

# DO HARD THINGS: Be Diligent in Small Things – Week 4

## INTRO

Series: Do Hard Things based on a book written by 2 teenagers.

- The One who made you has high expectations of you right now at your age.
- Five challenges, hard things, to apply to your life daily.
  - Ring finger = Get out of your comfort zone.
  - Middle finger = Go beyond what's expected.
  - Thumb = Collaborate: Did anyone choose to collaborate last week?

## HOOK

In the book *Captains Courageous*, Rudyard Kipling (author of *The Jungle Book*), writes of a 15-year-old boy, Harvey, who was the son of a wealthy railroad tycoon. To this point, he grew up spoiled, selfish, and hungering for his mother's doting. On a trip over the Atlantic, the boy was washed overboard. He was pulled out of the sea by fishermen. Here he is. He's from the elite of society living with those smelly, uneducated, fishermen on the lowest rung. Harvey told of his family's wealth and tried to convince them to give up the fishing season to return him to his home. As poor fishermen, they couldn't risk it and put him to work earning his keep mending nets and gutting fish day in and day out. The long hours, blistering work, terrible odors, and constantly being wet and cold overwhelmed him. Over time, his misery began to transform him. His body got stronger and he toughened against the cold. He began enjoying using his hands and problem solving the challenges of the open ocean.

When he finally got to shore, he wired his parents who came to find him at the small fishing town. But who did they find? Harvey had shed the skin of the soft, self-centered child and was now a man who was considerate, industrious, intelligent and prepared to succeed in taking over his father's shipping lines.

- God has a similar plan for you and me to transform our weakness into love, our self-dependency into faith, and our individualism into unity.
- We can recognize God's plan in our lives when we find ourselves in situations requiring aggravatingly menial tasks.
- **Faithfulness in the small hard things is a mark of a Jesus-follower and God uses them to shape, sanctify, and even reward His people.**

## BOOK

**Proverbs 21:5** - *The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance...*

- **Diligence** - steady, earnest, and devoted effort; painstaking work to accomplish an undertaking
- “Quality means doing it right when no one is looking.” - Henry Ford

**Proverbs 6:6-8** - *Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.*

- Ancient Egyptians would place an ant in the palm of a newborn baby as a good luck charm representing success from hard work.
- Each ant has a defined job which it does faithfully all day. Because of its consistency, it always has food.
- **Key:** The ant is part of something bigger than itself. It’s living for the good of the whole which reflects the Kingdom we serve.

**Ephesians 4:1-6** - *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call...*

- Paul is urging us to have the character to be diligent in every aspect of life. Why? Because it reflects on the whole body. It reflects on our Master.
- Our diligence isn’t for our own benefit. It is faithfulness to God as His church.

## LOOK

Reality = Life is “lifey.” It’s not always new and exciting. It’s repetitive, tedious, dull = normal. Most of what we do doesn’t make our heads pop off the pillow in the AM.

**TRUTH – Your life will always require you to invest a ton of time and energy in things that don’t earn immediate payoff.** Look at the ant. It keeps going. Walk in a manner worthy of your call.

## **HARD THING #4:** (The Pinky Finger) Stay diligent in the small things.

- **EX.** Have a volunteer squeeze my hand while I hold their pinky back. They don’t have any power.
  - Did you feel you were able to give your best effort? What did you learn about the pinky finger?

- **The power you have in the big things will come from your consistency in the small things.**
- Chores at home, getting up on time, saying no to distractions, schoolwork, working out, having daily God-time, practicing an instrument, learning a language, driving the speed limit, maintaining sexual purity, giving quality when no one is looking are the small things which define big character.
  - As small and unimportant as some of these may seem, they are areas where we walk in a manner worthy of our call. Diligence glorifies God.

**Why are the small responsibilities so hard?** (All of these are self-centered.)

1. They usually don't go away once you've done them. – folding clothes
2. They don't seem important. – math homework
3. They don't seem to have a payoff. – making the bed in the morning
4. You often don't receive credit/recognition (no glamor, no one's watching)
  - a. The news doesn't make headlines out of our routine lives.
    - i. "Local boy receives national recognition for zoning stock at work."
  - b. No one gives you props for holding your temper, picking up trash, or guarding your speech, but look at the ant.

Small responsibilities will always be harder when our only focus is how we'll benefit.

**Reasons we fail at small hard things:**

1. Bad Attitudes - Our efforts will always reflect our attitude
2. Procrastination – putting something off until it's too late for excellence
3. Cutting corners - **Prov.21:5** - *The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.*
4. Selfishness (the root of 1-3) – "I can't see how this benefits me."

