

# STAYING FOCUSED ON THE RACE

## APPRECIATION EXERCISE (do this as homework)

- from our theme verse: “*cloud of witnesses*”
- the cloud of witnesses are the people we can look up to and try to model (these can be living or dead, a peer mom, an older mom, whoever you think has their life focused on the right things, makes good choices and is the kind of mom you would like to be)
- who is a mom you look up to?

## REVIEW – first 2 sessions this year so far

- We wanted to help you see which race YOU and YOUR FAMILY are meant to run.
- This is the principle of “beginning with the end in mind”. Clarity in life is so important – every person who has ever done anything important will tell you that. If you don't know what you are living for or doing with your life you are going to feel very frustrated and end up doing not much of value. [Bonnie's analogy about the event planners not telling you where the finish line is.]
- Each of us is called to a different path which means we don't need to compare or be jealous. This is freeing!
- We gave you time to think about your gifts and abilities as well as your unique race. If you want to take this a step further, a great thing to do is to develop your own personal mission statement. We did this as a Core Team this past Summer and it's what the working moms group is doing on Thursday nights. Knowing what your values, skill set and life focus are is huge for building confidence and helping you actually be successful. [<http://intentionalbygrace.com/why-you-need-a-mission-statement>]
- Both of these sessions also reminded us that the ultimate finish line is to love God and love others. [Did you know that these 2 areas build on each other in the brain?]
- And then within that far end goal, there are mini-races along the way. Right now we are in the race of early-mid Motherhood. Sure there are other things we do during this season (and we're going to talk about that today), but even those things are centered around motherhood. If you are working you need to find childcare (the right childcare), if you are doing ministry you are striving to do it in a way that models something our kids want to do (some of you are even serving with your kids) and you've got to work at your marriage in a very different way than when you didn't have kids. And so on.
- It's not a mini-race, it's a mega-race. Like a qualifier.
- There are many days when I've dreamed about all the things I'm going to do when my kids have left home. Or even just what I'll do when they're all in school.
- The reality is that right now our world is centered around motherhood. It's hard and exhausting, but it's also one of the strongest propulsions we will have towards the end goal! There is nothing quite like our kids to reveal our true character issues and give us a need to crawl up to the feet of God. LOVING GOD. And no other relationships are more important to grow in love for than our kids. LOVING OTHERS. If we can't love them, our own flesh and blood, who can we love.

- And if we can be faithful during this leg of the race to give our best, use our talents to bless our home and pass the tests that come along the way, God says (in the parable of the talents) that He will give us so much more. [exactly like a qualifier race]

**INTRO** – that’s our topic today. How to stay faithful and focused on the finish line during this very important race.

- Both Bonnie and Nicole talked briefly about distractions that keep us from our paths. This session is going to focus solely on why it’s important to think about how we spend our days and then give you a chance to really look at your life and figure out if your priorities are in line with God’s plan for your life in this season.
- The MAIN reason this is important is because it will set the ground work for the topics after Christmas. This year we are going to be talking a lot about your brain and your kids’ brain and how best to disciple your kids with the help of science. One of the key things we want you remember is something called the GREENZONE. The GREENZONE is when you are in a position to teach and when your child is in the position to be taught. When our lives feel chaotic and without direction, that’s when we tend to get rigid and reactive in our parenting. As you will learn through this year, reactive parenting will get you nowhere. On the other hand, when life is in order you feel more at peace and are better able to handle the many situations of the day. I’ll give you more examples of this throughout this morning.
- It can be exciting at first to have a goal but isn't it true that once you start something it becomes less exciting and too much like work? (It's like our kids: when they are very little they love to take out the broom and pretend to sweep. When they actually get old enough to do it as a chore they don't want to anymore.) I don't think I'm much better than my kids. Didn't we as little girls play grown-up? We thought it would be so fun to be adults with our own houses and then we could do whatever we wanted. And now we are grown-ups and we wish we could be kids again. And how often do I grumble and complain about my lot in life and envy another mom's life. If only... When my kids do this I give them more work =) or I lose my cool and get upset at them for not being more grateful or having perspective that what they have to do is small compared to what I have to do. [Thank goodness God doesn't deal with us the way we sometimes deal with our kids.]
- It's humbling to think of it this way but we can take solace in the fact that this is human nature and even the best of us struggle to stay focused on God's path for our lives.
- A great example from the Bible is the story of Peter walking on the water. He saw Jesus do incredible things and he wanted to follow the great man with his whole life. When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water he wanted to go out to him. Jesus said, yes come out to me. So Peter did. He stepped out onto the water while looking at the finish line and he didn't sink. Can you imagine what that must have felt like? I'm pretty sure his heart was racing with the most exhilarating feeling he'd ever felt. That was when his gaze was focused on Jesus. Of course we all know what happened when he got scared

and started to look at the waves. His human mind kicked in and he suddenly realized he was doing the impossible. It was when he took his eyes off the all-mighty, all-powerful creator that he sank. It's true for our lives too. God calls us to live extra-ordinary lives. To be salt and light. To stand out. To go against the culture and raise whole-minded kids. To serve and give generously and love our enemies. We want this and believe in it. We get all motivated when we sit here together or spend time with Jesus. But the reality hits and we realize it's every bit as impossible as Peter walking on the water. The devil will try every tactic possible to make us scared and cause us to lose focus. Media, family defn confusion, busyness. Even good things like ministry, taking care of ourselves, or tasks that need to get done.

