

Scripture Reading: Psalm 24

The secret to permanently breaking any bad habit is to love something greater than the habit. —Bryant McGill

In Thailand, elephants are not uncommon. They used to be very important to the economy, especially in the logging industry. But since their use for logging was banned in the 1980s, elephants exist primarily to entertain and delight tourists.

While living in southeast Asia, my wife and I visited Thailand on numerous occasions. We frequently saw elephants. Often, they were idle and just tied with a small rope to a post, much like cowboys used to do in old TV and movie Westerns.

This reminded me of the story of a man passing a couple of Indian elephants in a marketplace of Chiang Mai. He suddenly stopped, confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by *only a small rope tied to their front leg!* No chains, no cages. It was obvious that the elephants could, at any time, break away from their bonds. But for some reason, they did not try to get away.

He saw a trainer nearby and asked why these animals just stood there and made no attempt to escape.

“Well,” the trainer said, “when they are very young and much smaller we use the same size rope to tie them and, at that age, it’s enough to hold them. As they grow up, they are conditioned to believe they cannot break away. They believe the rope can still hold them, so they never try to break free.”

Isn’t this amazing? Isn’t it true that sometimes our bad habits are *learned* behaviors, and once we have learned them, we forget that we can also unlearn them and step away into freedom?

What bad habits do we need to unlearn today? The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, saying, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

To be “conformed” is to look like, behave like, sound like everyone else. Conformity to the world is like an elephant standing mutely by a post, believing that that little tiny rope is strong enough to keep him in his place.

We are bigger than the habits that hold us captive. Our God is bigger than any habits that control us. We can walk away. Those little ropes of sin have no strength or power to tame us! Thanks be to God!

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: O God, thank you for the strength to break the bonds of sin! Amen.

*Blessings,
Lisa & Pastor Ben Metz*

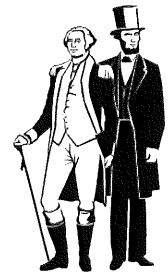


Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Acts 6-9
- Monday:** Isaiah 55-57
- Tuesday:** Isaiah 58-60
- Wednesday:** Isaiah 61-63
- Thursday:** Isaiah 64-66
- Friday:** Micah 1-4
- Saturday:** Psalms 76-78

U.S. PRESIDENTS

A week ago, we celebrated our independence and the founding of our country. The two puzzles below are about the presidential leaders of our country.



YES or NO? Were the following ever presidents of our country? Yes or No? Circle the correct answer.

Aaron Burr	YES / NO
Andrew Jackson	YES / NO
Millard Fillmore	YES / NO
Harry Truman	YES / NO
Alf Landon	YES / NO
Benjamin Franklin	YES / NO
Thomas Edison	YES / NO
Grover Cleveland	YES / NO
John Tyler	YES / NO
Warren Harding	YES / NO
Daniel Webster	YES / NO
James Garfield	YES / NO
William McKinley	YES / NO
Henry Clay	YES / NO
Bob Dole	YES / NO
Franklin Pierce	YES / NO

Presidents by Last Name

The United States has had 46 presidents.

5 presidents have a last name beginning with T. Can you name them?

5 presidents have a last name beginning with H. Can you name them?

4 presidents have a last name beginning with J. Can you name them?

4 presidents have a last name beginning with C. Can you name them?

Answers below

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD:

Across — 2. loyal; 8. stripes; 10. flag; 11. colonies; 13. citizenship; 16. celebration; 19. picnic; 23. constitution; 24. British; 27. Congress; 28. bell; 29. anniversary. **Down**—1. bands; 3. freedom; 4. union; 5. cannons; 6. Jefferson; 7. government; 9. patriotic; 12. Philadelphia; 14. democracy; 15. declaration; 17. independence; 18. England; 20. fireworks; 21. birthday; 22. stars; 25. states; 26. July.

BACKWARDS GEOGRAPHY

Think of the last place you visited on a holiday — a city, state or country. This visit might have happened last week or last year or several years ago. Doesn't matter. Then, think of any place in the world that begins with the last letter of your starter location. For example, if you said RENO, then your next location would start with an O. Perhaps OLYMPIA, and so your next place would start with an A, and so on. Do this until you have ten (10) places in the world to complete this backwards geography ladder. **WRITE YOUR ANSWERS HERE:**

God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. —Psalm 73:26

ANSWERS TO YES / NO: Aaron Burr, Alf Landon, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay and Bob Dole were NOT presidents. **ANSWERS TO PRESIDENTS BY LAST NAME:** The letter T (5), Taft, Taylor, Trump, Truman, Tyler; The letter H (5), Harding, Benjamin Harrison, William Henry Harrison, Hayes, Hoover; The letter J (4), Jackson, Jefferson, Andrew Johnson, Lyndon Baines Johnson; The letter C (4), Carter, Cleveland, Clinton, Coolidge.