

7 HOLY HABITS

for

HIGHLY DEPENDENT LEADERS

ROWLAND FORMAN

Each of these **7 Holy Habits** answers a potential need uncovered in the parallel devotional: **7 Warning Lights for Highly Vulnerable Leaders**. What was exposed now has a corresponding grace-filled life rhythm.

Few leaders suddenly burn out. Often there is a slow drift. Where drift had begun, God offers steps to renewal and wholeness through these Holy Habits.

Written for leaders in the home, workplace, and ministry, **7 Holy Habits** invites both young and seasoned leaders to fold spiritual practices into their lives regularly, so that these practices become God-given habits of grace.

These 7 habits are not techniques for success, but practices of surrender. As you practice them prayerfully and patiently, trust God to reshape you from the inside out.

This Holy Habits PDF, originally published on YouVersion, is made available through www.rowlandforman.com so that you can print it freely or access it on platforms like WhatsApp. Please email Rowland (rowlandforman@gmail.com) if you decide to use it with your leadership team, or with a mentor-friend.

HOLY HABIT #1:

HUMILITY: *Becoming More Like Jesus*

If you're anything like me, processing Warning Light #1: "Am I too big for my boots?"¹ was very convicting. That's because we are all infected with pride, to a greater or lesser degree. If that is so, how then can we become like Jesus, the "gentle and lowly" one (Matthew 11:30)?

Humility is elusive! It comes and goes when we least expect it. Just when you think you've reached a state of humility, a prideful attitude is very likely to pop up. Like King Uzziah, we may be relatively humble most of the time and be tripped up by pride as the curtain is about to go down on our lives (2 Chronicles 26:3-5; 16-22).

How long might it take to cultivate a habit of humility? The popular rule of three weeks is too short. Several studies suggest it can take around three months to embed a complex habit like humility. In my case it feels more like a lifetime! The 7 Holy Habits in this devotional plan will begin to be embedded into our character and behaviors through a series of practices.

Scripture gives us several glimpses into what humility looks like. Consider these three metaphors: serving others, washing feet, and climbing down.

Serving others

Waiters in a café for example, are there not to be served, but to serve. When Jesus' 12 disciples were quarreling about who was the greatest, he said that their rulers lorded it over them, but if they wanted to be great they must become servants, *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many* (Mark 10:43-45).

The following practices are not rules to follow, but postures to try—simple experiments that over time, may shape humility in you:

Practices that May Become Habits:

- When you meet leadership team members (or family members), pause and ask yourself— "How might I serve this person?"

¹ From the YouVersion Plan: "7 Warning Lights for Highly Vulnerable Leaders."

- If an opportunity presents itself, choose a quiet or unseen way to serve, especially when no one will know.

Washing Feet

In the Upper Room, before Jesus made his way to his crucifixion, despite being infinitely greater than every one of his Twelve disciples, he stooped down and washed their dirty feet. This included the feet of Judas who would betray him, and Peter who would deny him (John 13:1-17). What humility! Such grace!

In some cultures, to this day, literal foot washing is still appropriate. For the rest of us, finding ways to do the least enviable, but most refreshing acts of service, is a way in which we can wash one another's feet.

Practices that May Become Habits:

- Look for ways to encourage someone you lead, especially if you find them difficult or draining.
- Practice one of the biblical one-anothers, such as praying, forgiving, or encouraging, as intentional acts of "foot-washing."

Climbing Down

We live in a world where people try to climb the leadership ladder. In Philippians 2:5-11, Paul challenges people to be like Jesus who climbed down to serve others. He describes Jesus' steps downward: *He emptied himself vv.6-7*—although he was God, he became one of us and served us. *He humbled himself v.8*—By dying for us on the Cross.

Practices that May Become Habits:

- Notice when your position, title, or reputation influences how you relate to others, and lay them aside when they get in the way of loving service.
- Choose a less prominent place or role as a way of reminding yourself that your security comes from God, not status.

