

I walked into my Invisalign dental appointment carrying a copy of Mark Baterson's [Win the Day](#) and before I left, one of the dental assistants was asking me if I had any book recommendations. I explained that I'm into self-help books, personal development, and the like, but if she told me what she was into I might be able to make a suggestion. My dentist, Dr. Rajani piped in that he liked reading [Ryan Holiday](#)—I'd never heard of him until that point, but then he mentioned [Atomic Habits](#) by James Clear. Not sure if the assistant, nor the dentist had patients waiting, but we proceeded to monopolize the next several minutes with a summary of James Clear's book, namely the point about identity driving habit formation (or reformation). We mentioned that if a smoker tries to quit without changing their *identifying* as a non-smoker, it's like a leopard trying to change their spots. If however, a smoker starts thinking "I'm not a smoker" then when the urge to smoke presents itself, they reject it as an external compulsion because it is out of alignment with their identity.

In the January 5th newsletter I shared that we were created to rest—our identity as God's creation includes resting. Not resting means being out of alignment with how we were made, and the results can only be disastrous.

I took a trip to Dyker Heights in Brooklyn during Christmas time one year to see the holiday decorations. People flock to the area to see brightly adorned homes with toy soldiers standing several stories high, and to take pictures in front of homes as if they belonged to them—hello Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. There's even a 15-foot tall Santa, the largest in all of New York City. What is interesting about Dyker Heights is that the tradition of decorating homes—to the point that 100,000 people per year flock to Dyker Heights to see them at Christmas—was started by one person in the 80s. You would not think that from the number of homes spanning 3 blocks and 3 avenues—dozens of homes that caught the Christmas decoration bug. Lucy Spata started the tradition to carry on her mother's legacy, and not all the neighbors were happy about her over the top Christmas display; her outlook—["It didn't catch on at first but I figured sooner or later they'd have to give in."](#)

Lucy was confident in her identity and her zeal to continue a family tradition that memorialized her mother. The result—an entire section of Brooklyn obtained a new identity! In a sense, what Lucy Spata did for Brooklyn, Christ has done for the whole world. John 1: 12 reads, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name (NKJV)." We live in a world where people harness the power of identity all the time to support their behavior, and one of the most powerful statements and convictions a person can have is that they were born a certain way, that there are irrevocable reasons for their behavior, lifestyle, etc.—saying otherwise is the equivalent of modern day blasphemy. Identity as a driver for behavior is not new, rather it forms the basis for how we reduce friction within ourselves. God ultimately should get the first word, and will certainly have the last word on all of

the identifiers His creation claims to possess, but the verdict remains that to change behavior we must first see that behavior change through the lens of an identity that allows for that change.