

The book of Ecclesiastes is unique because of who wrote it and why he wrote it. The book of Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:24), the third king of Israel.

Because Solomon reigned as king during the “golden age” of Israel, a time of peace (1 Chron. 22:9), he had time to reflect on the meaning of life. Solomon actually experimented with the various aspects of life: relationships, marriage, pleasure, wealth, construction projects, idleness, busyness, etc. In doing so, he answered the following question once and for all: “What is the meaning of life and what is the best way to spend your time on earth?”

In order to make sure that we understand the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon opened the book with his \_\_\_\_\_ — the first of the two most important thoughts Solomon emphasizes in the book. Solomon opened the book by telling us what he was going to tell us:

“The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: <sup>2</sup> ‘Meaningless! Meaningless!’ says the Teacher. ‘Utterly meaningless! **Everything is meaningless.**’ <sup>3</sup> What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun? <sup>4</sup> Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. <sup>5</sup> The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.” (Ecc. 1:1-5 TNIV)

Solomon used the word “meaningless” 35 times in the book of Ecclesiastes. So, what did Solomon mean when he asserted that “everything is meaningless?” (Ecc. 1:2) Simply stated, we buy “stuff,” use it, and then buy more “stuff” to replace it. This is

repeated again and again throughout our lives just as the sun sets and then rises on a new day. Then, we die and leave the “stuff” we worked so hard to acquire to someone who did nothing to earn it and does not appreciate it. Solomon says that this is all “meaningless.”

Solomon also observed that each generation thinks that they are special but they are really not (Ecc. 1:4). Why? Because one generation is followed by another generation which is followed by another generation and the process is repeated until God decides to end it all.

### “There Is Nothing New ‘Under The Sun’”

Solomon further declared:

“What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; **there is nothing new** \_\_\_\_\_ .” (Ecc. 1:9 TNIV)

Solomon says that if you think you are special because you have done something no one else has done—think again! You have only done what people who lived before you have done and what other people will do after you are gone.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon goes on and on about the “meaninglessness” of life which he describes as a “chasing after the wind” (Ecc. 1:14 TNIV).

However, there is a “\_\_\_\_\_” to understanding the book of Ecclesiastes. If you do **not** understand the “key”—you will **not** understand Solomon’s message. The “key” phrase in the book of Ecclesiastes is “under the sun.” This phrase is repeated 29 times throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. [Ecc. 1:3,9,14; 2:11,17,18,19,20,22; 3:16; 4:1,3,7,15; 5:13,18; 6:1,12; 8:9,15 (2),17; 9:3,6,9,(2);11,13; 10:5]

Solomon’s “key” is simply this. If all there is to life is what we see, hear, feel, and experience “under the sun”—then there is no meaning to life. If this is all there is to this life—then it is a “chasing after the wind,” “vanity,” and “meaningless.”

Solomon continues:

“I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.” (Ecc. 9:11)

In this verse, Solomon made several other personal observations about life:

- Sometimes the quickest do not win.
- Sometimes the strongest do not prevail.
- Wisdom will not fill your stomach with food.
- Rich people are not always the smartest people in the room.
- Educated people are not necessarily respected by others.

If you think that you can figure out how everything “under the sun” makes sense—Solomon says that you are **not** as smart as you think you are! Why? Because life “under the sun” is unpredictable.

Solomon concludes that this “meaninglessness” of life “under the sun” should drive us to consider that there has to be something more than just this life. There has to be more than this because this is just **not** working—in fact, life just does **not** make any sense!