Jesus' Twelve argued among themselves as to who was the greatest. He showed them how to descend into greatness by serving as a humble waiter, encouraging those he led by washing their feet, and climbing down in the sure knowledge that God would exalt him.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. Which of these three metaphors—serving like a waiter, washing feet, or climbing down—most challenges you right now?
2. Where might pride be quietly shaping your leadership decisions or relationships?
3. Which of the suggested practices could you implement this week?
4. How does Jesus' example of humble service reshape your understanding of true greatness?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, gentle and lowly in heart, I confess that pride still finds a home in me. I want to be seen, affirmed and respected, sometimes more than I want to serve. Teach me the way of humility. Help me to notice where I cling to position. Give me eyes to see simple opportunities to serve. Make me gentler and lowlier like you. I trust you to shape me and lift me up in your time. Amen.

Scriptures for Further Meditation

- Romans 12:3
- Ephesians 4:2
- 1 Peter 5:5-7

HOLY HABIT #2:

DEPENDENCE: *Praying as Your Way of Life*

If your desire as a Christian leader is to be more like Jesus, then nothing will shape you more deeply than a life of prayer.

Why? Because to be like Jesus is to live dependently. And Jesus' dependence upon his Father was expressed constantly through prayer.

Luke peppers his Gospel with glimpses of Jesus at prayer. He opens a window into Jesus' prayer-shaped life:

As he was praying heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him ... (Luke 3:21-22)

In prayer, Jesus was affirmed by the Father and empowered by the Spirit. And this was no isolated moment. After healing many, Luke adds: *Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:16).*

He chose his disciples after a night of prayer (Luke 6:12). On the eve of his crucifixion, he withdrew to Gethsemane with three trusted friends and prayed (Luke 22:39-45).

If Jesus—the holy Son of God—lived this way, how much more must I cultivate this habit of dependence?

Jesus' life was so saturated with prayer that one day, while he was praying, one of the Twelve asked him, *Lord, teach us to pray ... (Luke 11:1).* Their request reminds us that prayer is not just instinctive; it is learned. In response, Jesus gave them two anchors for a life of dependence.

Firstly, he offered a model prayer, which we know of as the Lord's Prayer. This prayer begins by exalting God's name and kingdom, then moves on to making request for daily needs, forgiveness and protection.

Secondly, he urged them to ask and keep on asking, because prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance but laying hold of his highest willingness.

If prayer is to become a holy habit, it helps to begin with small, life-giving practices—many of them modeled by leaders in Scripture. I've found these helpful to make my prayer life more intentional.

Practices that May Become Habits:

Meditative Prayers. As you open your Bible each day, pause at each verse and turn it into a spoken or written prayer. It's like praying God's thoughts back to him.

Spontaneous Prayers. Simply pray as things happen. Rather than fretting because your mind is distracted every time you pray, turn each of those cares into prayers. If, like David, you are deeply anxious, as in Psalm 55:3, turn to Jesus who knows all about that (Hebrews 5:7). If you've been betrayed by your best friend (Psalm 55:12-16) turn to Jesus who understands all about betrayal. *Cast your burden on the LORD and he will sustain you ...* (Psalm 55:22).

Periodic Prayers. Pray before, during, and after each daily event. For example, if you've scheduled a mentoring session, ask God for a sense of his presence as you travel to it. During the meeting, send a quick prayer to heaven, expecting God to give you the answer. Nehemiah set us this example when he needed the right words to say to a pagan king. (Nehemiah 2:2-5). After your time together, thank God for the wisdom he gave you.

Scheduled Prayers. Like Jesus, choose a private spot or quiet place to meet with your Heavenly Father. Like David, schedule a time each morning to bring your requests before God (Psalm 5:3, 55:17), stop what you are doing at noon to send prayers to heaven, and pause every evening to review the day. Daniel was a great role model of this practice (Daniel 6:10).

These practices are not prayer-duties. They are gentle pathways—ways of moving slowly to a life where prayer becomes as natural as breathing: a holy habit of dependence. Maybe try one of these practices this week.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. When you think about Jesus praying so often, what does it reveal to you about his life of dependence on the Father?
2. Which kind of prayer comes most naturally to you right now: meditative, free, routine, or scheduled? Which feels hardest?
3. What is one moment in your daily leadership rhythm where you could simply “send a quick prayer to heaven,” like Nehemiah?
4. How might your life change if prayer became as natural as breathing—less a duty, and more a way of being with God?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for showing me what a life of dependence looks like. Teach me to pray—not as a duty, but as a habit of closeness with the Father. When I feel anxious, distracted, or empty, remind me that I can turn to You.

