



# **Growing change**

**DEVELOPING THE  
HABITS THAT MAKE  
CHANGE POSSIBLE**

a eBook by  
*Kathryn C. Lang*

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*Developing the habits that make change possible and create a path to my impossible dreams.*

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## **Growing Change**

If I want to build change in my life and for my life and THROUGH my life then I will have to pursue a path I haven't walked before. Five steps have helped me begin to live out the change.

1. Choose to Unmask

2. Change Direction
3. Find the Right Focus
4. Turn back
5. Build a Habit of Belief

It is up to me but it can happen if I will make the choices that bring my change to life.

## **Growing Change – One Unmask**

The more I invest on the positive the more I grow up the courage to be all that I know that I am designed to be – but the more that I recognize I can, the more I am realizing I will not if I don't change.

I will never reach all of my goals and dreams if I stay in the same spot – the same spot of my being and even the same spot throughout my day. I do better when I mix things up – when I take my office on the go, when I juggle the menu a little, or when I encourage a spontaneous trip or gathering – because I like things to be different.

It's one of the reasons that I enjoyed planning social activities because each event would be different and most of the time the people that attended the events would be different. The changes kept me excited about the job and also kept me motivated in my pursuit of more.

Minor changes are a great stimulation for me but not for everyone around me (it turns out). My husband became fearful about leaving the house for any extended periods because he never knew what he might come home to find. Sometimes it was just a change in location of the garbage can – which turns out is a bigger change than you might have imagined especially when the garbage can sat in that old place for almost two decades. That was one change I changed back.

He has also come home once to find all of the rooms rearranged – and by that I mean the living room became the dining room. He was **THRILLED** to no end.

It is okay that he doesn't see things like me. The change gave me a new focus that I hadn't had before and it turns out we could utilize the spaces even more with the new set up.

Sometimes I have to live with the change a little before I know if they will work for my life (and the life of my family) – like the garbage can. Sometimes I just know immediately that it is going to work – like my new office space.

Those were the external changes, but internal changes sometimes have to be tried out as well. I have to step into my different to see if works and how it works in my life. Sometimes the change fits like a glove, sometimes the change fits like a dress two sizes to small, sometimes the change falls off because it was never meant for me in the first place.

Until I step into the change, I will never know how the change will (or will not) work for my life.

I grow up change for my life when I take a few steps into that change.

First – I have to take off the mask I have to stop pretending I am somewhere that I am not.

Second – I have to choose the direction I want to go because I am not where I want to be simply because I haven't been moving in the direction I want to go.

Third – I have to put my attention on the right place. The only way that I can walk on water is to have a focus on Christ.

Fourth – I have to stop looking back. Trying to plow (or even walk for that matter) while I look behind will only leave everything in a mess.

Fifth – I have to build a habit of belief. I need to speak it until I think it without having to think about it. I need to see it until I believe it as natural as I breathe.

I can walk out my extraordinary and impossible dreams when I invest in growing change for my life and in my life.

The first thing I need to do it quit pretending. I have to take off my mask. Masks do nothing but hinder my chance to be all that I can be. Masks never accomplish what I think they accomplish. Masks are more trouble than benefit. I take off the masks that will allow me to grow change.

Masks hide the reality from me – others still see what is.

Masks make it difficult to breathe – they hold in the bad air and limit the intake of good air.

Masks make it tough to see – where I am going and what is coming at me.

Masks limit my movement – because I struggle to turn my head and see where I am going.

Masks create a barrier between me and others – and it is all from my side and never theirs.

I will only change when I build up the focus to get me to that place of change. It will require I be honest with myself and I take off the masks I am using to pretend I am something other than I am.

I can reach my impossible dreams when I begin walking out the changes that will give wings to those dreams. That kind of change will not happen accidentally. That kind of change will not happen where we are. That kind of change will only happen when I get brave enough to remove the masks and reveal the truth.

I put on masks to make me feel better or to allow me to pretend like I'm better or to at least allow me to put up a wall so I can be deluded enough to believe that others are buying what I'm selling.

