

Spiritual Tip

The Power of a Focused Life

By Rick Warren

“Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.” Proverbs 21:5 (NLT)

If you want God to use you in great ways in 2014, you'll need focus. The more focused you are in 2014, the more effective you'll be — and the more God will use you.

There's awesome power in a focused life. Diffused light doesn't have much of an effect on what it touches. But when you focus light — like the sun's light through a magnifying glass — you can light a piece of paper or grass on fire. If you can focus it even more, it becomes a laser. A laser can cut through steel and destroy cancer.

The same is true with your life. If your 2014 is directionless, you'll just drift through without impacting much. But if you focus your year on a few key goals, then you can make a powerful impact on the world for God.

The Bible says. “Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty” Proverbs 21:5 NLT).

One of the great examples of focus in the Bible is the story in Genesis 24. Abraham was getting old, and his son still hadn't married. God had promised Abraham that through his own family he would create a great nation through Abraham, which God did. But Abraham's son, Isaac, still didn't have any kids. He wasn't even married yet. So Abraham gave his servant, Eliazar, a goal of finding a wife for his son. Abraham told his servant, “Don't get a wife from the Canaanite girls who live around here. Go back to my country, to the land of my relatives, and there get a wife for my son Isaac.”

Like all good goals, Eliazar's was clear. He knew he needed to find Isaac a wife, and he knew exactly what kind of wife to look for. He needed to find a wife from Abraham's homeland. You'll never reach a vague goal because you'll never know if you've completed it. Eliazar didn't have that problem.

For example, if your goal for 2014 is to be a better parent, that's vague. Even if you make the goal to spend more time with your children this year, you'll never really know if you've completed the goal.

But if you commit to spending an hour every Tuesday evening with your children, that's specific. You'll know whether or not you've completed it. Those kinds of goals can change your life.

So what specific goal will you set for yourself in 2014?

Talk It Over

- How do specific goals empower you to complete them?
- What specific goals do you want to set for yourself in 2014?
- With whom can you share your goals in 2014 for encouragement and accountability?

Marriage Tip

How Do We Restore the Romance?

By Dr. Bill Maier

Dear Dr. Bill: My husband and I have been married for 10 years and I'm concerned that our relationship has gotten stuck in a rut. Long gone are the days of romantic dinners, love notes, and spontaneous dates. I don't mean to sound discouraged, but we don't even seem to have a lot of fun together anymore. Can you give me some ideas about how to talk to my husband about this without sounding like I'm nagging him?

It sounds like you are more than a little frustrated with your marriage right now. The place to start is by asking your husband some questions. You'll want to do this in a caring, non-threatening way, and resist the temptation to tell him what you think is wrong with the relationship.

Now, I should point out that some men can feel a bit intimidated by a sit-down, face-to-face "let's talk about our issues" kind of discussion. If your husband is like that, you might suggest that the two of you engage in some kind of joint activity he enjoys, like going fishing or taking a day hike. Then when you're involved in the activity, ask him if he would mind if you talked about something that's been on your mind.

Without interrogating him, tell him you'd really like to know how he's been feeling about life lately, and how he views your marriage relationship. Chances are that you'll learn one of three things. He may reveal to you that he's concerned about something that has nothing to do with your marriage. Perhaps he's stressed about work, worried about his health, or has been feeling depressed. In other words, his unromantic behavior has little or nothing to do with you.

A second option may be that he is feeling fine and thinks your marriage is going great. In other words, he's pretty clueless and hasn't noticed anything wrong with the relationship. He loves you and feels warm feelings toward you, but simply doesn't express them.

The third option is that he'll tell you that he's been feeling unhappy in the relationship. He may open up with a whole laundry list of things that have been bothering him, including things that bug him about you. If that happens, do your best not to get defensive and just let him vent.

Once you get him talking, you should get a good idea of what's going on in the relationship. From there, it's critical that you express to him that you want to work together to get things back on track. In other words, getting your marriage back on track needs to be a "team effort," not you telling him what he needs to do to "fix" things.

