

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THRIVING LIFE

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BE THE MIRACLE

What chances to be the miracle have you passed over only to regret it later?

What kept you from acting?

How do you react to knowing Jesus was the miracle to those who expected God's wrath because of their guilt?

What miracle can you be today if you choose to wear your crown?

James 2:14-17 – ¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶and 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 good is that? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

1) Make It So...

The world is desperate for an effective faith. God stirs everyone's soul enough to know there is something else out there. Something our eyes cannot see, our fingers cannot grasp. We lurch about in search of this elusive truth. Some are blessed by God, who opens their eyes and ears to perceive it. That truth is His Lordship and His anointing humanity as His legacy, His royal heirs. The blessed and chosen are called to glory, the privilege of being His revelation that others would see, hear, and believe. Yet many fumble the opportunity. Some cannot come to accept the truth, defining it as fantasy rather than dream. Fantasy being pure imagination, dream being the extreme desires of the heart. Others have not progressed from forgiveness to the fullness of salvation. Jesus exhorts us lives of faith in which we put on the crown as the sign of God. Be the miracle.

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◆**Unrealized potential:** The first step in fulfilling our dreams is to have the dream. A true dream, not a fantasy. As a means of guiding our lives, fantasies are safe. We don't have any intent of pursuing them. No, we need a dream of our best selves. One implanted within by God and affirmed by Scripture. In other words, an idea of our potential in Jesus with faith that He can make it so. But this is just the first step. Once we hold this dream in our heart, we must activate it by living in faith that it is assured. "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works (James 2:14)?" If we never act, we have only unrealized potential.

◆**Fallacy of fantasy:** Fantasy can deceive us. Dwelling on fantasy stimulates our emotions. Soon, we want to spend most of our time on the fantasy. Our lives become inert while the imagination rules. This is not God's design. Imagination, visions, dreams exist to stir us into action, not idleness. Do not settle for the fantasy that Jesus has forgiven you from the consequences of evil for your sake. He restored the dream that you represent royalty. When Scripture asks us, "Can faith save you (v14)?", it inquires about right now. It wants to know whether we remain frustrated, fearful, selfish, waiting on death for salvation or if we are hopeful people devoted to life.

II) No Regrets...

We encounter fleeting moments nearly every day that demand us decide who we are. Moments when we can remain spiritual beggars waiting for a miracle. While we wait for our miracle, we neglect to bring life to those around us in His name. Instead, those of us pursuing the dream approach each day looking for these moments. Looking for ways to express royal dignity and compassion to others, particularly those who least expect it from us. Ways to surprise and delight, just like Jesus did. Moments when we get to be the miracle.

◆**Seek opportunity:** Those of us unconvinced of the truth and living in the fantasy dwell on what we might do in heaven. Not much serious thought is given to what we can do today. Those content with forgiveness do not want the complications of others' issues. We choose not to see the need for royal action. That's not what Jesus did. He waded into the suffering masses uninhibited by His inability to heal everyone. Instead, He healed the person directly in front of Him. He sought the opportunity to address a practical need, especially for those who expected Him to hate them. He sought "a brother or sister [who] is naked and lacks daily food (v15)," so He could be the miracle. He lived to be the royal representative of His Father in heaven.

◆**Ready for action:** Those who live for the fantasy act in their imaginations. It feels good, like we've done something useful, despite producing no effect. This is a trap for the well-intentioned who are deceived into the religious fantasy. Jesus prayed regularly. And He busied Himself serving people practically. And He recognized and honored their faith as the means to accessing the miraculous. Prayer, action, and faith are intertwined in the Christian life. When one of those strands break, we become impotent. When our reply to suffering is "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what good is that (v16)?" Do not pray that God intercede while we walk by. Life without regrets is opening ourselves in prayer to the miracle He wants us to be in that moment to that person.

III) Go For It...

Once you accept the truth, have faith that the burgeoning vision of yourself is a dream, not fantasy. It can be inhabited by those who commit everything to it. Recognize imperfection as the natural result of immaturity and inexperience, not inadequacy. God chose and anointed you. Be bold and courageous, put on the crown and let others see the truth through you. Either you reveal the glory of God to those ready to see it or you are more evidence of a lifeless existence.

◆**Big dreams:** Faith is given by God to inform us of our true being. It swells within, forcing us to deal with it. Faith is the big dream of our life while it remains within. We frustrate our true being when we confine it within our imagination, limiting faith's growth and denying our royal privilege. Big dreams need a form of actualization. We constrain ourselves—and other's perception of God—if we isolate "faith by itself (v17)." Lives of salvation are manifestations of hope, joy, and compassion. The inner life is strangled without an outlet.

◆**Bold personality:** Big dreams require bold expression. What is bolder than living as though we are princes and princesses of the kingdom of heaven? It feels inappropriate, blasphemous. Yet that is what Jesus declared. We sense the truth within the absurdity. Living boldly in the name of the King feels risky. He tells us that we are forgiven anything when we act sincerely in His name. But a life in His name, "if it has no works, is dead (v17)." We are a people of purpose. A people of prayer. A people of faith. A people of action. Pray over your discontent with the world, believe He has given you a crown, and be the royal source of life to another. Be the miracle.