

FBC TODAY

U N L E A S H I N G T H E G O S P E L

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Prayer Spotlight Youth Ministry



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MAIN SERVICE

| Physical & Youtube |

Sundays 8:45am / 11:15am

YOUTH SERVICE

| ZOOM | Sundays 9:00am

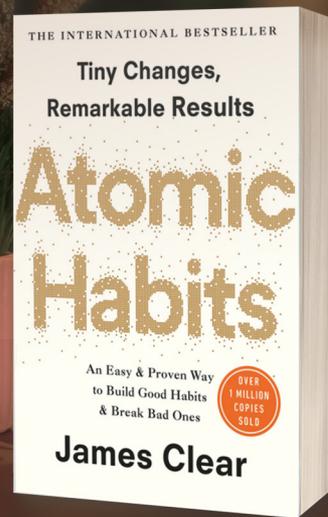
SUNDAY SCHOOL

For Ages 3 to 12
(Preschool to std 6)

Physical Classes
8:45am / 11:15am

Atomic Habits

Book Review & Reflection



How many times have you heard preachers (like yours truly) tell you “as Christians we need to XXXX.” We are often told WHAT TO DO, but more often we are not told HOW TO DO. For example, we are told to love our God with all our hearts, with all our minds, and with all our strength. I often struggle with this.

I find it hard enough to love people that I can see. How do I love a God I cannot see?

I think scripture is a compass that points us to the Gospel. But we are to also discern wisdom from what we can learn from science in our discipleship journey. Too often Christians are reluctant to turn to science on the basis that it leads one down a pathway to being reliant on self and logic instead of being reliant on God and faith. But this is a false dichotomy. God reveals himself in nature and that in itself has a scientific basis.



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Believers should integrate themselves with what science and empirical data show, on the understanding that only Holy Scripture is divinely inspired and we should view all scientific data through the lenses of the Gospel.

It is on this basis that I am reviewing a secular book – “Atomic Habits” by James Clear. Being written by a non-Christian, the basis of the book is of course based on self-reliance and man being his own god and master of his destiny. But if we are able to have godly discernment we can glean some valuable lessons for our everyday walk. So here are some key takeaways I got from reading the book:

1. Make Godly Habits. Then The Godly Habits Will Make You.

James Clear doesn't jump straight into techniques on how to make habits that work. He starts off with the most pertinent question: Why do you want to change?

Habits are therefore an issue of identity. For example, you can see on Youtube some of these videos of people who go on a grueling 30-day challenge to lose fat and get really amped up. The videos will get millions of hits. The question is this: once you have achieved your goals... then what?

Going to the gym to lose weight as a habit loses its luster if you are going for all the wrong reasons:

- to get slim because you think that would make you more popular
- to get recognized for your achievements.

However, if you go to the gym with the right motivation:

- because it will make you healthier
- your thinking will be clearer; then the reasons for that habit become your identity.

As believers, we are made in the image of God. This is our identity. And this is the basis of why we need to cultivate good habits and why we need to get rid of some bad sinful habits. Begin with that end in sight and the habit you are trying to form for God will have a better chance to stick.

2. Understand How Dopamine Works

Dopamine is a neural transmitter associated with reward and satisfaction. Too often, Christians dismiss the physiologic effects of how the mind is resistant to change. That is why so many believers start off with noble intentions to really wanting to change to be more godly but falter along the way.

How Does Dopamine Work?

A man who is very hungry finds an apple on a tree and eats it. He finds it very delicious. So he looks forward to eating another apple. The dopamine kicks in anticipating the reward of the same delicious taste. He is rewarded fittingly. He then thinks if he plucks a bag full of the same apples and eats more his taste buds will be satiated like before or even better.

But common sense tells us this will not happen. He will lose his interest in the same apple but he has developed a craving. That's how dopamine works. He now needs a bigger kick to get the same earlier pleasure. More variety and different fruits to get the same rewarding feeling, and the craving worsens.

Welcome to the world of addiction. Instead of the apple in the story, it could be a seemingly innocent thing like satisfaction from playing a computer game, watching K-dramas, getting a like in your Instagram post, or something more sinister and sinful like addictions to drugs, shopping, pornography, etc. This brain chemistry can help us understand why many Christians resonate with the Romans 7:15 verse, "The things I should do I don't. The things I should not do, I do."

3. Habits Are In A Feedback Loop

Taking a cue from an earlier book by Professor BJ Fogg from Harvard James Clear notes that habits have 3 components. A trigger or cue, an action, and a reward. Understanding how these 3 work allows us to form habits that would stick.

For example, a trigger or cue works in the context of a **regular place** or **time** to do a certain **action**. So if you have a habit of getting up every morning to pray at the **same time**, in the **same place** in your home, the chances of that habit sticking are much higher.



This is the author's core message. Too often Christians try to make huge changes in their lives then fall flat on their face then go into a spiral of guilt and self-pity. The book advocates tiny changes but a LOT of them. By themselves they are negligible, but together they will facilitate major noticeable changes in our lives.

4. Habits Form On An Atomic Level

This is the author's core message. Too often Christians try to make huge changes in their lives then fall flat on their face then go into a spiral of guilt and self-pity. The book advocates tiny changes but a LOT of them. By themselves they are negligible, but together they will facilitate major noticeable changes in our lives.

I am reminded that when Paul mentioned renewing our minds in Romans 12:2, he also mentioned the body as an act of worship. So real change involves every part of us: Get enough sleep, eat right, exercise, learn to slow down, learn to fast, pray regularly, read a little regularly, etc, etc. The sum total will bring about major changes. When Elijah fell into depression after being threatened by Jezebel God did not lecture him. If it was one of us in FBC we would have given Elijah some "much-needed counseling." Instead, God through His angels fed him and ensured he had enough sleep

You Can Do The Mix And Match Yourself

Desired Action:

(eg. Praying for the church)

Regular place:

(eg. in your car or LRT on the way to work, or in the dining hall)



then spoke to him in a quiet whisper (1 Kings 19:4-13). So for example, if you want to get into a habit of not being so jumpy and nervous at every other matter that pops up you would be surprised how a good night's sleep, a hearty protein-filled breakfast, getting up at the same time and making a schedule before you start your work day actually calms you down.

5. Practice Habit Stacking

This is also borrowed from another earlier book that taught people to identify a keystone habit. Jesus is described as the cornerstone of our lives. Remove the cornerstone and everything comes crashing down. Identify key positive habits in your life and then pile other habits onto this key one and see the leveraging effect. For example, I walk 10,000 steps a day. That is a habit I have been doing for many years. So I stacked an audio reading habit on this keystone habit. Now, I listen to a lot of podcasts, devotions, etc when I am walking my 10,000 steps.

By Arnold Lim

Arnold serves in Family Life Ministry, Boys Brigade, Haven Ministry, Saujana Life Group, Pulpit Ministry, and is an elder of First Baptist Church



Edited by Toh Kai Xian

Kai Xian works under FBC Creative and Communications ministry and is the editor of FBC Today. She also serves in Gamma, Campus Ministry, and attends GG Life Group.



PrayerSpotlight

Prayer for Youth Ministry

1. Pray for the volunteers in Youth Ministry to have the heart to love God and love people through serving
2. Pray for all youth members to have a collective and welcoming warmth to each other and new members
3. Pray that the youth leaders will grow in their understanding of the gospel and apply it to their own lives - and by extension, be able to coach youths to apply the gospel.
4. Pray for all youth members not to be too distracted by unnecessary details that divert our attention from Him
5. Pray for the older youth members to have the wisdom to welcome and engage non-Christians that come to our services.