

Talent Plus Initiative and Focus

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forward to those things that are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 3:13-14

Initiative Activates Your Talent

Talent-plus people understand the importance of the first step. They don't wait for all conditions to be perfect to move forward. They don't wait for all problems and obstacles to disappear. They don't wait until they have no fear. They take action. Where you finish in life is not determined by where you start, but by *whether* you start.

Note the following reasons why initiative is important:

1. Initiative is the first step to your _____.
2. Initiative slams the door on _____.
3. Initiative opens the door to _____.
4. Initiative helps us overcome life's _____.
5. Initiative is often the _____ between success and failure.

No one can wait until everything is perfect to act and expect to be successful. It is better to be 80 percent sure and make things happen than it is to wait until you are 100 percent sure. If you wait, it's likely the opportunity will have passed you by. Are you waiting to take action on any of these situations?

- A decision you should be making
- A problem you should be solving
- A possibility you should be examining
- A project you should be starting
- A goal you should be reaching
- An opportunity you should be seizing
- A dream you should be fulfilling
- A friendship you should be cultivating
- A partnership you should be building

When will you take action?

People Who Lack Initiative

When it comes to initiative, there are really only four kinds of people:

1. People who do the right thing without being told.
2. People who do the right thing when told.
3. People who do the right thing when told more than once.
4. People who never do the right thing, no matter what.

A talent-plus person takes action without being told to do so. Why doesn't everyone do that? Consider these reasons:

1. People who lack initiative fail to see the _____ of inaction.
2. People who lack initiative want someone else to _____ them.
3. People who lack initiative are looking for the perfect _____ to act.
4. People who lack initiative are in love with _____.

Remember: Tomorrow is the only day in the year that appeals to a lazy person.

Discussion: Take some time to discuss the areas in your life where you need to have more initiative. What are some reasons why you procrastinate?

You should frequently review the daily dozen list from Today Matters (Notebook 1). Do you remember the 12 important areas to focus on in your life each day?

Attitude: Choose and display a right attitude daily.

Priorities: Determine and act on important priorities daily.

Health: Know and follow healthy guidelines daily.

Family: Communicate with and care for my family daily.

Thinking: Practice and develop good thinking daily.

Commitment: Make and keep proper commitments daily.

Finances: Earn and properly manage money daily.

Faith: Deepen and live out my faith daily.

Relationships: Initiate and invest in solid relationships daily.

Generosity: Plan for and model generosity daily.

Values: Embrace and practice good values daily.

Growth: Seek and experience improvements daily.

All of us tend to procrastinate in some area of our lives. If something is unpleasant, painful, uninteresting or complex, we sometimes put it off. Yet to reach our potential and become talent-plus people, we must reject procrastination. We must show initiative.

Reflect on these suggestions to help you become a talent-plus person in the area of initiative:

1. Accept _____ for your life.
2. Examine your _____ for not taking action.
3. Focus on the _____ of completing a task.

4. Ask a friend to help you reach your _____.
5. Allocate specific _____ to tasks that are difficult or unpleasant.
6. Break large tasks down into _____ ones.

Follow these steps to break a large goal into manageable parts:

- Divide it by categories that require certain skills.
- Prioritize it by importance.
- Establish deadlines.
- Delegate it according to abilities.
- Accomplish it by teamwork.

The hardest part is getting started. It is the start that often stops people. You must take action in order to become who you desire to be. Desire isn't enough. Good intentions aren't enough. Talent isn't enough. Success requires initiative.

Remember: The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on.

Biblical Case Study: The Ant and the Sluggard (Proverbs 6:6-11, 20:4)

King Solomon calls our attention to the ant. One of the smallest of God's creatures becomes one of His greatest teachers. Think about some of the lessons we learn from the ant:

1. Ants don't need a _____ to tell them to get started.
2. Ants work hard and need no one to _____ them to keep working.
3. Ants don't _____ opportunities to take action.
4. Ants understand that their _____ have consequences.

By contrast, King Solomon has plenty of criticism for the sluggard (lazy person) who lacks initiative and succumbs to procrastination. The sluggard makes only one commitment: his leisure. The lazy leader makes no difference in his world. When leaders lack initiative and lose their diligence in doing the work of the Lord, they become spiritual sluggards and worthless to the Kingdom. Wise leaders know their time is limited. Jesus underscored this when He said, "*I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work*" (John 9:4). Leaders in the Body of Christ must remain diligent in doing good and in encouraging others to do likewise.

Focus Directs Your Talent

Watch small children at play, and you will observe that they move from toy to toy and from activity to activity. They don't focus very long on any object or activity. They expend tremendous amounts of energy but get very little done. That is quite acceptable for small children. Sadly, many leaders do much the same.

Focus is essential for anyone who wants to make the most of his talents. Having talents without focus is like being an octopus on roller skates. There will be lots of movement, but you won't know in which direction it will be. Talent with focus gives direction for you to reach your potential.

Note some facts about focus:

1. Focus does not come _____ to most people.
2. Focus increases your _____.
3. Focus _____ you.
4. Focus _____ your life.
5. Focus must be _____ sustained.

Remember: The mind doesn't reach toward achievement until it has clear objectives. Attempting everything, like attempting nothing, will drain the life out of you.

Success is a process. It takes time. Anytime you are engaged in a process, focus is essential. The talent-plus person has focus. Here is how you develop focus:

1. Be _____ – make every action count.
2. Challenge your _____.
3. Don't let yesterday consume all of your _____.
4. Focus on the _____.
5. Stay _____ on results.
6. Develop and follow your _____.
7. Focus on your _____, not your weaknesses.
8. Delay rewards until the _____ is completed.

Remember: You can't change yesterday, and you can't count on tomorrow. You can choose what you do today. Giving today your focus will pay dividends tomorrow.

Discussion: What are some specific actions you can take to overcome procrastination? Example: Designate specific timelines in your calendar. Or ask others to help you follow through on your action plan. What will you do?

Biblical Case Study: Jesus (Luke 9: 51-62)

Jesus was focused on His journey to Jerusalem and His sacrificial death at Calvary. Even though He knew the agony and alienation that awaited Him in Jerusalem, He "*set His face to go to Jerusalem.*" He would not permit anyone or anything to detour Him from His mission to Planet Earth. Observe the following about His focus:

1. It could be seen in His _____.
2. It could be seen in the _____ for His journey.
3. It could be seen in His _____ to His life purpose.
4. It could be seen in His _____ to complete His God-given mission.

Assessment and Application

Assessment:

Do you spend a large amount of your time thinking about the past? Do you spend a significant amount of time daydreaming about tomorrow?

Are you sure that ninety percent of your energy is focused on today?

Application:

What can you give up that is keeping your life out of focus? What specific steps can you take to focus more on your strengths in reaching your God-given dream?