



STEVE POE

FOREWORD BY STEPHEN ARTERBURN

CREATURES

OF

HABIT

Breaking the Habits
Holding You Back from
God's Best

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Chapter 1: Pride

1. What are ways pride has been a good thing in your life? What are ways pride has been a problem for you?
2. Why did C. S. Lewis call pride “the Great Sin”?
3. Give several examples of how self-centered pride is at the very heart of our sinful nature.
4. Can you think of ways that a self-centered, prideful person would know that pride is becoming a habit?
5. How has your self-centered pride kept you from God’s purpose being accomplished in your life?
6. If humility is the antidote to pride, what can we do to grow humility in our lives?
7. Who is one of the humblest people you know? What are some of the characteristics that you admire about them?

GOING DEEPER

The LORD detests the proud;
they will surely be punished.
Pride goes before destruction,
and haughtiness before a fall.
Better to live humbly with the poor
than to share plunder with the proud.

(PROV. 16:5, 18-19)

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred.

(2 TIM. 3:1-2)

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

(GAL. 5:24-26)

Chapter 2: Anger

1. Can you think of a time you lost your temper? How did it make you feel later?

2. If anger is a God-given emotion, then how can it be expressed in a healthy way?
3. If anger is a secondary emotion, what are the things in your life that bring on anger for you?
4. What are some steps you can take to manage or control your anger?
5. Was there a lot of anger in your home growing up? How did it affect you?
6. Do you use yelling to motivate people? How does it affect your relationships?
7. Why does an unhealthy expression of anger alienate people and damage relationships?
8. What are things you do to calm down when you feel anger rising up in you?

GOING DEEPER

And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil. If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.

(EPH. 4:26-31)

Stop being angry!

Turn from your rage!

Do not lose your temper—

it only leads to harm.

For the wicked will be destroyed,

but those who trust in the LORD will possess the land.

(PS. 37:8-9)

Control your temper,

for anger labels you a fool.

(ECCLES. 7:9)

Don't befriend angry people

or associate with hot-tempered people.

(PROV. 22:24)

Chapter 3: Excuses

1. What is the funniest or most outrageous excuse you have ever heard someone make?
2. Think of an example where you made an excuse that derailed your dream. How were you able to correct it?
3. Can you think of a time someone let you down and then made a lame excuse to try and justify what they did? How did that make you feel? How did it affect your relationship with them?
4. What are some excuses we use for not serving God?
5. Philippians 4:13 shows us that what we cannot do in our own strength, God can. Pray together for your family, or

as a group pray that God would help you stop making excuses so you can do the things he has called you to do.

GOING DEEPER

Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, “What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!”

Jesus replied with this story: “A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, ‘Come, the banquet is ready.’ But they all began making excuses. One said, ‘I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

“The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, ‘Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ After the servant had done this, he reported, ‘There is still room for more.’ So his master said, ‘Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full. For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.’”

(LUKE 14:15-24)

“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.”

(MATT. 7:3-5)

Chapter 4: Lust

1. What steps would you be willing to take to remove the temptations of lust from your life?
2. How do you hold yourself accountable when it comes to the sin of lust?
3. Where do you feel you are most vulnerable to lust?
4. How would you describe the difference between lust and love?
5. How can lust hurt your marriage?
6. How does lust lie to us? What cost does lust carry?

GOING DEEPER

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

(2 SAM. 11:1-5 NIV)

Drink water from your own cistern,
 running water from your own well.
Should your springs overflow in the streets,
 your streams of water in the public squares?
Let them be yours alone,
 never to be shared with strangers.
May your fountain be blessed,
 and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.
A loving doe, a graceful deer—
 may her breasts satisfy you always,
 may you ever be intoxicated with her love.
Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man's wife?
 Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman?
For your ways are in full view of the LORD,
 and he examines all your paths.
The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them;
 the cords of their sins hold them fast.
For lack of discipline they will die,
 led astray by their own great folly.

(PROV. 5:15-23 NIV)

Chapter 5: Cynicism

1. Are you cynical? Can you give examples of times you have been cynical?
2. How is cynicism affecting your relationships? Do you have someone in your life who is cynical?
3. Do you find it hard to trust people?

4. Can you think of something in your childhood that has caused you to be cynical as an adult?
5. Adopting a curious, hopeful outlook on life can keep you from becoming cynical. What are some specific ways you can create and cultivate a more hopeful perspective?
6. Why are we less cynical as children than we are as adults?
7. The irony of cynicism is that it doesn't happen because you don't care; it happens because you do care. How has that been true in your life?

GOING DEEPER

Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness!"

(EX. 14:11-12 NASB)

"Beware of your friends;
do not trust anyone in your clan.
For every one of them is a deceiver,
and every friend a slanderer.
Friend deceives friend,
and no one speaks the truth.
They have taught their tongues to lie;
they weary themselves with sinning.
You live in the midst of deception;
in their deceit they refuse to acknowledge me."

(JER. 9:4-6 NIV)

And so they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they could hand Him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor. And the spies questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to anyone, but You teach the way of God on the basis of truth. Is it permissible for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” But He saw through their trickery and said to them, “Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?” They said, “Caesar’s.” And He said to them, “Then pay to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were unable to catch Him in a statement in the presence of the people; and they were amazed at His answer, and said nothing.