May my prayers become as natural as breathing—a quiet pathway back to Your presence throughout my day. I want to live more like You. Form this holy habit in me I pray. Amen.

Scriptures for Further Meditation:

- Nehemiah 2:2-5
- Psalm 5:1-3
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

HOLY HABIT #3:

RHYTHMS: *Learning When to Engage and When to Disengage.*

Fatigue is not a flaw. It's a signal.

Warning Light #3² exposed the danger of running on empty: serving faithfully while slowly being sapped of strength and joy.

Burnout is rarely a crash. More often, it is a slow leak.

How can we avoid debilitating exhaustion?

Jesus provides a pathway in Matthew 11:29-30: ... *learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

This way of Jesus sounds deeply attractive to me—soul rest and light burdens.

Consider these snapshots into how Jesus lived:

Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. (Mark 6:31)

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:15-16)

Jesus ... withdrew again to a mountain by himself. (John 6:15)

When we learn from him, we uncover his sacred rhythms: serving, withdrawing, resting, praying, then re-engaging. The life of Jesus was not hurried, it was rhythmic.

Within a day, or a week, Jesus exemplified the Sabbath principle. Some call the practice of Sabbath 'six and one': six days of work then a literal day of rest. I respect that view. Even more I like the idea of a Sabbath pause, when one retreats *within* a hectic day. I have found that taking a Sabbath interlude of ten minutes, an hour, or an evening pause of solitude and prayer—is both doable and deeply restorative.

² Warning Light #3 is from the YouVersion plan: "7 Warning Lights for Highly Vulnerable Leaders."

Once a month I take a Sabbath day. This provides a nice reflective rhythm—an opportunity for me to drive to my “lonely place,” and process what God has been doing in and through me over the last month. Might you consider that practice?

The Sabbath way is not endless output. It is the rhythm of working well, then ceasing, resting, and celebrating.

- **Ceasing** from whatever is work for us.
- **Resting** as an act of trust—physically, as in taking a nap, or relationally, such as withdrawing from people for a time of solitude, or spiritually, for example going on a prayer walk.
- **Celebrating** God’s goodness with gratitude through creation, music, friendship, or food.

These are not rules. They are invitations to whole-of-life health.

It's human to be tired.

Moses’ uplifted hands grew weary in prayer. (Exodus 17:12). Young people grow tired and weary (Isaiah 40:30). Jesus was tired from his journey (John 4:6).

The issue isn’t tiredness. It is working to the point of exhaustion, and ignoring the life-giving rhythms God has graciously put in place.

So, engage fully in the work God has entrusted to you in this season. Then disengage meaningfully: cease, rest and celebrate.

This is the holy habit of God-given, grace-filled “Sabbath” rhythm.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you that your way brings rest. Too often I've pushed past my limits and ignored healthy rhythms. Teach me when to engage in service, and when to withdraw to replenish my soul. Help me to cease, rest, and celebrate your goodness. Restore my soul today and lead me into your unhurried pace. Amen.

Reflect & Discuss

1. When leaders are fatigued, what might it signal?
2. Which of these life rhythms do you tend to ignore: ceasing, withdrawing, resting, praying, celebrating and re-engaging? Why?
3. What might a "Sabbath pause" look like for you this week?
4. What is one rhythm you could begin practicing, that would create space for Jesus to restore your soul?

Scriptures for Further Meditation:

- Exodus 20:8
- Isaiah 40:28-30
- Matthew 11:28-30

HOLY HABIT #4:

PURITY: *Guarding Your Heart*

Maintaining purity is challenging, but possible. And it begins with prayer.

Maybe an expansive prayer like, “Lord, make me as holy as a ransomed sinner can be”³ or a series of smaller expressions of dependence on God throughout the day.

If the goal is to become more like Jesus, it’s comforting to know that Jesus was:

... tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.
(Hebrews 4:15).

After forty days in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by the Evil One—to indulge himself by turning stones into bread, to show off by throwing himself from the pinnacle of the temple, and to turn aside from the Cross by bowing down to Satan.
(Matthew 4:1-11).

