Look Closer: Mistakes and Habits

I Kings 17:7-15: The Widow Feeds Elijah



Each choice we make in life paves the way for future choices. Today's reading and discussion /reflection activity leads students to consider each choice they make in terms of their future.

Supplies Needed for Each Student

- copy of "Mistakes and Habits" (see attached sheet)
- pencil and paper
- *optional:* recorded music to use as a background for follow-up activity

Activity

1. Read "Mistakes and Habits" aloud with the group.

2. Do the "Discussion and Reflection" section aloud with the group.

3. Distribute paper and pencils and encourage students to find their own space and complete the follow-up activity. *Optional:* play quiet background music as students write their responses.

4. Wrap up the activity by gathering the group together and offering each student an opportunity to share a response.

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Mistakes and Habits

(Adapted from *From the Top of the Yardstick* by Donnette Alfelt)
I Kings 17: 7-15 The Widow Feeds Elijah

We all make mistakes. Your parents and grandparents made mistakes. Your ministers and teachers make mistakes and you have made and will make mistakes. These are inevitable as we are required to make big and small choices hourly. World leaders make world changing choices every day, but in terms of eternity, their choices are no more or no less important than those you must make. In God's eyes we are all equally important. Life is about practicing to do what is right—and it does take a lifetime of practice. The most important part of all of us is what other people cannot see—that is, what goes on in our hearts and minds.

Some mistakes that seem large in your mind may not appear that way to others, and may be too small to even seem significant in the grand scheme of life. But big or small, you can learn from your errors and start each new day knowing it holds new possibilities for change and progress.

A merciful loving God created you free to make choices, knowing you would not always make the correct ones. He is merciful, and at every moment provides opportunities for new choices and growth.

Every time you do something, good or bad, you are practicing to do it again

Beware of establishing habits that interfere with the quality of your future experience. Make an effort to practice good habits which, when established, will make life easier. Consider how life even in the near future may be affected by today's choices. Consider who and where you want to be at the end of your life, and what will help you to get there.

Over time, bad habits become firmly rooted and resistant to change. They may threaten our lives. This includes not only obvious ones, like drinking and smoking, but our habitual ways of behaving and relating to others—things that seem trivial, like using sarcasm, gossiping, lying and criticizing.

Discussion or Reflection

Our minds may deny or rationalize our habits to avoid the painful truth of how they are affecting our lives. Choose a harmful habit, *e.g.* smoking, and make an honest list of possible negative effects and long term consequences. Now make a list of rationalizations for continuing and difficulties of stopping. Where can a person with this problem turn for help? Where there is a problem, what is the most loving thing that others might do for this person?

Follow Up

Make a personal inventory of your own habits. Identify ones that might have bad long term consequences. Make a plan to work on one of them. This could include reading the Word for strength and help, prayer, or finding help from other people.

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