Change only becomes a reality when I reach up to remove my masks and be determined enough to walk out that new way.

There are five points to understanding the value of removing masks.

*1. Masks hide the reality from me – not from others.* My grandmother, my mother, and I mastered the mask of “no, really, I’m fine.” Anytime I felt sick and others would come to check on me, I would put on a smile, sit up a little taller, and provide some entertainment just to bring the point home.

My mom was the same way, even up to her death. I can remember how she looked the last time I visited with her I watched when some friends of hers made an unexpected visit after I had arrived. Her whole demeanor changed and she put all of her energy into showing just how much better she felt.

She wasn’t feeling better – but she put on a mask to prove that she was.

Despite all that I know and all that I’ve watched with my mother and grandmother, I still find myself putting on that mask when I’m not feeling better to show just how good I feel. Others see through that mask, but I still find myself doing it.

*2. Masks make it difficult to breathe.* I wore a full mask when I was in elementary school. I was dressing up as a princess because my mom always wanted me to be a princess instead of playing baseball and football with the neighborhood boys. The costume she chose included a plastic pull over mask.

Only a few moments into the night I recognized that the mask was not something I wanted to wear. The tiny hole at the mouth was not enough for breathing and I found that I wore the mask on top of my head more than over my face.

Life masks also make it difficult to breathe – partly because it chokes me and squeezes me and keeps me from taking the necessary breaths that will allow me to keep going.

*3. Masks make it tough to see.* One of the first dance recitals I was in, the costume included a half mask so that we could still breathe while we danced. The first time through a rehearsal with the masks, we struggled to stay in line and on mark. It was hard to see through the masks. The instructor fixed the situation by enlarging the holes in the eyes. We could see better but we still couldn’t see everything.

Life masks keep me from seeing everything – mainly because I’m so focused on not showing the truth. I struggle to see the things that might be coming at me. I struggle to see the things that might be next to me. I struggle to see right in front me. I have to take off my masks to be able to see what’s going on.

*4. Masks limit my movement.* That first dance recital taught me the limiting factor of masks. Even with the enlarged eye holes, I still couldn’t see as well as I wanted. I stopped wearing masks after that experience and chose to use makeup when I dressed up for Halloween or costume parties.

Life masks hinder my movement as well. I can't take the actions I need when I am pretending I am something I'm not or I'm somewhere I'm not. Until I remove the masks, I will struggle to move.

*5. Masks create a barrier between me and others.* I taught ballroom dancing when I was in college. When I was teaching, I would put on stage makeup and I would slick my hair back into a bun. When I went out after hours, dancing with my colleagues or college roommates, I would remove the extra makeup and take my hair down and then the students I had been working with wouldn't even recognize me.

The makeup and hair served as a mask that prevented my students from connecting with me.

Life masks hinder my relationships as well. They keep me from being able to make complete connections because the masks keep people from knowing who I really am. Masks also hinder me from knowing who I really am.

Masks are masks are masks – whether they are masks from costumes or life masks. When I put on a mask then I limit my ability to do all and be all that I'm designed to be. The first step to my change is to take off my masks.

## **Foundations for Choosing to Unmask**

I know that the only way to live out my extraordinary life is to walk out change, and I also recognize that change – real and lasting change – can only happen when I become willing to take off the masks that are holding me back from that change.

I've been wearing masks long enough and most of the time the masks are merely hiding the truth from me. Other people see that I'm not pursuing my dreams. Other people see that I'm not following through with my actions. Other people can see that I am not living up to all that I desire to be.

My masks hid nothing from others – they hid only the truth from me. I have been tearing away at the masks lately – trying to strip down to the naked truth – to what see where I really am and to freely admit that position so that I can grow change that will create the path to my impossible dreams.

Putting on masks – or throwing up lies that keep me from seeing the truth – they go directly against God's call for my life. Proverbs 26 warns of how wearing masks limits my connection with God. In Proverbs 26: 24 – 25 (NIV translation) "Enemies disguise themselves with their lips, but in their hearts they harbor deceit. Though their speech is charming, do not believe them."

