

CREATING DAYS

September 2011

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I am responsible for the day I create for myself.

(Wayne Dyer)

I have a little box of colorful cards, each one artfully decorated with a quote for life, and most days I pull one out and read it with my breakfast. This particular card, "I am responsible for the day I create for myself," immediately absorbed right through my skull and penetrated deeply into my soul. It is now a part of me and I think of it often. Spiritually and emotionally, if not physically, what our day looks like is our choice. I don't mean that God isn't orchestrating our day, I'm saying that how we RESPOND to our day is up to us.

I've begun to look at my life through the lens of this quote. What this quote is really saying is summed up in "attitude is everything." But I like how it mentally puts us in the driver's seat, because so many times we have a tendency to feel like life happens to us and we're out of control. Terry and I refer to that as living by "default." It's a terrible waste to just be drug through life by your heels. What you put into life equals what you get out of it. And what I've found is that when you create your day you're also a part of creating other people's days. Like the saying, "If mama ain't happy ain't NOBODY happy!" I'm often at Walmart picking up prescriptions, both for our family and for my parents, and while I know everyone by name and chat with them, there has always been one woman who has never spoken to me, competently and quietly doing her work in the back. But recently, as I stood laughing with the lady ringing me up, this woman called out to me, saying "I think you must be the happiest customer Walmart has!"

Happy people make an impact on us. Once, as I was trying to park at Walmart and having to wait on the usual shoppers crossing the road, a woman caught my eye. After making sure I wasn't going to run over her she flashed me a giant smile, mouthed "Thanks!," and crossed. I had been frustrated but that smile changed my day. After parking I walked over to where she was getting in her car and told her how much I appreciated that smile.

The opposite of her was another woman we ran into one day in the Walmart parking lot. We've never forgotten her either. Attempting to park, we waited on her as she

backed her van out of a space. She had plenty of room but backed and backed until she was uncomfortably close to our car, so Terry tapped his horn to warn her we were there. Bounding out of her car she strode over to my window screaming "DO YOU KNOW WHAT PMS IS??? WELL, I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT IT IS, DON'T PUSH ME MISTER!!" On and on she went, while her young daughter stood by in embarrassment. That woman was also responsible for the day she was creating for herself (and others).

Recently I was on my way to visit my parents, about forty minutes away, and I was overwhelmed with all that Terry and I are trying to get done: in the business, in our personal lives, and in our ministry. I found myself stressing and fussing over my day, and then suddenly I understood another piece of the "creating my day" quote. Why do I spend this time with my parents? Because I enjoy being with them. Because I love them. Because I'm aware that our time together is limited. Because it is important to me. Because in the long run I want to have made the most of this time. BUT, if I go through each visit with my mind elsewhere, frustrated over what I'm not doing, than I might as well stay home. Sure, in the end I can assuage my guilt by saying that I did my best and saw them often, but that would be deluding myself. Because it being "worth it in the long run" isn't a one-time decision, it's a minute-by-minute choice. The only way it's REALLY worth it in the long run is if I make it worth it EACH time I'm there. The value isn't in just having my physical presence there, it's in making that time count.

It's like that with work, school, or whatever it is that in the moment we don't want to be doing. We can't say "I have this job and I have to work so I'm just going to get through it, it's worth it in the end because I'll have the money I need." Not only is that living life in default but if you work eight hours a day how much of your life are you wasting by not really living it? So many times we feel that life is holding us captive to periods of time, and we just endure until it's over so we can move on with the good stuff. I'm really bad at doing that. In my head I'm living for the next time I can write. We endure those things we don't want to do because we feel, for whatever reason, that it's worth it, or that life demands it of us. Whether it's to earn money, to do the chores, out of love, or for whatever reason, we obviously feel like it's important enough to spend our time on. Terry once came across a quote that we've never forgotten. "Whatever you're doing at the moment is what your priority is." You can argue with that, but your actions show your priorities. The only way anything is "worth it" is to MAKE it worth it every minute.

