

Atomic Discipleship: Make it Easy

James 2:14-26

September 13, 2020

Creating Small Wins for Bigger Results

"Small wins are a steady application of a small advantage repeatedly over time. Once a small win is integrated and patterned as a normative routine in the life of the athlete, driving forces build to create another small win...and another...and another..."
-adapted from Karl E. Weick

Defining Faithfulness for the Long Haul

"...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23a, NRSV)

Engaging in spiritual disciplines and practices that open me to the Holy Spirit serves as a keystone habit that strengthens my commitment and helps me experience the small wins that lead to even greater faithfulness.

Faithfulness Involves More than Just Claiming Our Salvation

"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." (James 2:14-17, NRSV)

For James, the answer to the question of whether faith alone saves us finds resolution in four ways: faith without works is useless (2:14), it cannot save (2:14), it is dead (2:17), and it is ineffective (2:20). -Scot McKnight in The Letter of James

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9, NRSV, underlining added)

"But someone will say, You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder." (James 2:18-19, NRSV, underlining added)

"Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road?" (James 2:20-25, NRSV, underlining added)

Faith works with works (2:22a). Faith is perfected by works (2:22b). Works fulfill faith (2:23).

"For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead." (James 2:26, NRSV)

Developing Greater Faithfulness

"In the discipline of secrecy, we abstain from letting our good deeds be known. We even take steps to prevent them from being known, as long as it doesn't involve deceit. To help us lose or tame the hunger for the attention of others, we learn to love to be unknown in our giving. In the practice of secrecy, we experience a continuing relationship with God independent of the praise of others."
– Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives

The Spiritual Discipline of Secrecy and the Third Law of Behavior Change

- Repetition – Habits form and eventually become automatic through repetition.
- Prime the environment – Proximity and ease are part of creating new habits.
- Automate – Set up a system whereby you automate your behavior.