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Book Review of Eat that frog: 21 Great ways to stop procrastinating and get more done in less time, by Tracy, B. (2007, 2nd ed.)

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conflicts occur among both Christians and non-Christians, it would be helpful to see how the principles highlighted in this book might be crafted to address conflict outside the Christian setting or between Christians and non-Christians.

We recommend this book as an introduction to the art of Christian conflict resolution and relational reconciliation. Though *Resolving Everyday Conflict* is a compact and easy-to-read book, it provides a concise and convincing argument that the cause of most conflicts centers in self—my wants, my needs, my rights—without any regard for how we are honoring God by revealing the reconciling love and power of Jesus Christ. The authors maintain that the foundation of principles of conflict resolution and true peacemaking are to be found in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings His love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, and wisdom to the conflicts of daily life.

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EAT THAT FROG: 21 GREAT WAYS TO STOP PROCRASTINATING AND GET MORE DONE IN LESS TIME

By Brian Tracy
San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler
(2007, 2nd edition)
Paperback, 128 pages

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We live in a competitive world wherein adding value to oneself can provide an edge over competitors. In *Eat That Frog*, Brian Tracy reveals the means of accomplishing that end by focusing on improving our management of time. “The main reason to develop time management skills is that one can complete everything that is important in one’s work and free up more and more time to do things that give one the greatest happiness and satisfaction” (p. 52).

We strongly agree with Tracy when he posits that “the effective people, due to limited time, select among the lot and launch directly into their major tasks and then discipline themselves to work steadily and single-mindedly until those tasks are complete.” Such people resist the temptation to start with the easier task (pp. 2-3). This can be made possible by setting priorities right.

The book introduces the Six-P Formula—“Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance”—and holds that proper planning leads to an increase in productivity and performance. This formula, according to Tracy, is seen in the 10/90 Rule. This rule asserts that the first 10% of time that a person spends planning and organizing her work before she begins will save as much as 90% of the time in getting the job done once she gets started (p.18). That said, we do not believe the author is suggesting the Six-P Formula to be a panacea for productivity increment.

According to Tracy, most people procrastinate on the top 10-20% of the “vital few” items that are the most valuable and important while concentrating on the “trivial many” 80% which contribute very little to significant results. The irony is that the amount of time required to complete an important job is often the same amount of time required to do an

unimportant job (pp. 21-23). Successful people are those who are willing to delay gratification and make sacrifices in the short term so that they can enjoy far greater rewards in the long term. Unsuccessful people do the opposite (p. 27). It is our job to find the limiting factor that acts as an impediment to our progress and focus our energies on alleviating it as quickly as possible. Tracy might have added balance to these two statements and avoided being prescriptive had he added that one can delay gratification and make sacrifices and still not succeed due to other hindering factors.

Tracy suggests that one's mental attitude can impact performance and effectiveness. He addresses issues relating to the development of a positive mental attitude by quoting Martin Seligman's book, *Learned Optimism*. Optimists have four special behaviors: (1) they look for the good in every situation, (2) they always seek valuable lessons in every setback or difficulty, (3) they always look for the solution to every problem, and (4) they think and talk continually about their goals. (p. 87)

"For you to be able to concentrate on those few things that make the most difference in your business or personal life, you must discipline yourself to treat technology as a servant, not as a master" (p. 101). If we want to perform at our best, says Tracy, we need to detach on a regular basis from technology and communication devices to avoid falling into the technological trap (p. 90). This trap enmeshes us in the distraction of information exchange that sabotages our intent to accomplish necessary work. Treating technology as a servant and not as a master is a must. There is no option (p. 94). This should not, however, be taken as Tracy's condemnation of technology and communication devices.

Another technique Tracy suggests for us to get ourselves going is called the "Swiss cheese" method of working. The person using this method gets into gear by resolving to punch a hole in the task. He takes intermittent breaks as he performs the tasks in order to energize himself and be enthusiastic (p. 99).

Throughout the book Tracy uses and reuses the term discipline. Success requires discipline—self-discipline, self-mastery, and self-control. These are the building blocks of character and high performance (p.111). It requires discipline, more for some than others, to focus on the significant rather than the trivial. "Eat the frog" is a memorable metaphor for embracing the significant tasks at hand as a means to greater productivity in our work.

We strongly recommend this book to anyone who wants to manage her time well and also add value to herself in this competitive world.

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