Wearing masks is deceitful – they hide the truth from me and attempt to hide the truth from others. God warns against people that are trying to hide the truth. It is never a good thing to be on the opposite side of a warning from God.

Jesus warns of masks – or at least of those that are wearing masks. He compares people being something they are not to wolves in Matthew 7: 15 (KIV) it reads “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

When I put on a mask – when I try to present something other than the real me – then I am standing in the same place as a false prophet – whether I’m doing it on purpose or doing it out of habit. Not being the real me is putting me in opposition to the good tree. I can’t bare good fruit if I am lying – even if the lie is just for me.

Paul gets a little more literal with the whole “take of the mask” issue in 2 Corinthians 3. Paul is talking to the Corinthians about Moses – and you will remember that Moses wore a mask – or a veil – to hide his true nature from the children of Israel because his true nature glowed from his encounters with God and it was too much for most people to look upon – or maybe just too scary. Paul is saying that because of our position with God through the sacrifice of Christ, we now have unveiled faces.

I have no excuse for wearing my masks. When Christ died on that cross He made a way for me to never have to hide my real self again.

I don’t know why I put on a mask – for someone so determined to live a bold life – one outside the box and beyond the limits of normal – I sure do try to fool myself into thinking I am somewhere I’m not or someone I’m not. Or I have done that in the past. Walking out this journey with you is pushing me to be real with myself – to take off the masks and look hard into the mirror and truly see what I can see.

It is not as bad as I thought but it is also not as great as I have imaged. I have to keep growing change that will fuel my pursuit of bold purpose.

Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 4 talking about the strength and boldness that comes from taking off the masks. In 4:2 (KJV) Paul writes “We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

I want to walk out this journey in truth in the sight of God and that means I have to walk out this journey in truth to myself. I have to take off the masks so that I am in a position to do what needs to be done to become what I am uniquely called to be.

## **Growing Change – Two Choose the Direction**

I am ready to fly. I am ready to leap up to the stars. I am ready to cross that rainbow and find my pot of gold on that other side. It is time for me to live out my impossible dreams – because they are only impossible because someone somewhere labeled them impossible.

I will have to change to see it happen, though.

I have not been where I want to be for a very long time. I was moving in that right direction and then apparently I took a wrong turn that got me a little off track and that little off track led to a little more off track and then all of a sudden I was somewhere different from what I had pictured in my mind.

I always wanted to fly. I dreamed of being in a position to share my words with the world. I expected to step out into all that I had imagined. I anticipated my success.

I looked around and I was here – not even close to all that I had imagined and slipping steadily in the wrong direction.

I thought it was my relationship with procrastination that held me back – as I studied through “Think and Grow Rich” for the second time this year, I was jolted when I realized that one of the symptoms of a fear of poverty (according to Napoleon Hill) is procrastination.

That understanding made me mad. I had never considered myself fearful – in fact I would have declared that I was pretty much fearless. My husband actually told someone that a few years back when a lady confronted me about something I said in a class. She asked me if I was afraid of anything and my husband told her “no – no she isn’t.”

With this as my foundation, you can imagine my shock when the words from Dr. Hill settled into my being. I denied it at first. Obviously Dr. Hill had to be wrong about his assumptions. There was no way I was afraid – particularly of something as benign as poverty.

Instead of rejecting what he wrote altogether, I mulled over it for a bit. I began to see how the comments my husband made about finances and his worry about the monetary situation had seeped into my own thought process.

That was the moment I determined to break up with procrastination and with that one determination I adjusted my sails and turned my ship back to the direction that I had wanted to go in the first place.

It was not easy. Procrastination has its own ideas about how long the relationship is supposed to last. I was blessed that unexpected company kept driving me to do things in a time and a way that challenged procrastination. Eventually, I got the upper hand and once I got the upper hand I have been walking out purposeful actions that continue to keep procrastination at bay. The moment I confronted my fears, I began growing up change. I admitted the truth about procrastination and what it was doing to my life (never for my life). Coming clean about my current place and my current walk made it possible for me to redefine the direction I want to be headed.