Creating your day means experiencing it with all your senses, relishing being alive. It's choosing to have a positive attitude about what you're doing, to decide that you're going to find pleasure in your day, however it goes. I love in Proverbs where it's talking about Jesus' bride and it says "She laughs at the days to come!" That doesn't mean that everything in her life is perfect or fun or lovely, it means that she knows in whom her joy is found, and she can trust Him not only with her future but with her today. I'm currently reading a book called "How God Changes Your Brain" by the neuroscientist Andrew Newberg. He has some interesting things to say about a positive attitude:

Smile. Even if you don't feel like it, the mere act of smiling repetitively helps to interrupt mood disorders and strengthen the brain's neural ability to maintain a positive outlook on life. ...In fact, smiling has such a powerful effect on the brain that if you just see a picture of a smiling face, you will involuntarily feel happier and more secure. Conversely, frowning (or looking at frowning faces) stimulates feelings of anger, disgust, and dislike.

Skeptics might argue that maintaining an illusory optimism is problematic, but the evidence points in the opposite direction. Researchers at the University of California found that people who have self-enhancing illusions exhibit lower cardiovascular responses to stress, more rapid cardiovascular recovery, and lower baseline cortisol levels (produced by stress). In fact, an unrealistically optimistic belief about the future appears to be health protective, even when dealing with a disease as serious as AIDS. ...Pessimism, however, has few benefits, and it leaves the person more at risk to depression, anxiety, sleeping problems, obsessive-compulsive behavior, and impaired social functioning. In a thirty-year longitudinal study conducted by the Mayo Clinic, pessimism was significantly associated with a shorter life span and poorer mental functioning.

As I sit here at Starbucks working there is a mentally handicapped man in a wheelchair who is really enjoying socializing with me. I find myself feeling frustrated that I'm not getting to write, but then remember that in creating my day it's more important to bring joy to him than whatever I might be writing. Some may call me Pollyanna, but it's just choosing to make the most of the life God gave me. Whatever is happening in my life currently comes with a fallen world, but I've

learned that life is bigger than what is happening at this moment, and to keep my God-perspective. It's not always easy, as I sit here our good friends are waiting as their grandchild, born yesterday, has surgery. The doctor wanted to do surgery immediately after birth but the baby was too fragile. Another good friend is, at this moment, having open-heart surgery. In my personal life, due to unexpected fees, Terry and I learned this morning that our business is out of money and it's back to the drawing board of raising funds, and that our most interested investor has changed his mind. Between the county in Florida that is working to get us to put our plant there, and the state of Florida (also giving us incentives to come), they've effectively gotten enough red tape going to postpone everything two months out, a huge blow that affects so many people.

But none of that changes the fact that I am still responsible for the day I create for myself, be it good or lousy. It's my choice as to whether it passes unnoticed, without any life to it, wasted. When I am old, will I regret all the wasted days that slid past unnoticed, just because they weren't what I ideally wanted to be doing? I suspect so.

I'm at home now, having eaten lunch, put in a load of laundry, and am back to work. As I washed dishes I asked Terry how he was doing after the discouraging news this morning. He jokingly quipped, "I'm still an overcomer and God is still good," but while we laughed, I know that deep inside he knows that and is walking it out.

I was listening to a great teaching yesterday on my way home from visiting my parents, and she said something powerful. "You can't erase your thoughts, but you CAN replace them." No matter how you feel or what your head is telling you, you can replace it with truth. And when you speak truth it changes your beliefs, it changes your perspective of your day.

Look for ways to stretch your world, to create a good day whatever you're doing. I hate going to the grocery store more than most anything, unless it's going to Lowes or Sam's Club, so the other day I ate chocolate while grocery shopping, just to change up the chore. Remind yourself that life is short, and make the most of it! Go out and do something fun, something you wouldn't usually do. Even when the pocketbook is empty there are lots of ways to put some life into your day. Terry and I love walking in the local cemetery, or the park. About twelve miles from us is a free ferry that takes about five minutes to cross the Kentucky River. We enjoy riding the ferry and talking to the ferryman.

You are responsible for the day you create for yourself. Everyone has life happen to them, both good and bad, but it's up to you how you react to it. It's a minute by minute choice, not something you can wake up deciding and then that's the end of it. Minute by minute you create a good day or a bad one, in spite of your circumstances. Even in hard times Jesus is there walking with you, giving you the strength to create a positive day instead of one of despair. So go out and start creating days you want to remember!

To see some pictures of how I've created days click [HERE](#).