



I Call Shotgun:
**LESSONS FROM DAD FOR
NAVIGATING THE ROADS OF LIFE**

BUILD PRODUCTIVE HABITS

Dear Brooks,

Your grandfather once told me that he attributed much of his success to simply developing worthwhile habits. He said, “I just got into the habit of consistently doing the productive thing most of the time, and I maintained that habit over several decades.”

Habits are nothing more than behaviors that have become automatic through repetition and affirmation. Please remember that every habit, whether helpful or hurtful, adds color and definition to your character. Some of your habits revolve around your goals while others spring up out of fear. Constructive habits produce positive results and conserve willpower for other endeavors. Destructive habits become enemies of your potential, attempting to rob you of God’s great plans.

Up to this point, you have unknowingly or deliberately ingrained spiritual habits, emotional habits, mental habits, physical habits, and financial habits. Some of your habits strengthen your relationship with God; some do not. Some of your habits help you earn better grades; some do not. Some of your habits make you a more competitive athlete; some do not. Some of your habits make you a better friend; some do not. Some of your habits make you a better steward of your time and talent; some do not.

Author and leadership coach Stephen Covey wrote, “Our character is basically a composite of our habits. Because they are consistent, often unconscious patterns, they constantly, daily, express our character.” And one of the founders of our great nation, Ben Franklin, noted, “Each year one vicious habit rooted out, in time might make the worst man good throughout.”

Incidentally, I would recommend that you read as much as you can from what both Covey and Franklin have written.

At this very moment, you possess both productive and unproductive habits. This is true for all of us. Some of your habits are specific and precise, such as doing two hundred pushups every day, memorizing a Bible verse each week, or brushing your teeth two or three times a day. Other habits are broad, such as treating others well, eating healthy, or going the second mile. But all habits have one thing in common: they either move you toward the person God created you to be or they move you away. Each habit either develops or weakens your character.

As you go through life, I urge you to pay attention to your habits. From time to time make an inventory of the things you consistently do in your life whether positive or negative. Then connect each habit you identify to a goal you have or a character quality you are striving to possess. Be brutally honest with yourself.

Then resolve to replace a weak habit with an excellent habit. I’ve found it’s best to work on one habit at a time. This way you won’t get overwhelmed or discouraged. Besides, there is usually no need to rush. At your age, you are building a foundation with many of your habits that will follow you for a lifetime. Build one better habit until it has taken root and become an automatic extension of who you are. In about thirty uninterrupted days, you can lock in a new habit. (It might take ninety days if you have a few misses here and there.)

When it comes to your habits, you will either be their master or their slave.

**Love,
Dad**



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