If I want to grow change for my life then I have to define the direction I will head. I will only know the best steps to take and the right actions to choose if I have a target to focus on when I make those choices.

It is also important to understand some basic ideas about how my unique direction will look.



1. My direction will be defined by me or my direction will be defined by others if I give them control.
2. My direction will be focused or my direction will be random – and only one way gets me to a specific location.
3. My direction needs to be written down or my direction will easily slip my mind. Written directions are tangible terms that I can see and review as necessary.
4. My direction stays fueled by my passion when defined by me or my direction becomes a rut when defined by others.
5. My direction must be specific but it is also necessary that my direction be a little flexible as well.

I know that I'm going to have to do it – if I want to see it done. I have been distracted enough from my destination. I have been knocked off target by procrastination and the great THEY out there trying to dictate my path.

I am ready to take charge, take control, and make change happen. I have realigned my compass to get things back on track. I have taken that next step so that I am one step closer. With my newly re-defined direction I am ready to fly

Things are not always the way that I want but I can still find the determination to smile – and I'm not talking about one of those "I smile because it is the only way to avoid hurting someone" kind of smile. I'm talking about a smile that bubbles up from the warmth growing in your heart.

Have you noticed that doing something as simple as smiling can make a huge difference in your day and in your demeanor. I was sitting on my couch the other day and watching as Boy Scouts came in one door and went out the other – keeping all four doors busy. One of them asked my husband for some help and when he came back I saw the smile. Despite the utter chaos swirling around us, my husband was smiling, and it changed the whole atmosphere of the room.

I am working on smiling more – even though smiles are a natural part of my personality. I know that when I smile, it gives me the fuel to keep going, to keep pushing, to keep making things happen.

It is up to me. Things won't happen TO me. Things happen BY me. I have to find the way and I find the way when I define the way. I can discover the right direction for me and my journey when I understand a few points about my direction.

*1. My direction needs to be defined by me* – because ultimately I am the only one that knows me. Others know some of me. Others know parts of me. I am the only one that is intimately aware of all that I am and all that I want to be.

If I rely on someone else to define my direction then I will either lose focus or lose desire. I want to be in a place of exceedingly abundantly above all that I can think or imagine and I will need desire to keep me going down that path.

I won't get there trying to follow someone else's directions.

*2. My direction needs to be focused and specific* – because there is far too much noise in this world to keep me distracted without that focus. I need to determine where I am going, why I am going, and when I am going, so I can recognize the opportunities for HOW I am going to go.

If I do not get focused on my direction then my direction will become random. Random direction rarely ends me up in any place that I even remotely want to be.

I need to be specific if I want to be on target.

*3. My direction needs to be written down* – because I have a tendency to forget what I'm doing from one moment to the next. I need to have my direction in a place where I can see it and even touch it. It needs to become tangible because tangible becomes real.

If I keep my direction unwritten then it is very likely that it will also become unremembered. I have to write it down to grow change to walk it out.

When I write down my direction I can remember my direction no matter what comes up around me – or what comes at me.

*4. My direction is strongest when defined by me* – because I can infuse my directions with passion. I can do things that I am good at, and I can do things that I have education to do, but when I do things that are driven by passion I will be walking in a direction that I will not be easily swayed from continuing to walk.

If I allow others to dictate my direction then I often end up in a rut. That thing that I am just good at becomes monotonous. That thing that I just have an education to do becomes tedious and tiring.

I am more invested in the direction that I define.

*5. My direction needs to be specific and flexible* - because there are too many twists and turns along the way. Without a specific direction, I become caught up in all of the options and then I end up getting nowhere in the end.

But I also have to be flexible for the journey because there ARE so many twists and turns and sometimes they come up before I know what hits me. If I am not flexible in pursuing the specific then I will find that I struggle with every little hindrance that pops up on the path – and they will pop up.

My directions need to be specific to who I am and what I am doing but flexible to be able to take the turns that life throws at me.

I know that I am not where I want to be right now because I lost my direction. I have been doing a lot but not getting very far. I have been very busy in all of my doing but not focused in purposeful action.