Each time he repulsed temptation by quoting Scripture.

Jesus is alongside you when impure thoughts assail you, and his Word is still the Spirit’s sword to win the battle of the mind.

To the intensely religious people of his day—those proud that they hadn’t physically broken the seventh commandment, Jesus said

... anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart. (Matthew 5:28)

Jesus taught that the solution to sexual impurity is not external, because the cause is not external.

It is a heart issue.

³ Robert Murray M’Cheyne

When one of the Early Church Fathers, Anthony, was overwhelmed with lust, he separated himself from society to live as a hermit in Egypt. He later admitted,

“I discovered Satan could easily find me in the desert.”

So how do we deal with this heart issue?

First, we need to pray.

Pray an expansive and expectant prayer such as: *Create in me a clean heart O God!*
(Psalm 51:10).

And pray urgent prayers too—Scripture-based prayers that confront sinful thoughts immediately. Because our hearts can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), we also need frequent prayers of confession.

John the Apostle reminds us:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 1:8-9).

All of us, however saintly we may appear, need tender hearts that keep short accounts with God.

Second, we need safe people with whom we can be vulnerable.

This is like coming out of hiding.

In Eden, our first parents hid from God and from one another. And when we are struggling on the inside but keeping up appearances on the outside, healing begins with honesty:

Confess your sins to one another that you may be healed.
(James 5:16)

Third we need humility

We need to approach sensitive issues like this with sober, humble hearts.

As the English Reformer, John Bradford, observed criminals being led to execution, he said, “There, but for the grace of God go I.” In other words, ***that could have been me.***

A pure mind develops, not through pride, but through dependence. God’s grace is limitless and always available.

So, guard your heart—not with self-confidence, but with prayer, community, and the gentle strength of Jesus.

This is the holy habit of purity.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. When do you feel most vulnerable when it comes to purity?
2. When temptation comes, what Scripture could you access immediately for your protection?
3. What are some of the challenges you face in your quest to find a safe person with whom you could be more honest?
4. What is one small step you can take this week to guard your heart more intentionally?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you that you understand temptation yet were without sin. Create in me a clean heart. Strengthen me when my thoughts drift towards impurity and lead me back to your ways.

Give me humility to confess, courage to seek help, and grace to walk in the light.

Guard my heart today and shape me to become more like You. Amen.

Scriptures for Further Meditation:

- Matthew 5:27-30
- Romans 8:13
- Hebrews 4:15-16

HOLY HABIT #5

INTERDEPENDENCE: *Learning to Walk with Others*

Let me ask you a simple question:

Who is walking alongside you so that you can lead in a way that is healthy and sustainable? Do they know what warning signals might be flashing on your life or ministry dashboard right now? And how vulnerable have you really been with them?

The story of leadership in Scripture is not one of heroic independence.

It is the story of holy interdependence.

Ecclesiastes describes a person who is ... *all alone* ... –working hard yet isolated and joyless (Ecclesiastes 4:7-8). But then the writer turns and shows us something better: *Two are better than one* ... (Ecclesiastes 4:9) because partnership brings support, encouragement and protection. If one stumbles, the other helps them back up.

Let me repeat that question. Do you have someone partnering with you who knows your vulnerabilities and can steady you when you wobble?

We all need others.

- Moses needed Jethro to pull him back from overload (Exodus 18:13-28).
- Joshua needed Moses to give him fresh courage (Deuteronomy 34:9).
- David needed Nathan to confront him with grace (2 Samuel 12:1-7).
- Timothy needed Paul to inspire him with a bigger vision (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Sometimes the need is mutual.

- Naomi needed Ruth's companionship, and Ruth needed Naomi's wisdom (Ruth 1:6-2:9).
- Saul needed Barnabas to speak up for him (Acts 9:26-29) and Barnabas needed Saul's expertise in Antioch (Acts 11:22-26).

This is what New Testament writers called the one-anothers:

- I encourage you; you encourage me. (Hebrews 3:13)
- I pray for you; you pray for me. (James 5:16)
- I carry your burdens; you carry mine. (Galatians 6:2)

God never intended his people, especially his leaders, to flourish in isolation.