(LUKE 20:20-26 NASB)

Chapter 6: Worry

1. Do you worry too much? What is the silliest thing you’ve ever worried about?
2. Why do you think we worry so much, even though we know God will take care of us?
3. Why does God want to take on our problems?
4. Do you ever hear people try to rationalize their worry? What are some of the reasons they use to justify their worry?
5. What triggers worry in your life?
6. How do you think unhealthy lifestyle choices make you more prone to worry?

GOING DEEPER

As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."

But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

(LUKE 10:38-42)

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

(MATT. 11:28-30)

So refuse to worry, and keep your body healthy. But remember that youth, with a whole life before you, is meaningless.

(ECCLES. 11:10)

Chapter 7: Complaining

1. What kinds of things do you find yourself complaining about?
2. What happens when you encounter a person who complains about everything? How does it make you feel and how do you usually respond?
3. When it comes to our jobs, our families, and our friendships, what is the overall “cost” of complaining?
4. What is your complaining style—polite or aggressive?
5. Take another look at the six steps to break the habit of complaining and decide which you need to focus on the most:

Step 1: Undergo a complaint detox

Step 2: Practice being positive

Step 3: Practice expressing gratitude

Step 4: Practice being content

Step 5: Be less judgmental

Step 6: Bite your tongue

GOING DEEPER

Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

(EPH. 4:29)

A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.

(LUKE 6:45)

Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

(JAMES 5:9 ESV)

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

(EPH. 4:29 ESV)

Chapter 8: Workaholism

1. Do you get more excited about your work than you do about family events?
2. How would you describe the differences between a hard worker and a workaholic?
3. Do you think about your work while in the car, while falling asleep at night, or even while others are talking?
4. How can you adjust your schedule to create more rest and family time?
5. Do you work on your phone or read while you are at dinner with your family?
6. Have your family and friends given up expecting you to arrive on time?
7. What are ways workaholism is offensive to your relationship with God?

GOING DEEPER

Unless the LORD builds a house,
the work of the builders is wasted.
Unless the LORD protects a city,
guarding it with sentries will do no good.
It is useless for you to work so hard
from early morning until late at night,
anxiously working for food to eat;
for God gives rest to his loved ones.

(PS. 127:1-2)

Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

(MATT. 6:19-21)

Chapter 9: Lying

1. What areas of lying do you need to work on avoiding?
2. Can you remember a time you were caught in a lie?
3. Have you ever been hurt by someone's lies?
4. Are there ever good reasons for lying? Give examples of what you think are harmless white lies.
5. Did you ever lie to your parents and get away with it?
6. What do you think it means to tame the tongue?
7. What steps have you taken to be a person of integrity?

GOING DEEPER

An honest witness does not lie;
a false witness breathes lies.

(PROV. 14:5)

Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren’t lying to us but to God!”

As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him.

(ACTS 5:3–6)

Don’t lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.

(COL. 3:9)

Outside the city are the dogs—the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idol worshipers, and all who love to live a lie.

(REV. 22:15)

Chapter 10: Idolatry

1. After reading this chapter, do you think you have been practicing idolatry without realizing it?
2. When you think of an idol in your life, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?
3. How do you respond when your idols are threatened or taken away (anger, fear, etc.)?
4. What obstacles seem to keep you from what you crave or want? Is it possible that God put the obstacle in front of you to keep you from that idol?
5. God is a jealous God. What does that mean and how does it impact our understanding of him?
6. Finish these sentences:
Life only has meaning if _____.
All I ever wanted is _____.
Could it be your answers indicate an idol in your life?
7. If idols are the things that capture your imagination, then what do you daydream about?
8. If the way out of idolatry is to turn back to the living God, what are actions you could take?

GOING DEEPER

Be very careful never to make a treaty with the people who live in the land where you are going. If you do, you will follow their evil ways and be trapped. Instead, you must break down their pagan altars, smash their sacred pillars, and cut down their Asherah poles. You must worship no other gods, for the LORD, whose very name is Jealous, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you.

(EX. 34:12-14)

You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him.

(JAMES 4:4-5)

Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

(DAN. 3:13-18)

Chapter 11: Guilt

1. Can you give an example of a time you felt healthy guilt or godly sorrow?
2. Can you give examples of false guilt you have struggled with?
3. Read 1 Timothy 1:15. How does Christ's forgiveness of Paul help you in your situation?
4. In what areas are you unnecessarily blaming yourself?
5. What is a way you punish yourself? Does the punishment fit the crime? It probably doesn't.
6. Torturing yourself with guilt doesn't make you a better person. Learning does. So what can you learn from your past experiences with guilt?
7. Whose standards are you failing to live up to?

GOING DEEPER

“I, even I, am he who blots out
your transgressions, for my own sake,
and remembers your sins no more.”

(ISA. 43:25 NIV)

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.
For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its
shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

(HEB. 12:2 NIV)

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the
full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled
to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies
washed with pure water.

(HEB. 10:22 NIV)

They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience.

(1 TIM. 3:9)

Chapter 12: Prayerlessness

1. Is prayer difficult for you? If so, what about it makes it so difficult?
2. What is your greatest obstacle to consistent prayer right now?
3. What are some of the consequences you have faced because of a lack of prayer?
4. How is prayer the surest remedy to any bad habit you might have?
5. How is prayerlessness evidence that you are backsliding?
6. Can a person who doesn't pray honor God?
7. To what extent is our prayerlessness due to not seeing our great needs? How can we be more aware of our true needs?

GOING DEEPER

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.

(ROM. 8:26-27)

I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

(JOHN 14:12-14)

I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them.

(1 TIM. 2:1)

One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up.

(LUKE 18:1)