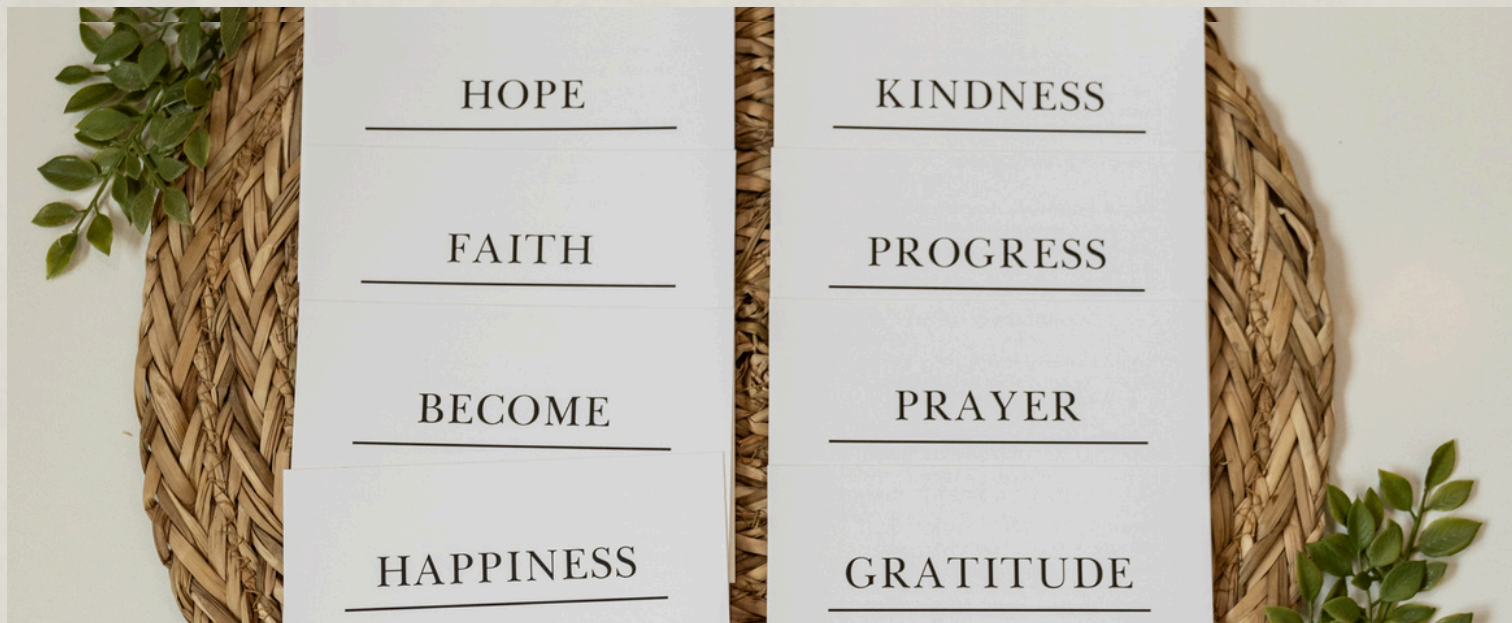


THE POWER OF FOCUS WORDS: PART ONE



The Power of Focus Words

Have you ever been to a sporting event and heard a coach yell to his team, “Focus!”? He can see his team struggling. They seem disconnected. The chemistry just isn’t there and they can’t seem to score. The coach yells a word he hopes will get his team back on track and moving toward success. “Focus!” What does he mean exactly? What does it mean to focus?

Focus: “an act of concentrating interest or activity on something”.

For the coach, he wants his team to get back in the game, to really think about the game, to dig deep and give that extra energy when it is needed. He needs his players to see each other, to work together, and to score. It is amazing to see a team struggle for most of the game and then after a time out, or when they come back from half time, the whole outcome of the game shifts and the struggling team takes the lead and wins the game.

Many times, all it takes is a little pep talk and some encouraging words from a coach to make the difference. The coach chooses his words wisely and gives his team keywords to help them improve their game. But, they must choose to change.

To make a change requires focus, a redirection of attention and energy.

When a team is focused, success can be achieved. The same can be true for us. When we are focused, success can be achieved! The process can be slow and at times uncomfortable, but if we keep our “eyes on the prize,” change will happen and we will see results.