If I want to get to that place that I desire – if I want to reach my dreams – if I want to fly, then I will have to recognize my direction and begin to walk in that direction. It is not all that complicated, but it is a challenge.

I had become comfortable in my settled place until I finally became aware that I had come to a settled place and it was NOT the place that I really wanted to be. I determined to change directions.

## **Foundations to Help Choose Directions**

I have been spinning my wheels – or spinning in circles – depending on the moment in time we are reviewing. The last few years I have been off the mark because I lost my direction. I allowed others to tell me how to do what I wanted to do or even worse I allowed them to tell me what to do.

It seems kind of strange that someone who believes in the power of being unique would fall into the trap of walking in the path THEY determine – but I promise that I fell into that hole one subtle step at a time.

That's how these life holes work.

One day you think you are on solid ground and then the next time you look around you are in that hole surrounded by the dark.

The good news is that you never have to remain in that hole. I didn't stay in that hole. I broke up with procrastination, took a step, and redefined my direction so that I would know where to keep stepping.

I am breaking out and I am breaking free and that is where I am supposed to be.

God has designed me on purpose and for a purpose. When I am walking out my unique direction then I am walking in the way that He has designed for me to go. When I walk that unique way – God's way for me – then I will discover that my paths are straight (Psalm 5:8) and my path will be level (Psalm 27:11)

That is pretty amazing when you think about it – because one of the toughest parts about walking out my unique journey can be the twists and turns that life tries to throw in. It turns out that when I am doing what God has designed that He also steps in and designs a straight path. The world can never compete with that design.

Not only will God make the path straight and level, but God will even make a way in the wilderness. Isaiah 43: 18 – 19 (in the KJV) says it this way “Remember not the former things; neither consider the things of old.” God is trying to get me to stop looking to my past for my direction. Isaiah goes on to share “Behold, I will do a new thing . . . I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

When I am walking in the direction that is unique for me – that God designed direction – then my past is no longer the determining factor. My past no longer has a say in what I am doing or what I am becoming. My past is just that – past. God makes the way – even in the wilderness and the desert.

Unless I know that God designed direction and unless I grow up change to push me in that God designed direction, I will not live under that umbrella of blessings.

My part is to understand my direction and then to keep moving in that direction. Job 17:9 from the New Living Translation reads like this: “The righteous keep moving forward and those with clean hands become stronger and stronger.”

The more I move in the right direction then the more I will move in the right direction. The more I do what I know to do and stick to my right direction then the stronger I will grow.

I grow change in my life when I know where to go and then I go. I have to understand my direction – the one that was uniquely designed by God for me – and then I have to take a step in that direction.

That is what will get me to the change that will fly me to my dreams.

### **Growing Change – Three Right Focus**

We need to be living extraordinary lives – we are designed to live extraordinary. We are uniquely designed and built to walk out impossible dreams. The world tries to push us back into the box and the world demands we get in line and be “normal” which is the code THEY use for ordinary.

I am not the conformity type – and I believe that when you grasp the power of possibility then there is no way that you can be the conformity type either.

We can latch hold of positive thinking and possibility thinking and then we will begin to live positive lives.

That’s just how it works – the more I invest in the positive then the more I am in a position to grow up the extraordinary.

I won't get there by staying here. If I want to move into that extraordinary then I am going to have to MOVE. I have to invest in the actions and the habits that will feed change for my life.

The other day my son and I were sitting on the back porch watching the bird feeders he had put out. While we watched the feeders, I heard a wood pecker in the tree above them. It took me a few times, but I was finally able to see the woodpecker through the binoculars that I was using.

My son was not having any luck seeing the wood pecker despite all of my directions on where he needed to be looking. I could tell he was looking in the right direction so I didn't understand why he was still missing the view.

I asked for his binoculars and looked through them. The focus was way off. Once I adjusted the focus then my son was able to not only see the woodpecker but he was able to identify it based on all the details he could see.

We had to get the focus right.

