

Spiritual Tip

Look Inside

By Joel Osteen

One day a man had an accident while driving to work. He got out of the car and yelled at the other driver, "Lady! You need to learn how to drive. You're the fourth person that's hit me today."

In life, we can get to a point sometimes where, like this man, we're always pointing fingers and placing the blame on others. But there comes a time when we need to look inside and say, "Maybe I'm the one that needs to change."

If you're finding fault all the time and developing a habit of seeing the bad rather than the good, if you're skeptical and have trained yourself to be cynical and sarcastic rather than believing the best, if you're constantly blaming everyone for everything that's going wrong in your life, then maybe it's time to look inward instead of at others.

Just like the man who had the accident while driving to work; if he had been hit four times in one day, obviously, he's the one doing something wrong!

One thing I've learned is that a critical spirit will follow you everywhere you go. You can't get away from it. You can leave one job angry, upset and bitter and go around saying, "They didn't treat me right." "My boss doesn't know what he's doing." "Nobody can do anything right." But if you don't deal with the root issue, you'll have the same problem at the next job or in your next relationship. You'll still think everybody is against you. It's because the problem is inward and not outward.

I love what Jesus said to people that were always placing the blame on others and looking at what others need to fix all the time instead of looking at their own lives. He said, "Get the telephone pole out of your eye before you try to get the toothpick out of your brother's eye."

When I come to the end of my days and stand before God, and He says, "Joel, what did you do with the time that I entrusted you with? How did you use the gifts that I gave you?"

I would hate to have to say, "God, I spent my life criticizing others, knocking people down and trying to make them look bad, placing the blame on others and stirring everything up."

I have a hard time believing that God is going to say, "Well done, you good and faithful servant. You did just what I asked!"

No, I imagine God is going to say, "Do me a favor. Clean your own window; look inward before you come up here. If not, before long, you'll be finding fault with Me."

Today, you can make the switch. You can work on cleaning your own windows. You can wipe away the judgment, criticism, and fault finding, which may be the things that have held you back for years. Love believes the best in others. It always sees the good. And when there is blame or a fault to be found, instead of looking outward, first look inward.

Don't be afraid to look inward and humble yourself before God. After all, when we're humble, we give God the opportunity to promote and bless us.

1 Peter 5:6 "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (KJV)

Marriage Tip

The Secret To Motivating A Husband

By Dr. Emerson Eggerichs

I discovered a secret - a secret hidden in plain sight! A husband does not lack the knowledge that he is to love his wife. She tells him that she needs to feel his love.

What he lacks is motivation.

The secret is this: A husband is motivated to be loving in response to a wife showing him unconditional respect.

That's a big truth hidden in plain sight. After hearing it, it still seems foreign to many!

Peter reveals that a wife's "respectful behavior" (1 Peter 3:1,2 NASB) motivates a husband - even an undeserving one - to open his heart to God and by implication to his wife. "Even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your... respectful behavior."

Paul, as well, shares God's secret. "The wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33b NIV). This is his summary statement on marriage to the wife in the most significant treatise on marriage in the New Testament.

Did you know that God does not command a wife to agape-love her husband? Only the husband is commanded to agape-love (Ephesians 5:33a). Agape-love is that God-like unconditional love.

Why is a wife not commanded to agape-love? God designed a wife to love. She loves to love. For this reason, a husband does not doubt his wife's love. What he doubts is her respect for him. During an argument, if she shouts, "I love you a ton, but don't feel any respect for you!" he'll become an island unto himself. A mysterious island.

That is equal to a husband shouting, "I respect you more than any other human being, but I don't love you, never have." What wife will jump in the air and click her heels over that comment? She is devastated and would never get over it.

As a wife needs love like she needs air, so a husband needs respect like he needs air. He is devastated and never gets over the declaration, "Nobody could ever respect you."

The key to motivating any person is by meeting that person's deepest need. A husband is best motivated when his need is met to feel respected for who he is apart from his performance.