### “Eternity In Our Hearts”

Solomon goes on to write:

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. **He has also set eternity in the human heart**; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end ... <sup>14</sup> I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live.” (Ecc. 3:11,14 TNIV)

It was Solomon’s desire that we all understand that God has embedded “eternity” in our hearts—a knowledge that there is something more than what we see “under the sun.” Solomon then issues a warning to all men living “under the sun”:

“I said to myself, ‘**God will bring into judgment** both the righteous and the wicked, **for there will be a time for every activity, a time to judge every deed.**’” (Ecc. 3:17 TNIV)

The writer of the book of Hebrews declares:

“And again, ‘The Lord shall judge his people.’ <sup>31</sup> **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**” ( Heb. 10:30-31 TNIV)

Jesus Himself stated it this way:

“And **fear** not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather **fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**” (Mt. 10:28 TNIV)

According to Solomon, the purpose of life “under the sun” is that at the end of the day man will “\_\_\_\_\_” God. Not “fear” God as in afraid of him (although the sinner should “fear” God!)—but “fear” in the sense of “awe,” “respect,” and “reverence” for God. Even though my life “under the sun” does **not** make sense to me today—it is because God has placed “eternity in my heart” that I live my life knowing in my heart of hearts that there will be a day when a righteous God will make all things right.

### **“Fear God And Keep His Commandments”**

Solomon concludes the book of Ecclesiastes with these words of wisdom:

“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: <sup>14</sup> **Fear God and keep his commandments**, for this is the duty of all mankind.” (Ecc. 12:13,14 TNIV)

We stated earlier that Solomon made two thesis statements in the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon opened the book by telling us what he was going to tell us (Ecc. 1:2) and concluded the book by telling us what he told us (Ecc. 12:14). Those two thesis statements combined in a single sentence are: “Everything [on earth] is ‘meaningless’” (Ecc. 1:2) therefore, “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.” (Ecc. 12:14 TNIV) After a lifetime of reflection, Solomon concluded that this life is “meaningless” so therefore, we should live for the next life.

### **Conclusion**

Let us return to where we started this session. Moses prayed:

“Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” (Ps. 90:12 TNIV)

We encourage you to start every day with this prayer in your heart—to live as if your days are numbered because they are. Remember, God has an eternal purpose for your life that extends beyond this life we now live “under the sun.”

## **Under the Sun**





# How to Form A Habit

## Habits Series

**Part 2: Starting** (38 minutes)

**Presenter: Craig Groeschel**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXX1kc4xEgQ>

**Synopsis of this Session:** In this session, Craig Groeschel's premise is that most of what we do every day is not the result of conscious choices but of habits. Therefore, we must develop the right kind of "habits"—something that he calls "systems." A "system" when practiced daily, over time, will shape our identity. In fact, godly "systems" will mold us into the godly man we desire to be.

### Habits—Not Choices

Think about what you did on the last "normal" day of your life. **What are some of the things you did?**

We think that you will discover that on the last "normal" day of your life you probably did what you did the day before that, and the day before that, and the day before that. **Why is that?**

It is simply because most of what we normally do is **not** the result of conscious \_\_\_\_\_ but a result of daily \_\_\_\_\_. This is why if we want to change

where we are going or who we are becoming in life—we are going to have to change our habits.

In the book *Atomic Habits*, author James Clear states that most people have similar goals, but dramatically different \_\_\_\_\_. Why is that? James Clear explains: “Goals don’t determine success, but systems determine success.” He further stated: “You don’t rise to the level of your goals but fall to the level of your \_\_\_\_\_.”

So, if we need “systems” to be successful—what are “systems?” A “system” is a plan to accomplish our goals. We might define a “system” or “plan” as a “habit” that will shape us into becoming the men of God we desire to be.

We find many characters in the Bible who had a “system” that made their lives effective for the Lord. One such person was \_\_\_\_\_. What made Daniel stand out amongst 123 top leaders in Babylon? (Dan. 6:1) According to the scriptures, no one could find a fault or weakness in him:

“Now Daniel so **distinguished** himself among the administrators and the satraps [**Persian governors**] **by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.** At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. **They could find no corruption in him,** because **he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.**” (Dan. 6:3 NIV)

Darius, the king of Babylon, was so pleased with Daniel that he decided to appoint Daniel to rule over his entire kingdom. (Dan. 6:3) When the other leaders heard that Daniel was about to be promoted over them, they were jealous and began to look for any weakness in Daniel, any flaw in his character, that if shared with the king, would keep the king from appointing Daniel over them. The scriptures state:

“At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. **They could find no corruption in him,** because **he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.** <sup>5</sup> Finally these men said, ‘We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.’” (Dan. 6:4,5 NIV)

So, the satraps tricked King Darius into issuing a decree that no man could pray to any other man or god except the king for the next 30 days. The punishment for anyone who did, would be thrown into a den of lions. (Dan. 6:6-8) The king agreed with his advisor’s suggestion and signed the decree. (Dan. 6:9)

## What Was It That Made Daniel The Man He Was?

What was it that made Daniel stand out from among all the leaders in Babylon? What was it that made Daniel the man of God that he was? We would submit that it was one “\_\_\_\_\_” or “habit” that he practiced daily, over time, which shaped his identity.