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“AN ARROW CAN ONLY BE SHOT BY PULLING IT BACKWARD. WHEN LIFE IS DRAGGING YOU BACK WITH DIFFICULTIES, IT MEANS IT’S GOING TO LAUNCH YOU INTO SOMETHING GREAT. SO JUST FOCUS, AND KEEP AIMING.”

- ANONYMOUS

”

Focus Words and Me

In years past, Christmas has always been a hard time for me. I am not good at giving gifts. It is not my love language. I have struggled to find the perfect gift for the people I love. I have felt overwhelmed with the task of finding the right present for everyone on my list and to make things worse, I have visions of their disappointment on Christmas morning because of the gifts I have chosen. (Not helpful thoughts, I know).

In addition to choosing all the gifts, I have felt discouraged by the cost of all those gifts. Many times, our budget could not absorb the extra money needed to fulfill all the wishes written in letters to Santa. I felt guilty for not doing enough service at this time of year. I felt embarrassed that I couldn't come up with a cute gift with a sweet phrase written on the gift tag for my neighbors.



The negative thoughts and emotions went on and on until I really could not feel the spirit of Christmas. This scenario seemed to repeat every Christmas. One year, in October, while I was driving alone, I felt the dread welling up inside me. It filled my mind with sadness and darkness. “Oh no!” I thought, “not this soon.” “Christmas is still a few months away! How am I going to cope with this feeling of despair for three months?” Whether I liked it or not, Christmas was coming. The despair was welling up inside me and I felt very low.

MARTHA MOVES UP

As quickly as the darkness had descended, I felt a tiny spark of light enter my mind. The words, "Christmas music" came floating into my thoughts like a shimmering snowflake. Even though Christmas was a hard time for me, I still loved Christmas music! During times of despair, I could turn to Christmas music to feel peace or comfort during the holiday season. All was not lost! I felt a ray of hope and quickly made a mental scan of which music artist I would choose to listen to that day.

I decided on the album "On This Winter's Night" by Lady A. One of my favorites. I quickly pushed play and started to listen. "Holly Jolly Christmas" came first. The music was jolly indeed, but the jovial tune did not make me feel any better. I skipped it. I moved through the list to "On This Winter's Night." It is a beautiful song with a lovely message about being with a loved one, reflecting on the year coming to an end. As I listened, certain phrases made their way to my heart, "We'll count our blessings,"

and

"The child became a King so the whole wide world would know what Christmas really is"

and

"We will remember."

My heart began to soften. I let the song finish and forced myself to smile.

Then "Silent Night" started to play.

"Silent Night, Holy Night.

All is Calm, All is Bright."

"All is Calm, All is Bright!"

The last phrase shot like an arrow into my heart and everything became clear.

Because of Jesus, the whole world will be ok! I will be ok! My family will be ok. My

neighbors and friends will be ok! We all have struggles and trials but because of

Jesus Christ, all is calm, and because of His light, all can be bright! My focus had

been all wrong!! No wonder Christmas was not fun for me. I had spent so many

years worrying and focusing on the wrong things! For many years, I had heard the

phrases "Remember the reason for the season" and "Put Christ back into

Christmas," but somehow, I had looked right past those invitations and let the

temporal world with all its hustle and bustle bring me down. Well, not this year. I had

to make a change. I needed to change my focus. I chose to redirect my focus, using

powerful positive words. This experience was a special gift. It was a message from

heaven and I was going to make this Christmas different. "All is calm, All is Bright"

would be my Christmas theme, my focus words, and what a difference it made!

The interesting thing about being focused on something is that you start to see things in life that connect to the thing you are focused on.

MARTHA MOVES UP

Try it. Let's say you want to think about the color green today. I bet you will notice a million shades of green on everything from things in nature, to clothing, and even food.

With my Christmas theme in my heart and mind, I started seeing the words everywhere! I saw them in stores, on magazines, on clothes, on home décor and Christmas decorations. I even opened the Christmas catalog from Deseret Book and right on the first page were the words "**All is Calm, All is Bright!**" They even had Christmas socks with those words printed on the bottom! I bought a pair for each member of my family, including the grandkids! That year each member of my family would receive a pair of socks and I would share with them the wonderful experience I had with the words "All is Calm, All is Bright." It would be a special gift that would come from my heart.

