

Shaping the Path

I always had a tough time getting out of bed growing up. No matter how much I wanted to become a morning person, my body never seemed to comply.

We all have internal battles where our minds and bodies are at odds. Like Paul, we might say, "*For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate*" (Rom. 7:12). And so often, when we give in and allow our bodies to win, we're worse off than we were before (2 Peter 2:20).

And we don't do ourselves any favors when we make the journey of life harder by cluttering up our paths with roadblocks and potholes. So how can we shape our way and give ourselves the best possible chance at success?

Alter Your Surroundings

If you're on a diet, you don't put a giant Costco-sized bag of M&Ms next to your multivitamins. Solomon offered a similar warning about the "forbidden woman":

"Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house ... Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes" (Prov. 5:8; 6:25).

Honestly, **identify friction** in your life. What are your stumbling blocks? And how can you get rid of them? Whether it's certain friends, websites, TV shows, or anything else that trips you up, point them out and remove them before they cause you to fall.

Replace those temptations with **small helpful habits**. Habits tend to build on each other. And the small steps you take in study, prayer, and kindness will compound, the longer you practice them.

Build Support Systems

I recently got an Apple Watch to track my fitness. One of my favorite features is being able to share my progress with others. Throughout the day, I'm always getting messages from friends to "Keep it up!" when I hit my daily goals.

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ... but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb. 10:24-25).

Open up and **be honest** with someone close to you. As Christians, our job is to help, so let us! Shutting others out will only lead to isolation and frustration.

Look for real **opportunities to encourage**. Support your brothers and sisters by genuinely being interested in their lives. Listen to them and stir them up on their journey towards the finish line.

Change is hard! And lasting change is even harder! But if you're willing to work for it, change is *always* possible. May God help us shape our paths to avoid temptation and lean on each other for support.