Not long ago, I was struggling to see my finish line. I had my White Board of World Domination showing me the steps to get there, but I was not that clear on where "there" was supposed to be.

I stayed busy with the actions listed on my white board but I was not seeing any results. Busy is not the way to get to that finish line. Busy is especially not the way to get to that finish line when you aren't even sure where the finish line is located.

My focus was off and because my focus was off, even just a little, the rest of me was off as well – from my attitude, to my actions, to my thoughts. Without that right focus, it all becomes blurry.

For me, the right focus begins with my personal relationship with Jesus and with God. When I get that relationship right then I get everything else right. I have seen first-hand that if I want to walk on water then I have to be so focused on Jesus that not even the storm and waves will break that focus.

I begin to clear up my focus or to get my focus right by making a few minor adjustments to my day.

1. I have to build a habit of reading Scripture and it needs to be such a natural part of my day that my day feels off unless I invest in that reading.
2. I need to study with others – in person or online. The group dynamics will help to feed my focus and also will provide some accountability for the journey.
3. I have to make time for daily conversation with God – and the conversation should include time of praise, time of petition, and time of being still and listening.

4. I need to invest in a church community – not just in volunteering to be part of activities but in active engagement with others to build up relationships. It is the relationships that make the church.

5. I need to write down my concerns, my encounters, and my answered prayers. Keeping a record of the petitions and the blessings that come along will make it possible to keep my focus during the toughest times and during the times when things are so quiet that it doesn't seem I even need to focus.

The change that I want for my life and in my life is so amazing and quite honestly it is completely impossible – according to the world. But I don't live according to the world. When I adjust my focus on the One that created me for the purpose I am attempting to walk – the purpose for which I am making the change – then that focus will get me to the steps and through the steps that lead me there.

The best thing about this focus is that it not only lets me see the steps, but it ignites even more dreams and even more possibilities than I had before. It clarifies the impossible into something possible – something real – something tangible – because this focus reminds me that it is not me doing it but the One living in me.

For the One living in me, impossible is not a word – it is not even a concept – it is a silly phrase crafted by people who have no idea about His design. I tap into life giving power when I make that right focus my priority.

Change is not easy – or at least the purposeful change that leads to that impossible dream is not easy. If it was easy then everyone would be doing it. Not everyone is walking out in their impossible dreams because the change that gets you there requires sacrifice, determination, and most of all it requires focus.

Focus is not always easy when you live in a house full of chaos. If the distractions aren't coming from inside the house then they are coming from the hummingbirds fighting outside my office window or the literal squirrels barking for attention.

There has been a super storm of chaos around my house of late. I have to clarify that chaos for me is not bad – it just means there is a lot going on and usually most of it is not planned. So this chaos around my house is the good kind of chaos filled with laughter, and joy, and overflowing with blessings.

Despite the good in the chaos, it has made it difficult for me to stay on task with the radio show and with the writing. I get caught up in the moment and then the end of the day creeps up and I know that there is still so much I need to do.

For a long time, my focus was so far off that I would use the lateness to put off doing. As I have adjusted my focus, I see clearly that putting things off is not a step I am willing to take and is never the step that will put me closer to my impossible dreams.

I have been clearing up my focus by taking a few steps.

1. I am building up a habit of reading Scripture – EVERY DAY. It all started for me with my dad’s challenge to read a Proverb every day. It turns out that many months there are the same number of Proverbs as there are days – so I started reading the corresponding Proverb every day.

I determined to add more Scripture to my daily habit. I sat down and divided up the Psalms. If I read five Psalms each day (six on four days so that I can read 119 on its own) then there are just enough Psalms to make it through the month as well.

After a year or so of reading the Proverb and the Psalms every day, I decided to break down the Gospels into daily readings. My goal was to have the readings divided in such a way that on any given day of the month I would read corresponding Scripture. Eventually I divided up the entire Bible into bite sized bits – Pentateuch, History, Poetry, Prophets, Psalms, Proverbs, Gospels, Acts, Letters of Paul, and Epistles/Revelations (although I did put Hosea and Joel here to balance things out).