We are members of one body: the Body of Christ. And body parts need each other. *The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'* (1 Corinthians 12:21-22).

So how do you find a trusted mentor-friend to share your life with?

Start where we always need to start. Pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Then pay attention to the people God has already placed near you. Take note of what some call a Divine “click”—a growing sense of trust and affinity. Arrange time to meet for mutual encouragement. And remember your primary role is not to fix, but to ask questions and listen to each other.

Luke tells the story of two disciples walking the road to Emmaus. They were processing the heartbreak of Jesus' death. They were processing life, but they were still missing something.

They were walking together, but without Christ. Until Jesus came alongside them.

He walked with them. He listened. As he opened the Scriptures, their hearts burned, and as he broke bread, they realized who he was.
(Luke 24:13-35)

Interdependence overcomes isolation. But it goes to an even deeper level when we add dependence on Christ.

As I look back on 50 years of Christian leadership in various roles and ministries, it has been the mutual mentors in my life, the “Jethro’s” or “Barnabas’s who have sustained me. They have been companions when I

was alone, stabilizers when I might have tripped up, guides when I had almost lost my way, and encouragers when the wind had gone out of my sails.

And even more than that, it is the endless love and faithful companionship of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that means I will never really walk alone.

Servant leadership is daily dependence on Christ. Apart from Him we can do nothing.

And it is also the courage to walk with others.

So, take one simple step this week:

Pray.

Then reach out to someone you trust. Invite them to walk alongside you.

Healthy leadership is not independence. It is dependence—on Christ, and on the people he has graciously provided.

Reflect & Discuss

1. Who can you trust to be able to understand and support you through the real pressures and vulnerabilities of your leadership?
2. When are you most tempted to drift into isolation?
3. Which biblical example of interdependence stands out most to you—and why?
4. What would it look like to take one step toward a mentor-friend relationship this week?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you that you never designed me to walk alone. Forgive me for the times I've tried to lead in independence or hiddenness.

Give me courage to be known, wisdom to seek the right people, and humility to both give and receive support.

Teach me to walk with others—and to walk closely with You. Amen.

Scriptures for Further Meditation:

- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- 1 Corinthians 12:21-26

HOLY HABIT #6

INTEGRITY: *Leading From the Inside Out*

How would you describe the part of your life that no one sees but God?

Does what people see on the outside match what is true on the inside? Are you living honestly when no one is watching? Do you lead with integrity?

The reality is that many highly regarded leaders start the race strongly but don't finish well. And the problem is rarely something visible. More often it begins in the hidden places of the inner life.

On the outside, things appear to be going well. On the inside, there may be compromises, secret sins, or unresolved fractures of the soul. Integrity is not lost in a moment, but through an unexamined life.

Jesus named the problem with piercing clarity:

Now then you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. (Luke 11:39)

He compared them to a dishwasher that cleans only what can be seen, while leaving the inside still soiled. The Pharisees appeared clean, but behind closed doors their hearts were divided.

So, where do we look for an example of integrity over the long haul? No biblical character was sinlessly perfect apart from our Savior, but one other stands out to me.

Passing the “Little” Test (Daniel 1:3-21)

Daniel, the Hebrew exile in Babylon, was a beacon of integrity in a dark place. He was among the brightest and best of Hebrew youths conscripted into King Nebuchadnezzar's service.

Far from home, Daniel *purposed in his heart* not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, likely offered to the Babylonian gods. He chose vegetables and water instead. He could have reasoned, “No one back home will know.” Or, “It's just a small compromise.” But Daniel stayed true to God in the “little things.” And in time, those small decisions revealed his integrity.

At the end of the training period, Daniel and his three companions were ten times wiser than the other trainees. They embodied Jesus' words in Luke 16:10: *Whoever is faithful in very little is faithful in much.*

An Open Window: Integrity Under Pressure (Daniel 6:1-28)

Integrity over the long haul, begins with integrity in small decisions—but it will eventually be tested.

Later in life, Daniel was promoted to become one of three commissioners over the kingdom. He was so capable that the king planned to set him over the whole realm.