- A. **KEEPING FOCUSED** - So how can we keep our eyes focused on Jesus in order to do the impossible and get to the right finish line?
- When an athlete decides to get serious about their sport they work with their coach to figure out what the whole of their life needs to look like in order to achieve success. They know it's not just about what happens during their training sessions but also how they structure the rest of their life:
    - i. They need to follow a special diet.
    - ii. They need to get proper rest.
    - iii. They will have to give up self-time to train.
    - iv. They'll need to be financially smart so they can afford the right equipment.
    - v. They'll want to surround themselves with people who encourage them and people who are passionate about the same race so they keep motivated. (perhaps even letting go of friends who don't support them so they don't sink)
    - vi. They will need to listen to and respect their coach.
    - vii. They will need to be willing to sweat and work hard and not give up.
  - They choose to live a disciplined and regimented lifestyle in order to be fully prepared on race day and so they are able to complete the race to the best of their ability.
  - As moms, as wives, as Christians, we too will **need to choose live a disciplined life** in order to get to the finish line. And not just to get there but to have raced well: which would be to have made an impact and an investment.
  - **"Be very careful then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity..." Eph 5:15-16**

**STORY:** Think of something hard you've accomplished. Something that took time, energy and perseverance to complete. Briefly describe what happened. Use feeling words to describe how you felt as you were working towards the goal and then how it felt to have achieved the goal. [Let Jesus respond.] 4+ story format

## B. LIVING A FOCUSED LIFE:

- Story: *Sue is getting ready to go out. She goes into the bathroom to wash her face. Noticing all the dust on the floor, she stops to clean the floor. Then she sees that the laundry basket is full. So she won't forget to wash it, she picks it up and takes it to the laundry room. On the way to the laundry room, the phone rings and a friend shares a difficult situation she is in, so they pray together. Then the dog is barking to go out, so she throws on her jeans to take the dog out when the doorbell rings! Oh no, her ride is here, and she's not even close to being ready.*
- It's so easy to get distracted!
- One great tool for staying focused is recognizing the 7 key areas of life.

## C. THERE ARE 7 KEY AREAS OF YOUR LIFE:

1. Belief (spiritual) - relationship with God and the level of your faith life, bible reading, journaling, prayer, accountability, church, reading.  
God must be our coach and our number #1 priority! [Nicole & Bonnie talked about this.] The whole purpose of this life is to get to know our bridegroom so we should constantly be growing in this area.
2. Body (physical) - how you feel physically and how you take care of your body affects your life. (ex. Throwing away my scale.) Best and truly natural remedies for anxiety, stress, and anger is physical activity, water, healthy diet with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables and rest.
3. Beloved (Family) - spouse, kids, best friends (your primary attachments). We were created for relationships. [I'm independent by nature. I can do it myself. It's only been by doing this community that I've realized how important friends are. I have come to realize how much better I feel about myself and life when I have healthy relationships.]
4. Budget - how you view money, what you spend money on (financial strain is one of the biggest marriage stressors) – for many of us the transition to parenthood also meant the transition to one income and/or we also don't always agree with our spouse on how to spend money. But when you have a workable budget that provides for your needs you have greater peace in this area.
5. Be renewed (emotional) - what makes you feel recharged and refreshed (all athletes need rest). We to include fun things in our life. We need to have hobbies and things we do just because we enjoy them. Otherwise we burn out. [Reminder to have proper expectations with this one because it will never be enough.]
6. Business - (ministry, job, schooling, home) These are the day-to-day things of life. They need to be done well (God expects us to work hard) but not come before Him or loving others.
7. Best Friends (Other relationships) – relationships with others. Who do you spend time with? Some may be your choice and some may be intentional. Friends you are trying to build up. Casual relationships. We have to make sure they are the right ones.

- These are the things we must make room for and focus on doing well in. When these are in their proper place according to your race plan, then it's amazing how there's more room for the other 'little' things.
- **Big Rocks in First** (do the demo)
- GREENZONE space. When you have properly managed the tasks of the day, it is easier to stay in the GREENZONE with your kids.

**D. A FOCUSED LIFE NOT A BALANCED LIFE.**

- It's not about devoting the same energy to all these (notice how the rocks are all big but they are not equally big.)
- In different seasons certain areas will need to take priority over others. (For example, if you decide not to go back to work you'll need to focus more on your budget to figure out how that will need to change. Or if a friend is in crises you might need to rearrange your life for a time to help her out.)
- This takes regularly bringing your life to God in your devotional times and asking Him to show you where your priorities need to be adjusted (which we are going to do today!).

**E. APPLICATION**

**1. Self-Perception-**

- a. The first thing to do is a simple self-analysis. Think back to your activity logs, if you did them, or just reflect on your life right now and rate how you think you are doing in the 7 key areas of life.

**2. Reality** – work through Reality Questionnaire to see how you are actually doing in each area. How does this compare to your initial perception?

**3. God's Perspective:**

- a. Then we need to prayerfully identify where God desires us to be so that we have right priorities for this season of our lives. Sometimes we may think we are not doing well in some area, and in reality we may not be giving it very much focus, but God says, don't worry about that right now. You need to be focusing on this area.
- b. Or we may think we *are* doing well in an area and God says we actually need to step it up.
- c. *God how do you see my life? How have I been growing in these areas in the past year? Where have I lost focus and what steps do I need to take to get this area on track?*

**4. Finally, Schedule it in** – write it down. WHEN will you DO the action steps God has shown you in order to properly focus your life for this season. If you don't write it down and tell someone it is less likely that you will do it.

**5. Share and Pray for each other.**

**HW- share your assessments and chart with someone you trust (besides your Selah table) and ask them to hold you accountable to doing your action steps.**