

Diligence in the Little Things Leads to Big Results

by Rolaant McKenzie



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The Karate Kid (1984) is an American martial arts drama film that tells the story of Daniel LaRusso, a teenager who moves with his widowed mother from Newark, New Jersey, to an apartment complex in a suburban Los Angeles neighborhood. At his new high school, Daniel is bullied by a gang of students who study an aggressive form of karate at a local dojo (martial arts school). On one occasion, after pursuing him down the street to his home, they brutally beat him until Miyagi, the apartment complex handyman, intervened and defeated them.

Miyagi was an immigrant from Okinawa, Japan, and a World War II veteran. He received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his valor on the battlefields of Europe, even though his wife was being held at Manzanar in California (where she died in childbirth), one of the ten Japanese-American concentration camps in America from 1942 to 1945.

Daniel asks Miyagi to teach him karate, and he eventually agrees to do so at his home. They meet with the sensei (teacher) of the dojo and agree that Daniel will enter the upcoming All-Valley Karate Championship to compete against his students on equal terms, with his students ceasing their harassment so that Daniel can train. Failure to appear at the tournament would result in harassment from the sensei and his students against both Daniel and Miyagi.

Daniel's training involves days of doing manual labor at Miyagi's home, such as sanding the wooden walkway in the backyard, waxing his vintage cars, and painting the house, fence, and walkway. At a point in his training, he became frustrated, thinking that he had only become Miyagi's servant. But Miyagi shows him that repetition of these chores has helped him learn defensive blocks through muscle memory.

Daniel diligently continues the tasks given to him as part of his training, and as his karate skills grow, so does his friendship with Miyagi. Before long, not only was he able to compete in the tournament, but he also defeated those who bullied him, gaining their respect and peace.

The story of Joseph illustrates the long-range benefits of diligence in the small things (Genesis 39-41). He was sold into slavery by jealous brothers, resulting in him being taken into Egypt to be the servant of Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard.

Joseph was faithful in handling the small things in his master's house, and he gained greater responsibility and success. Potiphar recognized his servant's faithfulness, integrity, and the fact that the Lord caused his home to prosper through him, so he made him overseer of his house.

An apparent setback occurred when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, but he refused to sin against God and his master, so she falsely accused him of attempted rape. Potiphar, knowing his servant's integrity, likely did not believe he would do such a thing; otherwise, he would have had him executed immediately. But to save face with the royal court and his peers, he had Joseph imprisoned – not in a common jail, but the one holding royal officials.

Even in prison, Joseph was careful with the little things, and the Lord gave him favor in the sight of the warden. So well did he do his work that the warden entrusted the management of

all the prisoners to him.

Joseph's conscientiousness helped him develop exceptional administrative talents. God prospered his work and gave him the ability to interpret the prophetic dreams of Pharaoh at a critical time in Egypt's history. Joseph was elevated by Pharaoh to be Governor over the entire country to prepare for a coming great famine, which enabled him to save the country and people of the world, especially preserving the lives of his brothers and their families. God used his diligence to save the people of Israel, which in turn eventually led to the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who provides the ultimate salvation for humanity.

An investor is a person who allocates financial capital with the expectation of a future return or profit. In the *Parable of the Talents*, Jesus tells the story of a man who, before leaving his house for a distant country, entrusts his servants with varying sums of money with which to do business until he returns (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27). Those who were careful and persistent made a profit on the money entrusted to them, and their master, upon his return, praised them with these words:

"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (Matthew 25:21)

Jesus conveyed the lesson that God "invests" in us by giving talents that He wants us to develop not only for His "profit," the expansion and glory of His kingdom, but for our own benefit and that of others. Faithfulness in the little things was a key factor in the success of the servants who were commended and rewarded with a promotion, and likewise, if we pay close attention to accomplishing the small tasks well, the talents God has given will grow in value and prepare us for the greater roles God has for us.

In another parable, Jesus said:

“He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.” (Luke 16:10)

The ordinary, mundane things of life are not inconsequential. They are worth doing well, and they do add up. Though we may at times face frustrations, setbacks, and uncertainty, diligence in the little things paves the way to fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives. It is an investment with an eye to eternity, where God rewards faithful service to Him and for others (1 Corinthians 3:5-15).

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E-Mail Rolaant McKenzie: rolaant@gospeloutreach.net

Website: <http://www.gospeloutreach.net/>