With promotion came jealousy. The other officials searched for grounds to accuse him, but they could find nothing—because Daniel was trustworthy. They were so desperate that they resorted to setting a trap. Anyone who prayed to any god, would be thrown into the lion's den.

Daniel went home, opened his window and prayed three times a day, just as he'd always done.

There's a quiet strength in him. A humility. Prayerfulness. A consistency. A life that is not performative, but whole.

“Lord, make me like that.”

In the face of certain death, Daniel refused to compromise. He lived with integrity, which meant that his life was not split between sacred parts and hidden parts. His private devotion matched his public leadership.

Even then, Daniel was not perfect. I'm sure, he would echo the words of another person of integrity, the Apostle Paul:

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on ...
(Philippians 3:12).

Integrity is less about never failing. It is more about staying truthful, with ourselves, with those we trust, and with God.

Integrity is choosing character over convenience; it's choosing wholeness, over a divided heart.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. Why might Christian leaders be tempted to live a split life—one version public, another private?
2. What are some little compromises that could slowly erode leaders' souls over time?
3. Which aspects of Daniel's life of integrity inspired you most?
4. What steps in the direction of integrity might the Holy Spirit be prompting you to take?

Prayer:

Lord, you see the parts of my life no one else sees. You know where my life is whole and where it is divided. I don't want to polish the outside and ignore what is happening on the inside.

Give me Daniel's courage in my small choices and the strength to remain faithful when my integrity is tested. I long for my private life to match my public life. Give me an undivided heart.

Please make me whole.

Amen.

Scriptures for Further Meditation

- Psalm 15:1-4
- Proverbs 12:19-22
- Matthew 23:25-28

HOLY HABIT #7:

ABIDING: Depending on Christ Daily

How can holy habits like humility, purity, and integrity become part of our everyday lives?

My first reaction to that question was simply: *This is beyond me!*

What has your response been? Do you ever feel too inadequate to live like this consistently? Do you wonder if lasting Christlike character is even possible?

Jesus gently reminds us all, using the same words that he spoke to his disciples,

Without me you can do nothing! (John 15:5).

“Nothing, Lord?” “Yes ... not one thing to produce the fruit of an attractive Christlike life: fruit such as kindness, joyfulness and love”

Jesus spoke these words using the metaphor of a grapevine bearing luscious fruit at harvest time.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes. (John 15:1-2)

If you’ve ever seen grapevines pruned in winter, you know it isn’t a pretty sight. The branches look bare, even lifeless. But pruning is not destruction—it’s preparation. It’s the only way to produce an abundant harvest.

Has the all-wise Gardener lovingly pruned you lately?

As you’ve processed the Warning Lights⁴—pride, prayerlessness, impurity, isolation—have you sensed God’s shears are at work?

It’s a reminder that God is the One producing the fruit.

So, what is our part? We cannot manufacture the fruit of Christlike character. But we can abide.

One of my life verses captures it perfectly:

If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

⁴ See the YouVersion Plan: “7 Warning Lights of Highly Vulnerable Leaders.”

(John 15:7)

This verse makes it clear that fruitfulness depends upon our practicing the following three habits:

Stay Connected to Christ

The recurring phrase in John 15:1-17 is ***remain in***. It means stay connected to, abide or make your home in.

Holy habits grow only as we stay close to Christ, interacting with him not just weekly, but daily ... even hourly.

Have you gone quiet on him lately? Do you acknowledge him before you even roll out of bed? Do you talk with him and listen to him throughout your day?

Stay Connected to His Word

Jesus adds: ... and ***my words remain in you*** ... His words are meant to find a home in us. We read them, meditate on them, and slowly, imperfectly, yet purposely align our lives to them.

That's what I love about the YouVersion Bible app. It helps you to stay in God's Word, until God's Word stays in you—to turn verses over in your mind, until your thoughts are saturated with Scripture.

Stay on Your Knees in Prayer

The outcome of abiding in Christ and his Word is prayer:

... ask whatever you wish ...

This fits so beautifully with Habit #2: praying as a way of life. As God's Word reshapes your desires, your prayers become less self-oriented and more Spirit-led.

You talk to Christ about your schedule. You bring him your burdens. You seek his help in small crises and quiet decisions.

