

Secrets to Help You Stay Focused in 2007!

by Cindy Rushton

Anybody else battle with distractions and interruptions? Do you want to stick to the things that are on your heart, yet realistically battle with staying focused?

Oh! I TOTALLY relate! In fact, the past few months, my heart-cry has been to stay focused. Everywhere I have turned, I have heard messages on staying focused...saw articles on being focused...and talked with my friends about being focused. As a result, I have found a few great secrets that have really helped me to stay focused on the most important things in my life and get more done at the same time. Want to know those secrets? Well, let's dig in...

BEGIN EACH DAY WITH A QUIET TIME...

I know what you just thought..."BUT! Cindy, that gets me off track!" Oh! Beloved, nothing can help to focus on the REAL plan for the day...the best opportunities...the most important. Actually, on those days that I am very, very tempted to skimp on my Quiet Time, I actually find that I am better prepared for the day that bombards me just moments later. Maybe it is the fresh perspective. Maybe it is renewal of my heart and mind. Maybe it is slowing down to remember to choose the best in everything for that day. Whatever, I never lose by taking time to let God fill my cup first thing each day. Want a great secret to staying focused this year? Begin each day with the best tool for getting focused--a Daily Quiet Time.

Make it easy!

Begin with Daily Bible Reading. Begin with just reading 5 minutes...or in 10 you can usually read through the Bible in a Year using any program! JUST TEN MINUTES A DAY!! Choose a plan--one that will get you in the Word and NOT frustrate you. And...while you are choosing, choose a new Bible. Each year I choose a different version for Daily Bible Reading. Talk about a HUGE difference! I have been a Christian for 32 years. One of my frustrations (now this is being honest) with Daily Bible Reading is that I found myself skipping over certain passages that I *THOUGHT* I knew. Oh! Try a new version! It will make words jump out and seize you! It will make those stories come alive! Last year, I chose to read through THE MESSAGE version of the Bible. It was SUPER! It made such a difference in making God's Word come alive that I decided to choose another version for my Daily Bible Reading. Just begin! Don't beat yourself up if you miss a day. Instead just dig in and let God talk to you! HE WILL!

As you begin with your Daily Bible Reading, keep a journal close by. Each day, jot down your favorite verse from the day in your journal. I love that this one discipline helps me to stay focused and tuned in for the study...but it does more... I am amazed that almost every day someone comes across my path who needs the Words that God gives me during my Quiet Times. Give it a try! The Word will stick to your brain and be on the tip of your tongue. Plus, it will keep you focused each day on the most important things! Give it a try!

Finally, during your quiet time, read the Bible, copy a verse that jumps out at you, and take some time to just pour out your heart to God and listen to Him before jumping into your day. He wants for you to come to Him and pour out your heart. He doesn't want for you to walk through your journey by yourself. He delights in being there with you communing with you along the way. Begin each day with some time with Him...you will be amazed at how much more you will accomplish and how focused you will be each day!

WRITE IT ALL DOWN...

Another secret! Actually, this one needs to become a lifestyle thing. Let me explain! This past year, I began 2006 with a bit of frustration. I had so many dreams...so many desires...so many goals...so many to-do's. In fact, I had had those dreams, desires, goals, to-do's for many years. Each year, I would dreamily resolve to "go for it" yet again. And...again the next year. Know what I mean???

Well, 2006 was a year of change for me. Looking back, this was one single factor that really made the difference!

I took some time during the last week of December 2005 to just brainstorm anything and everything that I really wanted to do and accomplish. Oh! You should see the poor journal that housed those dreams, desires, goals, and to-do's! Such a treasure as I walk into a new year! I just kicked back and spent the time to get everything out of my brain and into the journal. When I woke up in the middle of the night and something was on my brain, I got up and wrote it down. I kept the journal close for the whole week. I wrote out everything--the little things that I just could not find time to get wrapped up...the projects that seemed to never fit into my schedule...the business goals that I had...the financial goals (including how much money I owed on my debts--remember 2006 was my attack year on my debts and I ended the year with ALL of them paid off!!! WOohooo!)...the dreams that just seemed a bit out of reach.

I wrote down everything that came across my mind. I compiled them in the journal as to-do lists for different areas of life--the financial page listed each bill I owed with the amount I owed. For my writing goals, I listed books I wanted to finish and project ideas that were on my heart. I even wrote out my dreams for an online radio show--YEP! That far-fetched dream became reality as I began Mom-to-Mom Radio Show in January of 2006. Only a dream. Just needed focus!

Want to know the fun part about this? I reached ALL of my dreams, desires, goals, and to-do's that I wrote down in January by May!! I had to sit down and begin a new journal then with the same format, except I was much more bold in my dreams, desires, goals, and to-do's. Of all of the years of my life, 2006 was record-breaking! As a family, we reached for greater things and grasped onto them! We dared to go for all of the "impossible" things with focus and determination. It made all of the difference in the world to have it all written down. To mark off each accomplishment was priceless! Yep! This was another secret for staying focused. Why not try it for your New Year and see how it works?

USE A DAILY TO-DO LIST...

A few years ago, I read a book with my children for a homeschool unit study we pursued during the last four years of my son's school years. I know, I know. It was a study that took on a life of its own. It began with a simple biography about a great businessman. We continued through as many biographies as we could find. We STILL pursue these studies even though my son graduated almost 3 years ago!

What's the point? Oh! This is a good one!

We read one book about Mary Kay. You always learn so much when digging into the lives of others. One of the life-changing things that I learned from her life was from one thing that she attributed to her success--her daily to-do list. Daily, she kept a list of 5 things to do for the day. Each day the list changed. She wouldn't list the impossible. She just plugged away each day on 5 vital things.