That Christmas was glorious. Was it perfect, no. But did it feel calm and bright? It sure did!! When feelings of discouragement, guilt or overwhelm tried to creep in, I would say the words "All is calm, All is Bright." Those words reminded me of Jesus Christ and when I thought of Him, things changed. Not that the circumstance changed, but my thoughts about the circumstance changed. When I said those words aloud or silently in my mind, I would feel a sense of calm come over me. With that feeling of calm, I could replace my negative thoughts with positive ones such as;

"A gift does not have to be expensive to be meaningful."

"Making someone feel loved is a gift you can give every day."

"Everything will be ok in the end, because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ."

The thought about the atonement gave me the most peace and the more I thought about it, the more power it gave me to be my best self and bring more joy and happiness into the lives of others.

Focus Words: To Infinity and Beyond!

That was the beginning of my journey with focus words. The next year, I tried to listen and wait for words to come into my mind again. The words came, again in October. The words were, "**Peace and Joy.**" They came strong and clear. I was excited about these words. I needed peace and joy! My family needed peace and joy. The world needed peace and joy! The weight of the world can be heavy. We all have challenges, but I learned that through it all we can still feel peace and joy.

And to my surprise, when I opened the Deseret Book Christmas catalog for that year, "Peace and Joy," jumped right off the page at me!!! They even had socks again with that Christmas theme!!! I couldn't believe it! I had a good smile and thanked Heavenly Father for again giving me an early Christmas gift.

MARTHA MOVES UP

Focus Words Become a Gift

That year, I decided to share my theme with my extended family and my friends. I collected all the quotes I could find on peace and Joy and typed them up into a word document. I used fun fonts to make them look pretty and I made 31 cards to make a set. One quote for each day of the month. I gave them to my family and friends as a Christmas gift. I called them my joy cards. I was so delighted to hear the stories of how much my family and friends needed those joy cards that year. I was told it was just what they needed to brighten the season and to help their families stay focused on the joy of the season! I especially loved hearing that they have shared them with their friends and family. There is power in using focus words!

Focus words! Keep them coming!

(Stay with me, I'm almost done!)

The next year, the words, "**Light and Love**" came. Those words came during the summer, a little earlier than before. I chose gifts for my family and friends that coordinated with the words and you know what, gift giving isn't so bad when you change your focus! When you give a gift from your heart and remember how much you love the people you are buying for, gift giving becomes a joy and it brings a beautiful light into your life.

In the year 2023, the words came early again. It was in the early summer that I heard the words "**Faith and Hope**", with more of an emphasis on the word "Hope." That word is amazing my friends! I started to look for quotes that supported my thoughts on hope. Wow! Hope is powerful. With hope, even a tiny bit of hope, progress can be made. That is what I loved about that word. When we have hope, we can move forward in our lives instead of staying stuck and feeling discouraged.

I collected quotes and thoughts on hope and made more card sets. I was so excited to give my word cards to my family and friends!

One specific friend came to my mind. She has been dealing with a very difficult trial for many years. I took those cards to her home and gave her a big hug and shared my experience with focus words and told her this year my word was "Hope."

I told her how much I appreciated her friendship and that I hoped these cards about hope would help her. Later that week, she came to my home with a fresh baked loaf of bread (she is an excellent cook!) and gave me a hug. She said "Thank you for thinking of me with your hope cards. I need hope because there are many days that I don't have any." Have you ever felt that way? Yes? I have too. But, choosing hope can change the way we feel about the future.

MARTHA MOVES UP

I gave a set of hope cards to my mom. She shared the cards with a friend who asked if she could share them with her daughter. My mom told me I must have been inspired. She was right! I was inspired. Those words came straight from heaven. I needed those words and apparently a lot of other people did too! Here is one of my favorites:

HOPE, THE GENTLE FLICKER THAT BURNS WITHIN US, ILLUMINATING THE PATH AHEAD AND INSPIRING US TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD.

So good! Hope is powerful! The world needs more hope and it starts with us choosing hope in our own lives and then sharing hope with others!

And so, that is the story of how focus words came to be a powerful force in my life. Thanks for staying with me and reading to the end!

Have you had a word or phrase come to your mind that has made a difference in your life? I would love to hear your stories!

Please share or comment.

With Love,
Martha



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