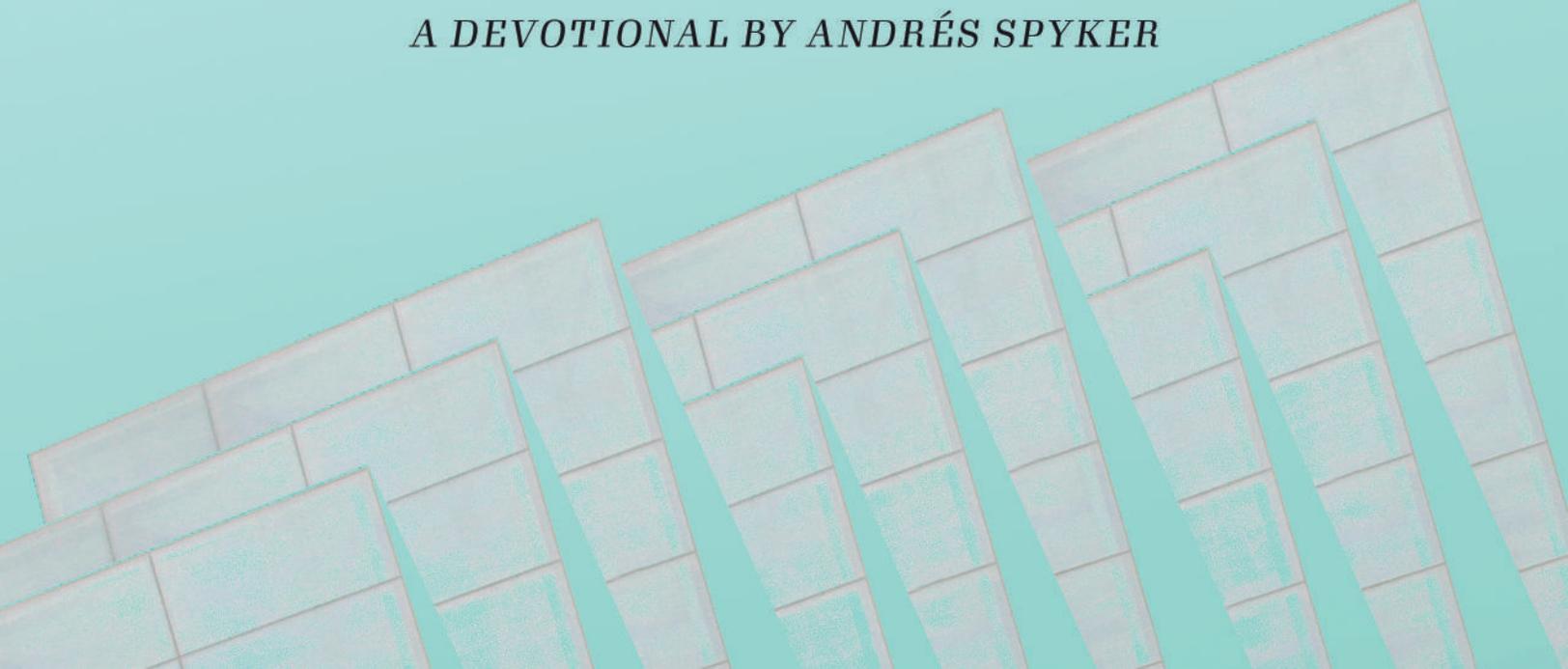




THE HABIT
O F H A B I T S

A DEVOTIONAL BY ANDRÉS SPYKER



DAY 1

*STOP LIVING BUSY AND WORRIED,
LEARN TO LIVE FOCUSED.*

*Verses: Lamentations 3:22-23 (KJV); Mark 1:35;
Proverbs 16:3; Romans 8:5-6.*

Happy New Year!

It is a day of new beginnings, new purposes, new opportunities... new mercy for your life! Many of us have lived frustrated for years feeling that time is getting away. The feeling of, no matter how much we want it or how much we put time management into practice or read self-help books, we simply fail to do what we have set out to do with our time. In the next few days, I want to teach you how to put into practice the habit of habits: daily discipline.

