

Coffee Connect | Small Steps

SPEAKERS

Blake Smith

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Welcome to Coffee Connect, a Project Zion Podcast series where we share inspiring stories and thought-provoking reflections of life and ministry that remind us of God's loving presence in the world. I'm your host, Blake Smith, and today, as we find ourselves at the beginning of another year, I want to share a reflection called, Focus on the Small Steps.

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Perhaps the best advice I ever received regarding new year's resolutions was not to make them. The theory is that you can't fail at something you never tried. But one might also say that you'll never know if you can unless you try. So, I'm forced to turn to the second-best advice I received on the topic ... to take small steps. I heard a fitness guru say just the other day, attainability equals sustainability. If my resolution is to run a marathon, I probably won't succeed anytime soon, certainly not in the first month or the second. Okay, probably never! If, however, my goal is to run to the mailbox every day, which isn't hard, most days, I am more likely to fulfill my resolution, feel better about myself and gain confidence to push myself by expanding my goals. Who knows, after a couple of weeks, I might also be able to run back from the mailbox without having to take a 10-minute rest at the curb.

Discipleship is not a lot different than everyday life when it comes to making resolutions. We want to be more spiritual. We want to be closer to God. We want to be more loving and patient and kind. We want to pray more often, and the list goes on. I guess I should pause here and say, perhaps, I hope these are the things we all want.

So, we resolve to make drastic changes in our lives, such as read the entire Bible in 30 days, or commit to journaling every day before bed, or taking an hour a day to pray, or maybe inviting 20 people to church. Then life happens. I can't tell you how many times I have resolved to start journaling. The good news is that every time I have resolved to start, I have started. That said, I think my longest run at journaling was three days straight. Most of my entries begin "well, it's been a long time since I last journaled..." The truth is, I like the idea of journaling, and I even like the insights that have occasionally come when looking back at previous journal entries, I just can't seem to do it for the long run.

The typical outcome of starting with extravagant resolutions and failing to achieve them is often guilt. And when guilt enters into our lives, it robs us of the joy that God has intended for us, and limits our ability to walk closer with God. On the other hand, when we focus on taking small (attainable and sustainable) steps, we are more likely to reach our goals and experience joy and fulfillment. Why not start off with the resolve to start each day with prayer, even if it's two minutes or less? Why not start with a resolve to invest more deeply in one relationship at work or in your neighborhood? Remember, it

wasn't Jesus who invited the whole town to come to the well. It was the one woman he had met there, and with whom he had taken the time to share, that did the inviting. Small steps.

As you commit, re-commit and adjust your New Year's resolutions, think carefully about the small steps God has enabled you to take on the journey we call discipleship. Then, focus on those steps, and trust God to lead you to even more small steps.

May you be blessed in this new year with a list of small steps, some of which you will hopefully take. God bless.