**Genesis 37** - Joseph. It begins with a spoiled, braggy, tattler and ends with that boy saving God's chosen family from starvation. But there were many painful steps along the way. Finally, 13 years after betrayal from his brothers his diligence brought him to God's destination for him: the right-hand man of Pharaoh.

- Joseph was NOT someone who made several big decisions or performed several big hard tasks. He was a man whose life was thousands of small decisions for diligence in small tasks.
- Whatever position he found himself in, he served as part of the bigger whole (Potiphar's house, prison, ruler), so he worked with diligence and integrity.

## How do we live like Joseph?

**Galatians 6:9** - *Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (Doing hard things always begins with a choice.)*

- Choose self-control
- Choose a positive attitude
- Choose excellence
- Choose a kingdom perspective (vs. self-centered POV). We choose to walk in a manner worthy of His calling on our lives.

## 3 Benefits to Diligence in Small Things

### 1) Building Discipline - EX. The Perfect roundhouse kick or Making guitar chords

- Muscle memory from hundreds of repetitions
- Diligence will be a choice the first hundred times you choose it, but it will also become part of your character. You won't have to think about it anymore, it'll just be your response.
- The #1 benefit to doing small hard things = building discipline

### 2) Building Foundation - EX. Chinese Bamboo Tree – 5 years without gratification

- In year six, it grows 80' in 6 weeks
- 5 years of building a massive root system
- The #2 benefit to doing small hard things = building foundation

### 3) Building Strength - EX. Vikings – feared and unstoppable

- Would pull their boats ashore by hand for quick escapes
- Always stronger than their prey
- Key: Other sea faring people used slaves to row. Vikings did their own rowing.
  - They sat for endless hours crossing oceans and traversing rivers redundantly rowing.
- The #3 benefit to doing small hard things = building strength
  - For us? Yes. But **more importantly**, for our team (the church). They rowed together for the benefit of the ship.

**As a believer, diligence means much more than personal success.**

**Matthew 24:44-51** - *Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant*

whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 47 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 48 But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know 51 and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Following Jesus in the monotony of life is hard. There's constant pressure to conform... to be a casual Christian. But a Jesus-follower is no less than diligent.

- **Proverbs 25:26** - *Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.*
- **Matthew. 5:44** - *I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*
- **Ephesians 4:1-6** – *Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
- **Galatians 6:9** - *Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*
  - Scripture is constantly demanding the believer walks out their faith with faithfulness. AND, faithfulness to Christ reaps big rewards.

What's today's menial task?

- Is it making an effort to be kind to a sibling?
  - It will accomplish 2 things – Shapes a future with them and trains you how to treat a difficult future spouse, coworkers, roommates.

**Small EX. Reading the bible 10 minutes a day** – 61 hours of bible time in a year.

- Across a lifetime 15-90 y/o – 4,562 hours of God's word (190 days!)
- How could that transform you? The world around you?
  - What if you served someone else for 10 minutes a day?
  - What if you talked about Jesus for 10 minutes a day?
  - What if you expressed gratefulness for 10 minutes a day?
  - What if you prayed for an unsaved friend for 10 ten minutes a day?
    - What kind of kingdom rewards would you see?

**Colossians 3:23-24** - *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive an inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

## RECAP

- Life will always be packed with repetitive and/or dull tasks.
- Diligence begins with a choice. You must choose self-control, a positive attitude, excellence, and selflessness.
- Making this choice builds strength, discipline, and foundation.
- Diligence in following Jesus separates casual “christians” from true believers.

## TOOK

**Ephesians 4:1-6** – *Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called...* **Proverbs 6:6-8** - *Go to the ant; consider its ways and be wise!*

**Challenge 1:** What’s something you have to do all the time, but usually don’t enjoy doing? Choose a good attitude in it this time.

**Challenge 2:** Add a 10-minute discipline to your day which glorifies God.

**Martin Luther King quote:** “If it falls to your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music . . . sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well.”

- Supposed we lived like this as a Christian?

## eGroup Questions /// Be Diligent in Small Hard Things

**Pray.**

**Scripture:** Proverbs 6:6-8 - *Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.*

**Questions:**

1. What's a chore/task/job you have to do daily or weekly? Who asks you to do it?
2. How would you define diligence?
3. Why are small responsibilities so hard to be diligent in?
4. Do you think it's possible to have a bad attitude and still give excellence?
5. How could it be possible to have a positive attitude in doing something we don't enjoy?
6. Why would faithfulness in routine tasks reflect our serving Jesus?
7. In what area is the Holy Spirit asking you to be diligent this week for His glory?
8. In what ways might you and the world around you be affected by this faithfulness?

**Ask for prayer requests. Pray.**

**Fill out student contact sheet in your folder.**