To walk with God. Spending time with God every day has transformed the way I use time. As a result, I can say that today I have greater creativity, I feel more focused, I make better decisions, I have more delight in life, I am more productive and I have more love for people. I have learned that the level of productivity and well-being in my life is directly proportional to my relationship with Jesus. I invite you to join me in the next few days to find out how to apply this habit to your life. It is similar to the beginning of tithing - the biblical principle in which we give God the first 10% of our profits - but in our time. As well as putting God first in our finances, bless and multiply the remaining 90%; likewise, by putting God first in your day, the rest of your time will yield more.

You were designed to have communion with God. When you make it a priority to give God time daily you will begin to see great rewards. The first thing I like to do on this first day of our devotional is to give God our time. Recognize that He owns your agenda, your plans, your day, every day. Decide at what time and how much of it will you spend talking to God in a focused way. There is not an amount of time required, but think: "What is the first and best of my time that I can dedicate to God? For me it's my first hour of the day; for you, it can be your first 15 or 30 minutes in the day. Start with something, the most important thing is to schedule it.

Prayer: God, you are the creator of time; my time belongs to you. I'll give you the first and best of my day and of this year that I'm starting. Help me, Holy Spirit, to discipline myself to look for you every morning. God, I want to honor you with my time, help me. In the name of Jesus, amen.

DAY 2

CONTEMPLATING GOD

*Verses: Genesis:2:7; Luke 4:14; Mark 3:13-15 (NIV);
Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (NLT)*

The habit of habits is based on a biblical principle that is repeated in all the Scriptures. We see it in the beginning with Adam and Eve when God created them. The Bible says that God breathed the breath of life into the man's nose; Adam received the breath of life before receiving the order that God gave to humanity to be fruitful, multiply and govern the earth.

In the New Testament, we see a similar pattern with Jesus, his disciples, and the early church. Jesus, before starting his public ministry, set out to seek God in the desert; it is the famous passage of the temptations of Jesus. Just after that time of searching and being tempted, Jesus returned 'filled with the Holy Spirit'. Only then, did he begin to preach and perform miracles.

When Jesus called his disciples, he called them to be with him...
And only then would He send them to preach and give them the authority to cast out demons.
In Acts, one of Jesus' last indications to his followers is that they do not do anything until they receive the Holy Spirit. And after receiving the Holy Spirit, they would they go out to tell everyone about Jesus

A productive life begins with receiving the breath of life from God. First I receive the breath of life and then I do; first I receive, then I produce; first I listen and then I work. How do we contemplate God? I want to suggest four practices: reading and meditating on His word, singing or worshiping God, and conversing with God through prayer and communion with other people. The first thing in my time of conversation with God is to read and meditate on the Scriptures. Every year I have a Bible reading plan. I recommend you do the same. There are plans to read the entire Bible, others of the gospels and psalms, and others by topic or by month. I suggest using the YouVersion application.

You don't have to be an expert in the Bible to start reading it, just start. Every day, in my reading, I emphasize some verses; I focus on one or two that I think God wants me to meditate on that day.
After underlining them, I write them down in a notes app that I then use to meditate during my prayer time.
The habit of habits begins with reading the Bible. On this second day of our devotional, I want to encourage you to choose a Bible reading plan for the rest of the year. Take a couple of minutes to decide what plan you are going to follow. I recommend that if you are starting out, you choose a plan that only requires about five minutes of reading a day. You can use our reading plan: "The Bible Challenge" (New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs) found in the YouVersion Bible app. I want to encourage you to see this pilgrimage as a growth of five or ten or twenty years.
Don't get frustrated if you don't understand something in your reading, focus on one or two passages that you think are the ones that God wants to talk to you about every day.

Prayer: Thank God for being a God who wants to connect with us.
I want to connect with you through your Word, the Bible; guide me to read it, understand it and apply it to my life.
Holy Spirit, reveal to me the truth of Jesus and give me wisdom and revelation to get to know you more each time I read the Bible. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

DAY 3

SING TO GOD

*Verses: Psalm 96:1-4 (NLT); Ephesians 5:18-19 (NLT);
Psalm 19:14 (NLT); Galatians 4:19*

Worshipping God is the second practice in my time of meditation and daily contemplation of God. Worship is more than singing, it is worshiping with our obedience and devotion to God in everything we do. But singing is still a central part of our adoration of God; it is to recognize with audible words who He is and everything he has done for us.