Returning to the scriptures, we read:

“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, **just as he had done before.**” (Dan. 6:10 NIV)

When Daniel learned of the decree of King Darius, he gave thanks to God in prayer, just as he had done the day before. Daniel did not pray just once per day, or twice per day, but three times per day. Daniel’s habit, his “system” was to prioritize his day around intimate time with his heavenly Father.

Never underestimate how our God can start something big through one small habit or act of \_\_\_\_\_. Our God loves to take a small act of obedience and do something special with it.

## Adding One Small Discipline To Our Lives Each Year

Craig Groeschel shared that over the past 3 decades, he has tried to add \_\_\_\_\_ new discipline per year in his life. Not a single one of these small disciplines has made an enormous difference in his life but all of them in totality, have reshaped the man that he is.

In fact, “habits” change how we see ourselves. To illustrate, he stated that one year he decided to start flossing his teeth daily. He did this because he hates to do it and this one small act of discipline, reminded him that he should choose to do what is right in his life over \_\_\_\_\_.

Remember, no one \_\_\_\_\_ into intimacy with God. It is the result of willpower, discipline, goals, and systems.

In his book *The Power of Habits*, author Charles Duhigg talks about a “\_\_\_\_\_.” He stated: “*Keystone habits, when in place, will help propel you to other disciplines.*” Daniel paused his life three times a day to meet with God. This was a

“keystone habit” that brought other God honoring habits into his life that enabled him to become the man God wanted him to become.

There is **not** a single small discipline that will really improve your marriage, dramatically improve your leadership skills, or overhaul your relationship with God. But one small discipline, added by faith to your life every year, will over time, strengthen your faith, build your marriage, empower you as a dad, and equip you to be a spiritual leader.

To determine what small act of obedience you want to add to your life this year, instead of starting with the “do”—start with the “\_\_\_\_\_.” Who does God want you to be? Then, based upon “who” God wants you to become, what one habit do you need to start right now? What is one small discipline that will move you in the right direction? In other words, “**who**” you want to become, will determine “**what**” you “do.”

**What new “habit” do you want to put in place? What new “system” if you were to add to your life would take you to where God wants you to be?**

We all have “systems.” You either have “systems” by intent or “systems” by default but we all have “systems.”

## The Habit Loop

Nearly all books written on the subject of habits speak about the “Habit Loop.” There will always be something that is a \_\_\_\_\_ or a cue for you. We see something, we feel something, or we experience an emotion which leads to an \_\_\_\_\_.

- This could be things such as you walk by the refrigerator, you are lonely, you are bored, you are hungry, you are angry, you are discouraged, you are in pain, it is the beginning of the day, it is the end of the day, etc.
- The “trigger” or cue leads to an “action.” It is then that you eat the piece of cake, you pray with your wife or kids, you hit the snooze button on the alarm, you lose your temper, you read your Bible, etc. (either a positive or negative reaction).

The action will then lead to a \_\_\_\_\_. Then, the process repeats itself—Trigger, Action, Reward. This is how habits are formed.

So then, how do we start a new habit? First, we must make it \_\_\_\_\_. If we are going to change what we \_\_\_\_\_, we must change what we \_\_\_\_\_.

To start a new habit, we must make it “obvious” and secondly, we must make it \_\_\_\_\_ to do and repeat. If you can do any behavior for 28 days in a row—it will become a habit and then you can increase the amount you are doing every day. Make it easy and you will be able to sustain the behavior until it becomes a habit.