It turns out that when I read the same verses every month then I begin to see them in a whole new way. My focus changes. If you are interested in getting a copy of my Scripture Reading Schedule then visit [www.KathrynLang.com/reflections](http://www.KathrynLang.com/reflections) and share your email and I will send you the free downloads.

The habit of reading Scripture changed my focus.

2. I am finding others that share my desire to study – both the word, but also daily habits and practices that are backed up by the Word. I attended a women’s study in the spring and I also attended an adult study on Wednesday nights. When those ended, I found some online studies that are helping me maintain the focus I have grown up so far, but they are also fueling my journey to continue to change even more.

The group doesn’t fix it for me – but they are the additional encouragement and accountability I need to step out into the fixing for myself.

3. I must make prayer a priority- and I mean personal conversation with God kind of prayer. I keep a prayer list that I pray over – ALMOST – every day. I have written out focused and purposeful prayers for my own journey. I also pray prayers over my children and over my husband that come from Stormie Omartain’s booklets – “Power of a Praying Wife” and “Power of a Praying Parent”.

I USED to make time to sit on the porch in the morning and just listen but haven’t done that in a long time. I suspect my struggles to focus could be related to my lack of listening. I need to regrow that habit for sure. Focus matters.

4. I need to be invested in a church community – not a church building or a denomination or a religious organization – but a COMMUNITY. I have to engage others outside of just shaking hands during the service. I need to develop the connections I make in the service and then

actively invest to grow up relationships. The whole reason the church is there is to give the Children of God a place to connect with each other so that we can help each other in developing that right focus.

5. I should keep a prayer journal because when I write out the prayer it not only becomes more real, but I also have a place to look when answers start to arrive. When I have recorded the prayer and the ultimate blessing then I have something to review when things get tough.

I need the right focus if I am going to grow change that moves me into my impossible dreams. I change my focus by making purposeful choices in the new direction.

## **Foundations for Finding the Right Focus**

I remember playing basketball in high school and getting hit by a rebound right on the nose – not in such a way that it bloodied my nose but just in that perfect spot that left me seeing spots.

I lost all the focus of my vision and I was unable to move because of it.

All too often, life hits me right there – right between the eyes. All I see is spots and because I lose my focus I am unable to move.

That is where I think I have been for far too long in my life. Sharing with you is giving me the courage I need to shake out the spots, clear up the focus, and begin walking out my impossible dreams in a bold new way.

The Scripture has a LOT to say about the importance of having the right focus. I have shared recently about how Peter walked on WATER but lost his focus and began to sink – so it is just as important to keep my focus once I get it as it is to get it in the first place.

In Hebrews 12, I am encouraged to keep looking to Jesus because Jesus is the author of my Faith and the finisher of my Faith. I don't need to look at the latest guru or even the top preacher. I have the one that authored my Faith and the one that FINISHED my faith living in me. If I keep my focus on Him then that will get me through whatever the world thinks it has in store for me.

I mentioned that I read the Psalms through every month – and I have to admit the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month is always one of my favorite. In Psalm 1, David writes about how powerful it is to have a focus on God. “Blessed is the man that delights in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night – he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” This comes from the King James translation.

For me, that is a drop your mic kind of moment – because David is telling me – from his own experience – that when I have the right focus then all that I do prospers – not will prosper, not might prosper – but it is a guarantee that steps taking in that focus will prosper.



What am I waiting for? It seems silly to me when I look at through the binoculars of Scripture – when I hone my focus this much then I feel a little ridiculous for not walking out bolder in my Faith.

And then I turn away for a moment, the focus fades a little, and I wonder how I will walk out Faith at all in this world.

Focus makes the difference.

Paul puts it like this in Romans 8:5 – the man that lives according to the flesh – the physical things that he can see and he can touch – is the man that is focused on the flesh. But it is the man that is focused on the things of the Spirit – those things that give life to impossible dreams – that is the man that will live according to the Spirit.

My focus will determine my life. I'm not sure it can get simpler than that.