I pondered that for a while. I knew that my biggest struggle was having bigger plans than I have hours to work on them. I decided to pray for my daily "5 things" for the day. Talk about a great secret for getting and staying focused! First, it keeps us from going day-after-day never getting "anything" done. You know that feeling? It comes from a lack of purpose and direction. Keeping a journal with all of the stuff on your heart for the year is great. Then, we can look at our daily to-do's and add those other things into that list of five things. I try to add ONE THING per day from my journal, even if it is a little thing. Of course, there are days that I have to be realistic and limit myself to the demands of the day. I am OK with that when I have hope that I will not put off the heartbeats for years to come. Adding them into my "5 things" regularly helps. Also, on those days that I am blank or that I happen to have some extra time to myself, I go through my journal and work through some of the simple tasks that I can attack. It worked great this year! Oh! On those days that I have 25 things to choose from...you know that those days pop up constantly, don't you?...Well, on those days, I construct my top five for the day and add the others to my journal. It clears my

brain and keeps me focused on working my plan. It helps me to accomplish much each day. And...keeps me focused. Give it a try! This year will be your best year yet!

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH GREAT (FOCUSED) PEOPLE...

I don't know about you, but I really grasp for more in life when I have a big dose of encouragement and inspiration! Nothing fires me up more than people who are focused on going for all that God has in store for them! I just LOVE their passion for success! They challenge me to keep growing, keep moving, keep grasping for my dreams! They inspire me to step out there and trust God for those impossible things that intimidate me. They keep my brain turning and fresh! They spur me to reach for the very, very best!

Do I sound blessed? Did you just "wish" you had others like this? Have you written yourself off?

Oh! Beloved! I am not advocating that you scrap your friends and family! :) Rather, I want to encourage you to ask the Lord to show you those that can step into the gap there! Ask God to show you opportunities this year to surround yourself with great people!

Years ago, one of my friends told me that great people are only as great as those that they surround themselves with. Talk about inspiring me! Well, she went one step forward...she said that a mediocre person could become great by surrounding themselves with the very best people in all areas of their lives. I have pondered that since she said it. It is SO true!

I have endeavored to surround myself with great people! They are everywhere! I am not special. You have them around you too.

We live in a complicated culture. Whereas, life is not simple like the lifestyle our grandparents had where they could learn from others while sitting on the front porch sipping tea and chatting (yep, I am from the South! WINK), they also did not have access to so much at their fingertips.

Take time to get to know others! You would probably be surprised at what is deep inside of those surrounding you. I want to know the greatness hidden inside of those surrounding me. Everyone has something great in there. Digging into their greatness instills greatness in me...AND challenges them to reach for more greatness. It makes the most of our time together. Of course, those people are the ones that I am around "in person" in my life. But, I also have some choices with my free time. I can surround myself with great people through books...online classes...audios...and other methods of study. I plug into great people regularly who are reaching for the best! They inspire me. They fire me up! They keep me

growing! Wanta get and stay focused? Those that surround you can make or break you! Surround yourself with focused people!

GET RID OF ALL HINDRANCES...

Anybody sitting there and thinking of all of the reasons that you cannot do ONE THING I have written...

...You have little ones that constantly interrupt your quiet times?
...You don't have TIME for a quiet time?
...You have too much to do each day to write down your list in a journal?
...You don't have any money for a journal--it IS after Christmas???
...Your day is so full of things wrapped around the children that you could never plan for "5 to-do's" each day?
...Those around you are YOUR problem!

Oh! Beloved! I DO understand! And...this is YOUR year!

Take a peek at Hebrews 12: 1-2 (I LOVE IT in The Message)...

This passage really fires me up! It was one of my key verses for 2006. It follows the chapter reminding us of the great men and women of faith throughout Scripture. Then, continues in this passage telling us what it is all there for...to remind us to lay aside every encumbrance, the sin that so easily entangles us, get busy running the race, staying focused on Jesus and HOW HE ran the race. It is SO good!!

It doesn't tell us that our circumstances will be ideal. It doesn't tell us that everyone around us will "get it" and support us or get on board with us. It doesn't tell us to change those around us. It simply reminds us to get focused on Jesus and get rid of all of the hindrances so we can run the race faithfully!

I have no idea what you will be facing this year. My year last year was not perfect. I had some very, very tough times from time-to-time. I had times that I got tired and weary along the way. I had times that everything I touched seemed to crash. However, a big secret to grasping onto all of the things that God had in store for me was to get rid of all of the hindrances and run the race faithfully. God didn't demand that I do everything perfect, rather He simply wanted for me to keep my eyes on Jesus while I faced all of the tough stuff. To stay focused!

I had to look past the impossibilities. I had to lay aside every hindrance and every encumbrance. I had to repent of my sins, confessing them so I could be healed and run the race with strength and stamina--sin zaps our strength and stamina. I had to drop my excuses--yep, that is what they were! I had to let go of everything

that had been hindering me. Want to stay focused? Get rid of all of the hindrances today! You have a great year ahead!

READY?

On your Mark...Get Set...

We have a great year ahead! Are you ready to go for it? Are you tired of setting resolutions and fizzle on January 2nd? Are you sick of being where you are? Are you ready to go for those dreams? Do you want to have the best year yet?

Oh! Try out my secrets! Stay focused! Make 2007 your best year yet!

ALL OF YOU CAN DO THAT!

So, what is your hindrance? What distracts you? Can you let go of some stuff? Can you lay aside your hindrance? Can you let go of the sin that is entangling you? Can you fix your eyes on Jesus?