

# Spiritual Tip

## God Blesses His Plan, Not Yours

by Rick Warren

Mary, the mother of Jesus, knew that faith and obedience are the keys to God's blessing, so she chose to go with God's destiny for her life.

"From now on, every generation will call me blessed! For He, the Mighty One, is holy, and He has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear Him." (Luke 1:48b-50 NLT)

Now, as a pastor, I want God to bless your life. I want Him to bless you spiritually. I want Him to bless you financially. I want Him to bless your career and family and relationships and health. But if you have a different plan for your life - I'll tell you - you're on your own.

God is not going to bless your plan. God did not put you on Earth to live for yourself. He put you on Earth for something much bigger than that. And when you go with His plan for your life, He will bless it.

Mary could sing about God's plan for her life because she was excited about it. Even though it would cause problems, people would misunderstand her, and she would be accused of wrongdoing, Mary trusted God. She knew God would bless her and that even generations to come would remember what God did through her.

Guess what? The same thing is true of your life, too. What you do with your life will be remembered not just on Earth but also in eternity forever and ever. How you serve and love others according to God's will for your life will leave a legacy on Earth and in eternity: "My Father will honor anyone who serves me" (John 12:26 NCV).

Could Mary have said "no" to God's destiny for her life? Yes. God never forces you to go with His plan, because He wants you to choose to love Him. That's why He gave you free will instead of making you a puppet. That's why the vast majority of people miss God's destiny. They choose to go their own way instead of saying, like Mary, "Whatever you want to do with me, I'm your servant. I accept your destiny for my life."

### Talk About It

How can you discern what God wants you to do with your life? How do you distinguish God's plans from your plans?

What kind of legacy do you want to leave on Earth?

# Marriage Tip

## The Other Person Is Never Really The Problem

By Leo Babauta.

In countless little ways each day, we blame other people for our frustrations.

They irritate us, don't do things the right way, are incompetent, rude, inconsiderate, bad drivers, too slow, not tidy, boring, or uncaring.

And yet, we will always be frustrated if we stick to this mindset.

We will always be angry, offended, hurt, disappointed. There will be no end to the offenses humanity can take against us, as long as we decide that everyone else is wrong, all the time.

They're not the problem.

The other person is never the problem.

This is a lesson I learned from Charlotte Joko Beck in her book, *Everyday Zen*. The problem is our reaction. The external event (someone is rude to you) will always happen, every day, often multiple times a day. We cannot stop others from being rude - but we can change how we react.

If we can react in a calmer, more peaceful manner, we will be happier. We will then act in a more compassionate way, smile, and perhaps the other person will be transformed just a little bit by this act of compassion.

Here's a short guide to reacting peacefully:

- 1. When you notice yourself getting offended, frustrated, angry, irritated, disappointed ... PAUSE.** Take a breath.
- 2. Don't act.** Acting in anger is harmful.
- 3. Examine the idea you have about how they should act.** You are holding onto this idea, and it is in conflict with reality. As long as you hold onto fantasies that aren't in line with reality, you will be frustrated. Try changing all of reality to match your expectations - let me know when you finally succeed.
- 4. Toss your expectation into the ocean.**
- 5. Smile.** Accept the person in front of you, and yourself, as a flawed human.
- 6. Act with compassion.** When you stop blaming the person for not acting perfectly, you can then respond appropriately, and with compassion. Accepting reality doesn't mean you don't take action - it just means you let go of the frustration. Instead, you can act appropriately, and be more centered in your actions.

Question: What if people you rely on are careless or irresponsible? Aren't they the problem then? Yes, the other person is careless or irresponsible. And this is reality - it will always be this way. You can't change that, and so the question is, how will you deal with it? You can rage and get mad at them, or you can let go of expectations, breathe, and act appropriately within this reality.

Toss your expectations into the ocean, smile, and act with compassion. The other person, rude bugger that he is, will never see it coming.

# Parenting Tip

## Practical Examples of the Five Love Languages In Action

By Gary Chapman

### 1. Words of Affirmation

If your wife does the majority of the cooking, be sure to give her genuine compliments on meals that you particular enjoy. Also let her know how much you appreciate her taking care of the meals. This will brighten her evening, especially if her primary love language is Words of Affirmation.