Abiding turns ordinary moments into holy dependence on Christ.

Much Fruit

What happens through God's pruning, and our abiding? Jesus says we will bear ***much fruit***. Not forced fruit. Not performance-based fruit. But Spirit-

produced fruit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

And that is the goal of these two parallel plans: **7 Warning Lights** and **7 Holy Habits**—an abundant life to God’s glory.

If these plans have blessed you, consider sharing them, or meeting with a friend to process them.

You were never meant to do this alone.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. What might it look like for you to “remain in Christ” in the ordinary moments of life today?
2. Has God been pruning anything in your life recently? How have you responded?
3. What can keep you from merely skimming God’s word, but rather “staying in God’s Word until God’s Word stays in you.”
4. With whom could you process these habits, so that you don’t walk alone?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I confess that without You I can do nothing of lasting spiritual value. I cannot manufacture humility, purity, integrity, or love through effort alone. Teach me to abide in You. Keep me close. Let Your words find a home in me and reshape my thoughts and desires. When You prune me, give me trust instead of resistance. Produce in me the fruit that brings glory to the Father —love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control. Today, I choose dependence over striving. Help me remain in You. Amen.

Scriptures for Further Meditation

- Psalm 27:4
- Philippians 3:7-14

From Conviction to Formation

Over the past days, the **7 Warning Lights** devotional⁵ may have revealed areas of quiet drift from the life you once longed to live. The **7 Holy Habits** have offered corresponding rhythms of grace. What was uncovered, has now been addressed.

But awareness alone does not transform us.

It is the steady, prayerful practice of these seven habits that reshapes and strengthens our leadership, from the inside out. For every area of vulnerability, there is a grace-shaped counterweight. If God, by his Spirit, has exposed a weakness, allow him to renew and restore you.

Lasting transformation is rarely dramatic. It is usually slow. Hidden. Formed quietly over time.

A habit such as prayerful dependence, when practiced daily, becomes gradually embedded into your character. Small acts of dependence quietly turn into settled trust.

Isaiah 26:3-4 describes the slow formation this way:

You keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD the LORD himself is the Rock eternal.

This is what a life of dependence looks like. As we rely on the LORD our Rock, he gives us shalom, shalom—perfect peace. A deep, settled wholeness can replace our brokenness. Over time our minds become *steadfast*—steady and undistracted—as we repeatedly express our trust in God.

I wish I could testify that I practice the dependent life perfectly. Not so. Mine has been a long obedience in the same direction—slow and sometimes painful. Small acts of dependence have gradually deepened into a more settled trust. The Warning Lights reveal my vulnerabilities. The Holy Habits express what God longs to form in me.

⁵ See the YouVersion devotional: “7 Warning Lights for Highly Vulnerable Leaders” or the PDF on rowlandforman.com

Consider the seven habits again.

1. **HUMILITY:** *Becoming More Like Jesus.*
2. **DEPENDENCE:** *Praying as a Way of Life.*
3. **RHYTHMS:** *Learning When to Engage and When to Disengage.*
4. **PURITY:** *Guarding My Heart.*
5. **INTERDEPENDENCE:** *Learning to Walk with Others*
6. **INTEGRITY:** *Leading from the Inside Out.*
7. **ABIDING:** *Depending on Christ Daily*

Do not try to embrace all seven habits at once. Instead, ask God which one he is inviting you to practice more intentionally in this life season. The goal is not perfection. It is daily dependence.

As these habits are woven into your life, something may begin to shift within you. Anxiety may lessen. Your leadership may become less about performance and more about staying close to Christ and watching him produce the fruit. Less striving. More trusting. **Be still (cease from striving) and know that I am God**, is the way the Psalmist describes it. (Psalm 46:10)

Some will process these warning signals and holy habits individually in order to experience change. Some may choose to journey through them with others—in mentoring pairs or clusters, or leadership teams—thus discovering the benefits of working in harmony and with shared purpose.

My prayer is that these life rhythms will continue to shape your life, your mentoring friendships, or leadership teams, long after this devotional ends.

Scriptures for Further Meditation

- Isaiah 26:3-8
- Isaiah 26:12-13
- John 15:4-5

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