What we are doing is building a “trigger” that tells me, “I will do (fill in the blank) after I (fill in the blank).” We need to build “systems” into our lives that will align our hearts with God’s will for our lives.

Remember this important principle: Successful people do \_\_\_\_\_ what other people only do \_\_\_\_\_. People who are close to God practice small disciplines consistently over time that draw them ever closer to God.

### The Habit Loop.

## Personal Goals

We all have similar goals but we have incredibly different results. We do **not** have goal problems—we have \_\_\_\_\_ or habit problems.

We do not just need goals—we need the correct kind of goals. Many of us have “\_\_\_\_\_” goals—our goals are a “means to an end.” How do you know if your goals are “means” goals? If there is at the end of every goal a “so”—then you have a “means” goal.

Instead of setting “\_\_\_\_\_” goals—we should set “\_\_\_\_\_” goals. “Means” goals focus on the “\_\_\_\_\_” and an “end” goal focuses on the “\_\_\_\_\_”—“who” I am becoming. The only “end” goal that really matters is that I become more like Christ. When becoming like Christ is your “end” goal—then you are successful every time that you obey the Lord.

If you are faithful in \_\_\_\_\_ things—God will trust with you with \_\_\_\_\_ things. (Lk. 16:10-12) You are **not** successful when you get the degree, get the promotion, get more stuff, or a hundred other things. You are successful when you are faithful and obedient to God today.

## Discussion Questions

1. How do habits and margin support each other?

2. James Clear wrote: “Most people have similar goals, but dramatically different results.” **Can you explain why?**
  
3. **What did James Clear mean by the statement, “You don’t rise to the level of your goals but fall to the level of your systems?” What does this statement mean to you?**
  
4. **Why is the domino used as an illustration during this message? What should be our final domino?**
  
5. Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement. **What does this mean to your spiritual life?**
  
6. **It should now be obvious why we ask you to develop one improvement per F? (Faith, Family, Friends, Finance, & Fitness) Why is that?**

## **How To Form A Habit**



## ***Tyranny of the Urgent* – Book Review**

by Charles E. Hummel

The theme of Charles E. Hummel's classic book entitled *Tyranny of the Urgent* is that we must **not** allow "the urgent things in life to crowd out the important." There is a daily tension in all our lives between doing what is urgent and what is important. If we allow the urgent to fill all available time — we will find ourselves working more and enjoying it less. Hummel's premise is that the problem we all face is not a shortage of time but a problem of priorities — something we addressed in Andy Stanley's lesson entitled "At Capacity."

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Doubts and misgivings (p. 4) lead to regrets later. **How can we minimize regrets as we try to close the gap between the men we are and the men that God calls us to be?**
2. Jesus was in the people business. It is easy to see how focused and attentive he was to the woman at the well (Jn. 4:1-26—p. 8). **How can we use Jesus' example as to how we should interact and converse with those around us?**
3. Notice also in Mark 1:35 that Jesus got up early in the morning (p. 9). Prayer was how he began his day. If you are a fan of the sport of football, you know that coaches will "pre-script" a certain number of plays that they are going to run the first time they have the ball on offense. The wise man of God will "pre-script" each day of his life with the plays (activities) he is going to do first every day of his life. **What are some of the activities that we should "pre-script" on a daily basis?**

4. P.T. Forsyth is quoted as saying, “The worst sin is prayerlessness.” (p. 13) **Why do you think he said that?**
  
5. Our habits (p. 23) determine how we manage our time. **What daily habits can you modify in order to be more efficient with your time?**
  
6. It cannot be stated too many times that a daily quiet time of Bible reading and prayer gives us our greatest chance to be in the will of God and obey the commandments of God. (p. 23) **What “system” do you have in place in your life to make Bible reading and prayer a priority in your life?**

## Conclusion to the Margin & Habits Module

The late Dr. E. Harold Henderson, said, “We must not presume upon our time, as if we had forever. We must not abuse our time, as if we were not accountable. We must not neglect our time, as if it were unlimited.” And we might add, “We must use our time, as if it were our most prized possession.” Remember, the only way to manage time is to manage ourselves!

## Margin & Habits Module