When I worship God singing with my words and my voice, I focus on Him, and, the more I do, the more I expose myself to the nature of God. This is how the image of Jesus is imprinted in the center of my being and I am transformed into His image. You and I become like what we most adore: if you adore things, you become materialistic; if you adore your own image, you become vain; if you adore people's opinion, you become humanist; if you worship Christ, you become more like Him. Paul says in Galatians that our goal is for Christ to be formed in us. This is the purpose of our lives. When I adore God, I see Jesus more clearly.

A few years ago I had the conviction to sing in an audible voice to God for a few moments each time of prayer. So every morning, after reading my Bible, the first thing I do is put on headphones, go for a walk, and begin to sing to God. It doesn't matter if I'm tuned or out of tune, but I sing to him audibly.

If you study a little more about language, you will realize that when you speak in an audible voice, your brain connects and focuses on what you are saying; in fact, it is impossible for you to think of anything else except the subject of which you are talking or singing... that's why I think the Psalms is full of instructions to sing in a loud voice to God.

In a practical way, the first thing I recommend is that you have a list of worship songs prepared. A playlist using one of your favorite platforms. I suggest that they be songs that focus on the person of Christ and that are of worship, exaltation, and statement of truths about God and His goodness.

There are many good Christian songs, but some are focused on emotions or circumstances. I have discovered that for my time of prayer, songs that talk about Jesus help me more or they help me to focus on Him and His nature; his goodness, power, grace, love, etc.

Ephesians 5 talks about making music in the heart.

Psalms talks about singing a new song to God. I like to spontaneously sing something from my heart to God or to sing in a language of prayer that the Spirit has given me. On this third day of the devotional, I want to encourage you to create a worship playlist or look for one already made on one of your music platforms, or ask a friend to share theirs with you; the important thing is that you have a plan. I choose the "shuffle" option so that I can play different songs every day. The idea is that you find something that focuses on God.

Prayer: I love you, God. Teach me to bring glory to your name every day of my life.

I want to worship you in spirit and in truth. I recognize your greatness; you are worthy, and you are holy. There is no other like you. My delight is to worship you and meet you. I want to be a worshiper and start every day with worship and gratitude. In the name of Jesus, amen.

DAY 4

TALK TO GOD

Verses: Matthew 6:9-13(RVC); Matthew 6:31-33(NLT); Psalm 63:1(RVR1960); 1Thessalonians 5:16-18(RVR1960)

After reading the Bible and worshipping God, the third step in my daily meditation routine is to talk to God in prayer. The key for me has been to choose a PRAYER MODEL. There are several models of prayer in the Bible, but the one I have liked to follow the most is the model of the The Lord's Prayer prayer, which is found in Matthew 6. Each line of the sentence is a topic of conversation. For example: "Our Father who is in heaven" - here I thank him for being my Father, for forgiving me, for listening to me, for being with me every day. And so every line of conversation.

"Hallowed be your name" - Here I worship him, I tell him to give me a holy fear of His name, to teach me to worship him, etc.
"Let your kingdom come" - Here I ask Him to give me meekness and humility to obey Him better, for His kingdom come into my marriage, into my family, that my neighbors be saved; I pray for my city, etc.
When I get to the phrase "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven..." It's when I return to the verses I read in my biblical reading time. And here I spend most of my time, asking what is in His Word, that He may teach me how to practice it

"Give us this day our daily bread" - Here I ask for everything: for my wife, children, dreams, to build my house, church plans, everything I need, etc. The worst thing that can happen to me is that He tells me 'no' and give me something better! "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"

Here I confess my sins to God, and I receive His forgiveness. In the daily prayer moments, I deal with my emotions, I don't hide them. If I'm going through a challenge or frustration, this is the time to tell God! I also forgive those with whom I feel offended. I forgive them, I bless them and I ask God to forgive them.

"And lead us not into temptation" - I ask God to keep us from the temptation of sexual immorality, love of money, love of fame, power, position, etc.; all kinds of temptation that could come to my life or to my family.

