

Spiritual Tip

Focus on Your Purpose, Not Your Problem

By Rick Warren

When you stay focused on your purpose, not your problem, you can be happy even when life seems to be falling apart.

Paul was an old man when he was in prison in Rome. He was a long way from home. He was awaiting execution. Everything has been taken from him: his friends, his freedom, his ministry, even his privacy, with a guard chained to him 24 hours a day. It wasn't exactly a happy time for Paul.

But there was one thing they could not take away from Paul: his purpose. Paul made the choice to stay focused on his purpose, even when he had lost everything else. What was his purpose? Serving God by serving others.

Paul says in Phil. 1:22-25, "If by continuing to live I can do more worthwhile work, then I am not sure which I should choose. I am pulled in two directions. I want very much to leave this life and be with Christ, which is a far better thing; but for your sake it is much more important that I remain alive. I am sure of this, and so I know that I will stay. I will stay on with you all, to add to your progress and your joy in the faith".

I'll never forget reading Viktor Frankl's book "Man's Search for Meaning." Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist who was taken to one of the death camps in Nazi Germany. All of his family and all of his friends were gassed and murdered. He talks in his book about one day when he stood in front of the Gestapo stark naked. They'd taken away the prisoners' clothes and even Frankl's wedding ring. He stood there with nothing at all when he suddenly realized there was one thing the Nazis could not take away from him: his choice in how he would respond.

You cannot control what other people do to you. You cannot control what other people do around you. But you can control how you respond.

Talk It Over

- * What do you believe is your purpose in life?
- * How does your response to a difficult situation change when you realize that how you respond is your choice?
- * What distractions or influences are keeping you focused on your problem and not your purpose?

Parenting Tip

Hurt Feelings

By John Rosemond

Question: My 6-year-old daughter has recently learned to say "You're hurting my feelings." This is part of her school's anti-bullying program. The problem is she's now saying it to me when I discipline her. What should I say to her? In exasperation I've said "You hurt my feelings when you disobey me." That seems to have some, admittedly small, effect. I hope you have a better idea.

Answer: The Law of Unintended Consequences strikes again! Over the past few years, a good number of parents have told me that their kids, when disciplined, complain of hurt feelings. The mystery as to the origin of this epidemic is solved! It's the schools.

A very wise man once said words to this effect, "Proper discipline never feels good at the time, but results in all manner of good in the long run." In other words, discipline is not corrective if it does not feel "bad" to the person receiving it.

It should "hurt" — not harm or abuse, just not feel good. That emotional memory is what deters future missteps of the same sort. So, don't concern yourself with your daughter's complaint.

A proper response to her complaint is "That means you heard me. Good." And then, walk away. Do not turn this into an exchange. If you don't give credence to her complaint, she will stop making it.

Marriage Tip

How Laughter Can Save Your Relationship

By E. Lisitsa, The Gottman Institute Staff

According to Dr. John Gottman, sharing humor with your partner is one of the most effective ways to strengthen your relationship.

Surprising each other with random acts of hilarity, enjoying playful back-and-forths, giving yourselves to the moment - these are ways in which your time together is gradually filled with a sense of laughter and joy.

As Dr. Gottman explains in **The Relationship Cure**, all that such playfulness requires is a "willingness to turn toward another's sense of silliness... and have a little bit of fun!"

In everyday situations, you often have the chance to react to situations in a variety of different ways. Imagine the following scenario:

Lila asked her husband Charlie to help her in the backyard on a sunny afternoon. She's been having some back pain and wants to untangle a particularly stubborn thicket of weeds, creeping steadily

closer and more alarmingly to the rose garden that she loves.

To add further cause for delight to an already wonderfully pleasurable activity, the rain from the night before has caused enormous sludge puddles through which they are constantly forced to squelch in their relatively useless leaky boots.

Charlie obliges, but isn't being particularly helpful, not knowing a cabbage from a daffodil.

As Lila grows more and more irritated by his incompetence and he grows more and more annoyed by her maddening micro-management, she tops everything off by accidentally splashing him with the overabundant mud.

Covered in mud, Charlie turns towards Lila.

He has two choices. He can express his exasperation at the entire state of affairs in which he has been mired, or he can look at their mutually muck covered state and see the humor in a completely absurd situation.

Looking at his wife with a mischievous glint in his eye, he dips his finger into a bit of reddish dirt on his jacket, and draws a frowny face with it on her arm.

With the paradoxical air of an exhausted rogue, she draws two streaks of red dirt war paint across his cheeks. He returns the favor. Now laughing hysterically at their mud covered selves, they are able to see the hilarious nature of their predicament, and the end of their struggles are punctuated by fits of hysterical giggling.

What has Charlie done in the scene above? He has done something incredible: he has converted a potentially explosive situation into a moment of hilarity.

By engaging his wife in play, he has made them into a team - sweaty, exhausted, trapped in muck, a hilarious double act.

Relieving tension, he has alerted his wife to the comedic value of their plight!

Remember the endless wisdom of Mary Poppins: "In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun. You find the fun, and - SNAP! - the job's a game!"

Luckily, most moments you share with your partner are much easier to fill with laughter. The power of shared mirth is invaluable to building your shared meaning and friendship - the quality which Dr. Gottman tells us is a predictor of

the ultimate success or failure of your relationship.

Apply this principle in your own life, and watch the connection between yourself and your partner deepen and thrive!

Compliments of the District 1 Marriage and Family Ministry, FFWPU

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