When a wife comes across as despising who her husband is as a human being, he loses his fond feelings of affection for her. He loses energy to emotionally connect. He has lost his motivation. This is similar to a wife losing energy to positively respond when her husband is harsh, angry and unloving.

Parenting Tip

Teaching Kids Personal Responsibility

By Susan Yates

I love when unexpected moments offer a great "Ah-ha!"

It happened after I'd been doing laundry all day and still wasn't finished. With five children, my dirty-clothes pile multiplied daily. As I began to sort my teenage son's T-shirts, I realized with growing alarm that I'd inadvertently washed his sister's red skirt with his clothes. Indeed, his shirts had a soft pink glow. Maybe he won't even notice, I desperately hoped.

No such luck.

"Mom!" he wailed when he saw his pile. "I can't wear these — they're pink! Please don't ever touch any of my clothes again!"

Ah-ha!

"What a splendid idea!" I responded. "From now on, you can do your own laundry."

The very next day, the teenagers began to wash their own clothes. They weren't neatly folded or ironed, but they were clean. Through trial and error, they quickly learned how to sort, what to wash on hot, what to dry, and what to hang. For me, it was an unexpected lesson in handing over responsibility. And the bonus? It built their life skills and made their transition to college easier.

Every parent longs to raise kids who are secure. We want our young children to become confident teens and eventually mature adults.

Teaching our kids personal responsibility builds their confidence as they learn to do things for themselves.

Here are some helpful tips that will equip you as you help your children learn responsibility:

Start now. Training begins at an early age and is gradual. "But wait," you may say. "My child is only 3 years old!" That's right, you need to start now. If he reaches 18 without having been trained in small steps along the way, he won't be prepared for the freedom he seeks.

A 3-year-old can clear his dish from the table. A 5-year-old can make her bed. It might not look like it would if you made it, but she's learning responsibility. Show her how to do it. Do it with her several times. Then let her do it by herself and praise her like crazy. It won't be perfect. That's not what matters. What matters is that she did it.

Preschool play dates can wreak havoc on the host home. Take 10 minutes before you leave and have your child help put away the toys. Encourage him to clean up after himself any time he visits someone else's home.

I've never made a school lunch. When our kids started going to school, they began to make their own lunches. Of course I watched what went into them, but they did the work.

My neighbor Lisa has two young sons. Early in the morning they run to our elderly neighbor's home, pick up her newspaper from the street and stick it in her door. Not only is Lisa

training them in responsibility, but she's also teaching them to be thoughtful. Keep an eye out for similar opportunities.

As they grow, gradually increase responsibility. A wonderful tool in teaching responsibility is often overlooked — chores.

Create a list of chores and who is responsible for them. Post the assignments where everyone can see them. It helps to rotate the chores weekly and permit trading between the siblings.

My friend Will is teaching his 8-year-old son to mow the lawn. His son doesn't do it perfectly, and Will spends a lot of time and energy supervising, but the child is learning the value of hard work as his dad coaches him.

In addition to household chores, teens should be responsible for keeping curfews and letting their parents know where they are, whom they are with and when they'll be home. Once they start driving, they should be expected to keep the car clean and full of gas.

Use humor and affirmation. Responsibility isn't always fun, so it helps if you can add a touch of humor to the process. Put the timer on and have a race to pick up the toys. Plan a family trip for ice cream as a reward after a special chore day. Make up silly songs or rhymes as you do housework. Laugh at yourself whenever you can. And praise your kids: "I'm so proud of you for picking up the mess in your room." "I appreciate your getting in

before curfew." "Every day, I see you becoming more responsible!"

Keep the long-range goal in view. Our primary job is not to make sure our child is always happy. Instead, it is to raise a responsible adult who will fulfill the plan God has prepared for him or her. Our small kids may pitch a fit and our teens may roll their eyes at parental instruction, but remember that what our children think of us now is not nearly as important as what they will think of us 20 years from now. We will make many mistakes. We will become discouraged. But we have to realize we are making small deposits in the lives of our children, who will one day reap big dividends.

Susan Yates is the author of many books about parenting and has five adult children.

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