"But deliver us from the evil one" - Here I declare that we are invisible to bad people; that God keeps us from accidents, diseases, and evil that others want to do to us. Here I also rebuke any unclean spirit, who wants to influence our lives.

"Yours is the kingdom, power, and glory forever" - I end up worshipping once again.

Here I want to explain to you how important and decisive it has been for me to have this time of meditation at the first moment of the day. You can do it at any time of the day but there is something unique, and inexplicable, to dedicate the beginning of your day to God. This is what I mentioned at the beginning of this devotional, to apply the principle of tithing to time: dedicate the first and best of your time daily to God.

When you do it, God honors the rest of your day. Something common for many people is that they don't know how to restart their daily meditation after a season without doing it; you are discouraged or feel condemnation for having neglected your time with God and it's hard for you to start.

I say don't be condemned for the time you couldn't spend with God, just come back as if not a day had been wasted. The faster you return, the more dynamic your relationship with God will be.

There is no set amount of time to meditate; if you don't have the habit, I recommend that you start reading the Bible for a few minutes, worshipping God, and praying. You can start with five minutes a day and you will see, before you realize it, that you will increase it. Persevere until it is your passion.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to know you more. Teach me to pray, to talk to you. Thank you that, through you, Jesus, I have access to God, my Heavenly Father. I can come in prayer not because of the perfection of my life, but for the greatness of your mercy. You listen to me when I approach with faith.

Today I believe that every time I talk to you you are attentive to my prayer.

Thank you for teaching me the path of communion with God. Amen.

DAY 5

COMMUNION WITH OTHERS

Verses: Matthew 22:36-40 (NLT); 1 John 4:19-21; Ephesians 4:3-6;

To complete this process of daily meditation, the habit of habits, we lack the 4th habit. I can't become like Christ only with the first 3 habits (Contemplating, Worshiping, and Talking with God); I need Communion with others. In our process of being more like Jesus, we need to make a community with the people that God has put in our lives, in our family, at work, and in the church. It's very easy to become a saint when we live isolated from people!

God designed us to live in community, to live in relationship with each other. The fourth habit of communion means that we learn from God when we learn from others. And we learn to be like God when we learn to treat others as God treats us. Our lives and our relationship with God are not something isolated, but God wants to fill you with his breath of life, with his Holy Spirit, so that you may be a reflection of God wherever you are and with whom you are.

For a long time, one of my dreams was to be a monk in a monastery far from everyone, only contemplating God, His word, and His creation. I'm not saying that whoever does that with their life is wrong, In my case, it was a way to escape having to deal with other people. On one occasion I was fasting and praying for an extended period.

One of those days, Lucas entered my studio. And he asked me to play soccer with him. I got angry and yelled at him because my prayer time had been interrupted. Kelly heard me and came to correct me; she told me if I was going to be that way when I fasted, then she didn't want me to do it.

I was very upset. I talked to God and I remember that I told him that my family didn't allow me to spend more time with Him, to which God answered me: "Your wife is right; if you are not loving your family more by spending time with me, it is only a religion, it is not a relationship." And then he added: "When you play soccer with your children, you're spending time with me too." I learned that there are times to be alone with God, but that those moments alone with God must equip us to be best friends, parents, husbands, and children. There are times to express God's love with others and that is also communion with God. Communion with people is also communion with God when I learn to love them as God loves them.

Today I try to be PRESENT. I still have a lot to learn; sometimes I'm distracted on my phone, or with work, or with some other thought, but I'm learning to be present and show my love and to listen to those around me more and more. I have discovered that what I learn in the Bible and what I talk about with God applies to my family, friendship, and work relationships. That is where what is learned in the Bible is practiced; a transformation of God in our lives... the image of Jesus in us.

I would like to invite you to decide in your heart to put God first this year. That you plan to dedicate the first minutes of your day to contemplate God, to expose yourself to his presence. And remember: if you get distracted by whatever it is, don't get condemned; just come back quickly. This is going to be a great year!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus, your son, to show us and teach us what love means. This year I want to dedicate the first and best of my time to you, to contemplate you, worship you, and talk to you, and I also want to learn to have communion with the people around me. Help me to remember that my family, friends, and collaborators are the place where I practice what I learn from you. Teach me to love them as you have loved me. In the name of Jesus, amen.