If you notice that your spouse has been working out lately, compliment him or her on the effort and physical progress. Starting a workout routine is usually difficult, so your encouragement will help your spouse stick to it.

Next time you see a report card or graded homework assignment of your child's with high marks, congratulate them for his or her efforts. This will provide positive reinforcement for the value of hard work and help him or her recognize his or her intelligence.

If you've recently resolved a conflict with someone, express appreciation for his or her willing to be honest and open about the issue. In doing so, you will remind him or her of how much you value the relationship and how important it was to you that it did not become terminally damaged.

In the holiday spirit, write a letter to a close friend or family member who you are not able to keep up with as much anymore. Remind him or her of the qualities that made your relationship dear. Fill them in on how your life is going, and request that they do the same for you.

If you don't already know, observe a favorite hobby of someone you care

about. Give them a sincere compliment related to it. For example, "Honey, you throw a frisbee so well," or "You really are an excellent planner."

### 2. Acts of Service

As the year's first snows begin to fall, find time to brush off or scrape the ice from a friend or loved ones' car or windshield. This will take him or her by surprise and free up a couple minutes of his or her morning.

Husbands, be sure to diligently keep the driveway clear of snow for your wife. If you don't she's sure to notice; if you do and she notices, she'll be charmed by your conscientiousness.

Many men do not enjoy cleaning or folding laundry, or even in some cases choosing what he will wear each day. Wives, do not miss this opportunity. If you take care of these things for him it will deepen his love for you, especially if his primary love language is Acts of Service.

Check your spouses shoes to see if they are accumulating street salt stains this winter. If so, scrub them clean. Your spouse will be happy that his or her shoes are clean, even in a snowy winter.

If you're a parent, why not consider laying out an outfit for your child on a school night. This will not only make them feel loved (if he or she likes the clothes you pick out), but it will also help you if your child is a late riser.

### 3. Quality Time

Pick a book that your child would be interested in and read a chapter or two together each night before bed. This will give you a regular avenue for conversation and deepen your bond with him or her as you spend time together.

Couples, make effort to connect with other married couples. Consider inviting them over for Christmas leftovers tonight or planning a New Year's event with them.

Find a night where all of your kids are free and plan a family board game night. Laughter and meaningful conversation often accompany the playing of board games.

If possible, try to have Christmas dinner with more than your immediate family this year. This will allow you and the others you eat with to enjoy not only a special dinner but also to interact with people who you may not normally be able to converse with meaningfully.

### 4. Receiving Gifts

If it is in your budget, this winter, in addition to ensuring that your children have warm clothing, give them a stipend to also get accessories that may not be completely necessary, like a scarf or winter boots. Not only will they be warm, but they will also feel extra special when they sport that extra accessory.

Compose a photo-album with pictures of you and your siblings from different stages of life. Once you have it organized in an appealing fashion present it to your parents. They will find this very endearing and enjoy recalling memories of raising you.

Think of what may be your spouse's favorite memory of the two of you. If you happen to have pictures of that moment, frame them and leave them on a hearth or dresser for them to see. If you weren't able to capture the moment, think of an artistic way to represent that memory and present it to them at a special time.

### 5. Physical Touch

If you know your spouse's primary love language is Physical Touch, always be

proactive in initiating hugs, cuddles, kisses, and other things as appropriate. It will mean a lot more to him or her if he or she does not have to seek it out but is instead taken by surprise.

Each time you are riding in the car as your spouse is driving, casually rub the back of his or her neck and head during the trip. Most people will find this tremendously soothing and endearing.

Consider putting your arm around your spouse when you are enjoying a movie or watching TV. Cuddles are almost always welcome by those whose primary love language is physical touch.

Keep an eye out for friends whose primary love language is Physical Touch and regularly give them shoulder pats, fist bumps, hugs—whatever may be appropriate in the relationship. These small things will affirm them greatly.

If you pray with the same person or group of people on a regular basis, consider holding hands or putting your hand on someone's shoulder as you pray. Appropriate Physical Touch often unites people; why not be united with those whom you pray with regularly?

### Compliments of the District 1 Marriage and Family Ministry, FFWPU

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