

DO IT FOR A DAY

DAY 14 – CONNECT THE DOTS

Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion.

Daniel 2:14, NLT

In the year 2009, a tree researcher named Dr. Martin Gossner was investigating the resilience of tree bark. As part of the study, he sprayed the oldest tree in **the Bavarian Forest National Park** with an insecticide called pyrethrin. All the organisms that lived on or in the bark of that tree fell to the ground. Do you dare to guess how many specimens he discovered?

To the average eye, a tree is a tree. Reality? **A tree is an ecosystem.** Did you know that trees communicate with each other by releasing chemicals into the air? They form a community, a network, through their root systems. And they not only feed the microorganisms in the soil that surround the logs, but also convert carbon dioxide into the oxygen that you and I breathe.

Dr. Gossner collected 2,041 insects, organisms, and animals of 257 different species.¹ **A tree, as you can see, is not just a tree.**

It's an ecosystem unto itself, just like you! I try to live and lead by a simple mantra: **"Always think like an ecosystem"**.

Every decision you make and every action you take has a ripple effect in hundreds of directions.

Habit formation is about connecting the dots by identifying drives, patterns, and rewards.

In the sixth century B.C. C., King Nebuchadnezzar II and the Babylonian army besieged the city of Jerusalem. They broke down the walls, looted the temple, and took the creative and upper classes captive to Babylon. Among those people was a young man named Daniel, who would come to power through unconventional means.

Daniel spent three years learning the language and literature of the Chaldeans. After learning their language, he changed the script with a rather unique anointing. **Daniel had the ability to solve impossible problems in a supernatural way.** Daniel was a fixer!

Albert Einstein said: *“A problem cannot be solved from the same level of consciousness that it was created”*. It is at that time and in that place that we need the prophetic imagination.

The prophet Daniel was an expert on ecosystems. His ability to perceive things beyond his five senses is almost unprecedented. Yes, he had a high level of education. **We think of prophets as having supernatural vision, and that certainly is one dimension of the prophetic imagination.** It is seeing beyond what others see.

The second dimension is supernatural vision. It is seeing beyond the present problems and recognizing the basic causes. It is identifying unintended consequences before they happen. **It is seeing how the different parts of an ecosystem affect each other** . This is crucial when it comes to accumulating habits. It's hard to interrupt the pattern if you can't see it.

The third dimension of prophetic imagination is supernatural hindsight. It is understanding who, what, when, where, why and how. **“You can't connect the dots looking forward,”** Steve Jobs said in his now famous commencement speech at Stanford University. **“You can only match them by looking back.” Do you remember the advice of day 8? The further back you look, the further forward you can see.**

The prophetic imagination gives us the moral courage to live counterculturally, like Daniel. It is refusing to bow down to the powers of being.

“But the prophetic imagination is not just sanctified explanations; they are sanctified expectations”

During the spring of 1884, the French artist George Seurat began painting the painting Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte. The painting, seven feet high and ten feet wide (2 x 3 m), is in the Art Institute of Chicago. At the end of the 19th century, impressionism was on the rise. Seurat broke with tradition and used a new technique called pointillism. Instead of painting with brushstrokes, Seurat used dots of different colors.

If you stand a few feet from Seurat's masterpiece, it's anything but art. You're too close to see it for what it is! It looks like a hodgepodge of points. The same could be said of the circumstances in which you find yourself.

But if you go back, the points form a masterpiece. If you stand at the right distance and look at it long enough, you'll feel like a Parisian in a park on the banks of the Siena River.

Life is like painting, isn't it? It's terribly easy to lose perspective if you're too close. You need to zoom out. You need to open the hole. Then, and only then, will you see the narrative that God is writing."

How did David defeat the giant called Goliath? He cultivated a skill with his sling, which required a great deal of deliberate practice. But more impressive than his ability was his way of thinking. **David was strong mentally. It connected the dots between what God had done and what God was about to do:**

The Lord, who delivered me from the clutches of the lion and the bear, will also deliver me from the power of that Philistine. (1 Sam 27:37)

David looks back on God's provision in the past and connects the dots with present circumstances and produces faith for future challenges. The Lions and the Bears were like the preseason games: they prepared David to play the official games. ***The testimony is the prophecy! If God did it before, he can do it again. Our future faith is based on God's faithfulness in the past.*** That's where divine confidence comes from. God's faithfulness pursues us from the past. ***God's sovereignty prepares us for the future.*** The best is yet to come.

HOW DO I MAKE IT A HABIT?

Always think ecosystem!

Can I make one more recommendation? Keep a journal to record each lesson. When I meet people, I always try to have my journal handy. Why? I have something to learn from them, and if I don't write it down, I'll miss the lesson.

Many years ago, Dr. Catherine Cox made a meticulous study of three thousand biographical sources, she investigated three hundred one of the greatest geniuses in history. In addition to assessing sixty-seven character traits, he retroactively gave them an IQ score.¹⁰ He also discovered a common denominator among them: They all recorded their thoughts and feelings, their ideas and points of view, their observations and reflections in a journal.

A gratitude journal connects the dots between blessings and turns moments into memories. A dream journal connects the dots between experiences and leads the way. A prayer journal connects the dots between cause and effect and helps you give glory to God when he answers those prayers!

If you want to break the cycle of a habit or create one, you have to connect the dots between the drive, the pattern, and the reward. No great measure of prophetic imagination is needed.

Connect the dots!"

Excerpt From

Do It For A Day: How to Make or Break Any Habit in 30 Days

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