

Chapter Three:

How We Develop Behaviors

Text Day One

Behavior development begins from the time we are born. When we are born, we are like a newly assembled computer; our memory bank is empty. Just like a computer, all we know is the data that is put into our memory bank.

A computer cannot solve any problems, or record anything until it is programmed. The process of programming many times takes hundreds of hours of keystroke after keystroke until a program is developed which can easily be accessed and used. I am typing this in Microsoft Word, a very effective program for writing. In fact, the books I publish are first written in this program.

Our life is much like a computer. It takes hundreds, even thousands of hours of programming for our brain to even gain control over our arms, hands, feet and legs. In fact, the first few years of life are almost entirely used up in learning to reach out and grab something, walk and run, handle a spoon to eat, and to speak their first words. There are so many things an infant must learn who is becoming a toddler and eventually beginning to learn something beyond just motor skills. Things like letters, words, numbers, etc.

Almost immediately after birth we begin to gather information, or data, that becomes the basis of our behaviors. God created us that way. Every child is born with a blank slate. He has no memory. Almost immediately he begins to build a bank of memory which becomes the foundation for his future behaviors.

God has built into us systems by which we gather information. He created us with five ports of entry for data. They are what we have identified as the five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. As we begin to explore this new world that we are born into we develop the ability to use our five senses to gather data.

Text Day Two

God has also given us the capacity to evaluate the data which comes through our senses and test its value. We call this process thinking. It is important to notice that, at least in the formative years, the only material we have for thought is the data that has entered through our senses.

We use the information we have gathered as "food for thought," using it to develop thinking patterns. From those patterns of thought we begin to develop our belief system. It is our belief system that is the basis for our behaviors. We act according to what we believe about ourselves and the world around us.

The way a child feels about itself is often formed by their primary caregiver. If they grow from infancy to the toddler stage and they are in a healthy, nurturing environment, they will probably grow into healthy, well balanced adults. However, the opposite is true of those whose formative years are marked by neglect and abuse.

It is the data we receive during our formative years, and how we process that data, that becomes the foundation for our future behaviors. What we hear, see, smell, taste and feel becomes the data we store in our memory system and becomes our "food for thought."

Regardless of what we say, or try to convince ourselves that we believe, our true belief system is the basis for our reality. Our belief system is actually an accumulation of the data our senses have gathered and how we have used that data to develop thought patterns.

Most of us have heard the quote from Scripture, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The Hebrew word translated "train up" means to narrow, to restrict, or to discipline. The meaning seems to be that parents are given the responsibility to channel (restrict) the behavior of children into a pattern of good behavior.

This is not a lesson on parenting, but we are just laying a foundation for discovering the factors involved in forming us into the person we have become.

The process is like this: The data we receive through our senses is the material we use for thought; What we think upon is what we actually come to believe; What we believe is sorted out in our thought processes as our belief system. Now there is one more step in the process: behavior. Our behaviors reflect our belief system.

This may sound a bit simplistic but it really is just that simple. Data is brought in and processed as thought, which becomes the basis for our belief system, which in turn becomes the catalyst for our behaviors.

The only way there can be lasting change in our behaviors is to change our belief system. And that cannot be done by just deciding that we now believe something else. In fact, one of the greatest hindrances to our spiritual development is trying to convince ourselves that we believe something that we have not yet internalized into our core belief system.

Text Day Three

There are many Scriptures which give us insight into what is necessary to effect lasting change in our belief system and thus, changing our behaviors.

In an earlier lesson we referred to Joshua 1:8 and spoke of several principles that are found there. These principles are 1) Repetition – “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth.” In other words keep repeating it to yourself. 2) Meditation – “But you shall meditate in it day and night.” 3) Memorization – not stated but implied.

What is the result of practicing these three principles? “That you may observe to do according to all that is written in [the law].” And the benefit of following this formula: “For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

There is no substitute for keeping God’s word ever before us. When we are not regularly reading, meditating and memorizing God’s word we stop growing in our faith journey and begin to slide back into the influences of this world system. To be successful in overcoming undesirable behaviors we must commit to these practices.

Moses knew that Israel would fall back into pagan practices if they did not keep God’s law in their mind and heart. That is why he instructs

them in Deuteronomy 6 to, “That you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you” (2). And he goes on to say, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart” (6)

Now the question is, “How do we keep them in our heart?” He follows with the formula: “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (7-9).

Moses was serious about God’s law and being obedient to it.

Text Day Four

Remember the purpose of these lessons. We are giving you the tools to change undesirable behaviors. This is just a brief description of how we develop behaviors and teaching on how to establish new behaviors. When you are committed to change and are willing to follow these proven tools to change, you will experience a new freedom in your life.

There can be moments of great, and sometimes miraculous, strides forward in the process, but the process must be continued to effect lasting and permanent change. That is why we call this the lifetime process of being reconciled to God, renewed in the Holy Spirit, and restored to the person God intended you to become.

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Apostle Paul gives further insight into overcoming undesirable behavior in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down

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Main Idea: How we developed our behaviors and how to change them

Practice This: Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. – Philippians 4:8

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Workbook Day One

1. What behaviors are we born with?

2. How do we develop new behaviors

3. What are the five portals through which data is recorded in our brain? (5 senses)

Workbook Day Two

4. What is the correlation between what we sense, what we think, what we believe and what we do?

5. What is “food for thought” and how do we use it?

6. How important is the data we store in our formative years? How does this data affect our lives?

7. What is the basis for our reality?

8. Explain Proverbs 22:6.

Workbook Day Three

9. What are the three principles given in Joshua 1:8 that are to be used to modify our behavior?

10. What will be the result of following those three principles?

11. What did Moses command regarding God's law?

12. Moses gave the children of Israel a formula for keeping the law ever before. What was that formula?

Workbook Day Four

13. What should you expect to happen within you when you follow these principles?

14. How does Paul teach us to change our behaviors in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5?

15. The journey of faith, and overcoming undesirable behaviors is a building process. Explain how you will begin this process.
