

Ignore, Pray, and Do

1 Samuel 17:17-20, Proverbs 23:7

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What should you do? Do you pay attention to the details or do you not sweat the small stuff? I mean there opposite approaches to life but each has its advocates.

You've heard the saying the "devils in the details" haven't you. I mean the difference between winning and losing is just a few inches. You've heard story after story of how a soldier, student, business man, or whoever has been distracted at a crucial moment and the battle was lost, the class was failed, the ship was sunk, and the business went bankrupt. So maybe they have a point---- pay attention to the details.

Of course "Don't Sweat the small stuff" has its own book. Much of what we sweat about rarely comes true----and much of it is so insignificant, why waste time on should your hair be up or down, should you take the 3:00 class on Monday and Wednesday or just take a night class on Tuesday. When most of us look back at what we have sweated about, the wedding, the roommate, whether the toilet seat is left up or down, did any of it really matter?

Yet both of these can't be right. It has to be one or the other. Or could there be another option. **Be faithful.** Then you'll pay attention to what matters (minding some of the details) and you'll pray more than sweat (not sweating the small stuff). Of course you may like another word, other than faithful. Some prefer persistent or determined. I'm not sweating the details---as long as the word implies---- sticking to it----then we are good.

Which brings us to David. Everybody knows the David and Goliath story but do you know the story prior to it? Before every big moment, life altering decision, or game changing action there is something usually boring. Something mundane. Something most people will not do. Don't get me wrong they want the life altering moment but the price for such borders on dull.

Now Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah ^[d] of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. ¹⁸ Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. ^[e] See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance ^[f] from them. ¹⁹ They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines."

²⁰ Early in the morning David left the flock with a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry.

We all know about David defeating Goliath, but what happened earlier. Well you have the episode where David puts on Saul's armour but it was so heavy he could not move so he took it off. Then there is the episode where he picked up 5 smooth stones, which is true but we have to go back further. There was how David was outraged by Goliath's daily threat to Israel. But I mean before that? Rewind the tape further. David was back home tending to the sheep and his father said, "David take this grain and this cheese to your brothers at the front." Do what? "Take this grain and this cheese to your brothers." Sounds like a rather boring activity. It's not important or life altering; it does not involve courage or strength. David didn't leave home expecting to be in a battle, he couldn't anticipate what he would walk in on. David was only doing a chore, taking care of business, practicing the mundane. It doesn't say if he had a good attitude or not.

All it says is his father ask him to go and he did. Faithful, answering the phone, doing his duty, paying his dues, call it what you will it was not an adventure it was a boring responsibility.

Today there is a computer which bears his name. Yet it began as a dishwasher. Michael Dell made \$2.30 an hour as a dishwasher at a Chinese restaurant. Long before he dreamed of designing a computer he was scrubbing dishes. Before he was eating steak and lobster he was eating Kung Pa chicken.

Today his novels are regularly turned into movies. He is an American novelist. The idea for his first novel came to him as he watched how girls treated each other in high school. He wasn't a student or a teacher, he was the custodian. Before Steven King's pushed a pencil he pushed a broom. This is what I mean before there is the life altering moment there is usually sweat and something so small anyone could do it, like running cheese and bread to your brothers.

I don't know what lies ahead of you, but I do know that if you have goals to reach and places you want to go then it will start with taking cheese and bread not fighting giants. It will start with going to class, it will happen by turning papers in on time, it will require that you keep appointments, ask questions, avoid distractions, say "no", and pray. Before the giants are fought----the dull, everyday events must be done. Before you become a CEO you will close up the store and sweep the stock room. Before you become the head coach you will mop the locker room and drive the bus. Before you design that web site you will learn how to cut and paste. Nobody starts with slaying giants not even David. We start with following orders and taking grain and cheese to brothers who don't even appreciate the effort.

A single mom who had overachieved much of her life was struggling with her daughter. Her daughter was doing the minimum in school. This is one of their more insightful exchanges. "But Mom I do want to make A's." "Honey everyone wants to make A's, but before you can make A's you have to want to do the work to make A's." "Mom didn't you hear me---I do want to make A's." "Sweetheart I heard you---'you want A's' you didn't hear me-----"you have to want to do the work to make A's, and it's not the same thing. Wanting you can do on the couch or on the computer but working means you have to go to the library, forget face book, don't get distracted by boys. Anybody can want----not everybody will work."