A great resource to get you started is a book called **When Bad Things Happen to Good Marriages** by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott. It is available at bookstores and [online retailers](#).

Copyright © 2008, Focus on the Family. All rights reserved. International copyright secured.

Parenting Tip

5 Tips For Managing Your Energy, Not Your Time

By Jenny Blake

“Life is a marathon, not a sprint.”

“I’m in this for the long-haul.”

“I can see the finish line — not letting up now.”

“I’ll sleep when I’m old” or “I’ll rest after I finish this next big phase.”

“I’m so passionate about what I’m doing that I don’t even NEED a break!”

If you’re anything like me, you’ve uttered one or more of these motivational phrases to yourself as you pursued a big project or business idea. As female business owners and entrepreneurs, we often try to do it all — build our business, eat healthy foods, stay fit, be social, take care of our home and loved ones, and be cheerful on top of it all.

It can be exhausting.

And contrary to all the popular mantras, treating life and business like a marathon might not actually be in our best interest.

My Ill-Timed Book Breakdown

I experienced this first-hand after having a complete and utter breakdown three weeks before my book, **Life After College: The Complete Guide to Getting What You Want**, was set to come out.

I had been working on the project for over two and half years, and in

the final months I ramped it up to an obsessive around-the-clock endeavor (in addition to my full-time job at Google). I felt like I was on Mile 23 of a marathon — I could see the finish line and now was no time to rest or let-up.

Because I wasn’t willing to take a break, life “knocked me on my ass” (that’s the technical term) and forced me to rest. Despite the fact that my book was going to be released in three weeks and I had an impossibly long to-do list of important tasks to complete, I was a miserable, crying, nonfunctioning mess. Even though I was incredibly passionate about my project, not building in any rest stops had been a recipe for disaster.

The Alternative: Manage your energy, not your time

Tony Schwartz, author of **The Power of Full Engagement**, recommends that we manage our energy not our time.

Rather than treating our life and businesses as a marathon, Schwartz advises we treat them as sprints and recovery (recovery being key here!).

We all know we are going to have big sprints — that’s what makes pursuing a project or business so exciting. But it’s imperative that we build in equal parts recovery.

5 Tips to Make Room for Recovery

1. Schedule it. No matter whether or not you think you need a break,

schedule fun or relaxation activities in advance and stick to them.

2. Double the break you think you need. I know how this goes, “Sure, I’ll take a break — I’ll give myself a whole hour off!” Not good enough. Whatever the break you think you need, double it. You are most likely underestimating the toll that all of your hard work is taking on your body and mind — even if you’re having fun.

3. Enlist family and friends. If you schedule a weekend get-away with family or friends, you’ll have no excuse but to unplug. Family and friends can be great accountability buddies for taking the breaks you need.

4. Make a list of the benefits of R&R, and brainstorm your favorite rejuvenation activities. I know that even after reluctantly taking a break, I will come back refreshed, more cheerful and more creative — which puts me in an even better position to do my best work once I’m back at it. Making a list of the benefits will help motivate and remind you to actually take the breaks you’ve set-up. At a loss for what to do? Make a list of any/all activities that bring you joy or relaxation. For me that’s reading, yoga, a glass of wine (with chocolate) and watching a few shows on Hulu.

5. Break down your biggest goals into achievable, measurable chunks and reward yourself often! For every day that you make a massive to-do list, add a “reward” item at the end that brings you joy.

Maybe it’s reading a book, a gossip magazine, or going out to dinner with a friend. For many of us, we only take breaks or celebrate when we hit the BIG goals — but those can take months to achieve. Instead, break them down into smaller parts and reward yourself for all of the smaller milestones you hit along the way.

So the next time you’re headed for a big business sprint, make sure you build in recovery rest-stops. Everyone needs to balance hard work with rest and play, otherwise you might lose out on the relationships that are the most important to you.

Compliments of the District 1
Marriage and Family Ministry,
FFWPU

For more:

Marriage Tips, Resources, or copies of
these Sunday Inserts visit:

www.TheMarriageLibrary.com

Archives: username: Member
password: 20112011