Thus prior to doing what we want we have to become faithful to doing the necessary small things. Recently I've seen ads about how to use 15 minutes. You can use 15 minutes to exercise, to write thank you notes or emails, to read, and to pray. Most people would waste it. The point is 15 minutes is a small thing in a 24 hour day. It's about 1% of the day but you can faithfully use it, and make a real difference in your life.

Does this mean we have to pay attention to the details? **It does mean you have to pay attention to what matters.** If your marriage matters then you have to pay attention to it. If your health matters then you have to pay attention to it. If writing well matters then you have to proofread. If one day making a difference matters then be friendly to people who can help you (cheese and bread), turn in your papers on time (cheese and bread) don't post any hurtful pictures on face book (cheese and bread) then one day you'll be ready for that giant because you have learned to be faithful, to what matters.

It is important and necessary to determine what matters. Knowing what matters is hard to figure out at 60 so it's practically impossible when you are 18. But usually if we will at least think aloud then we can draw some reasonable conclusions about what matters. Does it matter if your iPod is playing a particular song when you are driving? No. Does it matter if you are dating someone? No. Does it matter if you have more money than another person? No. This is small stuff not worth sweating over?

Still what matters? First motivation matters. If good intentions, dreams, and words were enough we'd all be millionaires with homes in Steamboat Springs and The Hamptons. From Steven Jobs to Teddy Roosevelt, from the stay at home mother to the insurance agent, all of it starts with motivation. Motivation to build a company, change a nation, nurture children, or take care of families insurance needs. Motivation to serve your brothers and take them some bread and cheese. Motivation matters, it is what gets you started but it is habits that keep you going.

David's habit was being faithful to the smallest of responsibilities. Tend to the sheep. Done. Take food to your brothers. Done. David did his best and left the rest to God. Habits matter. In fact as the human race disperse into careers by their mid and late 20's this is when the effects of habits are made clear. Some have learned some simple habits---dress appropriately for work, be on time, if you hurt someone's feelings apologize, pray, wait your turn, don't over spend, don't abuse alcohol, be friendly, and the result is the clouds begin to part for take-off. Others have picked up habits which are like weights tied around your neck, staying out too late, coming in late to work, feeling entitled, spending what they

don't have, and being negative and complaining. The result here is that fog is setting in and it won't clear until some of these habits are murdered.

So faithfulness matters, motivation matters, and habits matter, but what also matters is how you think. The author of the Proverb writes "that as a man thinks so is he (or her)." Thinking matters. We don't attract what we want, we attract what we are. The negative person will be a magnet for other negative people, the person with no ambition will attract others without ambition, but the person who has passion will lure others like themselves and the person who is compassionate will attract others who are compassionate. So how we think matters.

One last thing matters. Passion. David's passion was God and Israel and he walked on that field not because he was courageous but because he was passionate about it. Passion is the fuel for the future. Bill Johnson, president and chief operating officer of Progress Energy Inc., told his grown daughters, "If there's something you have a passion for, pursue that, because you're going to be working a long time, and it's better if you're doing something you like." Or, to quote a proverb Michael Dell learned in his days working at the Chinese restaurant: "Do work you love and you'll never work a day in your life."

When you add it all up, for all of us it is not about the details or about not sweating the details, there is a third way. Pay attention to what matters----**ignore** the insignificant things and **pray** about all things and **do**. And what matters is pretty evident---- be faithful, stay motivated, develop good habits, think and be passionate. There are giants to be defeated in this world---there is too much violence and not enough imagination, there is too much poverty and not enough

visionaries, there is too much pain and not enough healers. We need some giant killers but first you must be able to deliver cheese and bread. Your time will come, but for now you need to do the small things, turn in your papers on time, avoid destructive habits, read inspiring material, try new things, and listen to those who are guiding you. Frederick Buchner always writes it better than I can say it, “Where our deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet, this is where we are called.”