Solomon comes close though. In Proverbs 2: 2-5 he hammers home the power of focus. In the NIV translation Solomon writes “Turn your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding. Call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding. If you look for it as silver and search for it as hidden treasure then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

I have to have the right focus to walk out my right path.

## **Growing Change – Four Turn Back**

Life is not a sprint – and I need an extra smile and the infusion of positive to keep me going if I am going to get there. I find that halfway through most of my days I am distracted by shiny objects, the amazing picture box in the other room, or just my desire to play with the family instead of plodding ahead into my purpose.

There have been so many distractions knocking me off my game as of late that I'm not even sure what game I was playing in the first place (even if I didn't know better back then).

That does not bode well for my reaching my impossible dreams.

There was a time when I would have beaten myself up over what I did not do yesterday – or last week – or last year. Or maybe I would have just chided myself for what I DID do that maybe I knew I shouldn't have done or that I know now I shouldn't have done.

Either way, I am harping on something that will gain me nothing – because try as I might I will never change what happened. All I can do is find a way to grow change for my now.

Several years ago, my son reported on himself about something he had done months before. “I thought you should know. I explained to him that it was good that he had been honest with me but that I knew he had learned to make better choices in the weeks since.

“The weight of what I did was hurting.” That was the reason he gave me for coming to me and telling me about what he had done.

I got angry – not at him, but at the enemy having the audacity to weigh down my son for so long with something that was not only past, but that had been washed clean.

“Have you talked to God about it?” I asked him. He nodded in response.

“Then you need to let it go. You are in a different place and that place is gone.” I straightened up in my seat. “The enemy is reminding you of something that God has freed you from. Keep making the better choices and know that you are free because when we ask for forgiveness from God then we are clean and when we make the better choices and walk out those choices with consistency then we are free.”

My son was free.

I am free – although I haven’t been acting like it as much as I know I should. Sharing with you about that encounter with my son so long ago reminded me of how I felt at the attacks that were coming on him for something that was gone.

I need to address my own past and my own situations with the same determination so that I can choose to walk out my freedom.

I can roll around in the despair of the past or I can pull back my shoulders and walk boldly into my future.

Where I face will determine what I do.

As long as I stay turned to the past, I will walk crooked. As long as I keep my focus on what has already gone, I will walk into walls and obstacles. As long as I keep my eyes looking on what has been, I will not be in a position to imagine what could be.

If I want to grow change for my life then I have to stop looking back – because looking back only leaves me caught in a past that I have no business toting around. When I look ahead, then I change everything.

- Looking ahead creates a straight line – looking behind will leave a crooked mess.

- Looking ahead reduces the stumbles – when I am looking behind me I can’t see the things that are going to trip me up when I step ahead.

- Looking ahead prepares me for the incoming hindrances or storms – looking behind keeps me blind to what I might walk into.

- Looking ahead keeps me focused on the possibility – looking behind will keep me mired down in what ifs and should haves.

- Looking ahead releases me from the past – looking behind keeps me in bondage do it.

There is nothing in the past that will guide me in my journey. Yes, I should learn from my mistakes, but once I know the lesson I have to plow ahead and walk into the future. I will never be able to do that looking behind.

I did not walk out a perfect past – I know that is a shock. I know that you are sitting there thinking that I have always made all the right decisions for everything.

Nope – not so much.

My husband also didn't walk out a perfect past – and after we got together we didn't walk out a perfect past.

My husband often gets mired down in the not so perfect past. He will get caught up in a loop of “if we hadn't done this” or “if we had only done that” and often times he will try to bring me into the loop with him.

I may have mentioned that I am not much for running and I am definitely not one for running on a wheel that gets me nowhere.

I know that I made mistakes. I know WHY I made my mistakes. I am taking steps to try and make better choices. Why do I need to jump on that wheel and run back through it all?

I want change and growing change in my life requires that I stop looking back and turn my focus to the possibilities of what lies ahead.

Looking ahead creates a straight line. I have done a bit of tilling since we moved out to the farm and I learned early on that if I looked behind or away while I was tilling that it would not look pretty when I got to the end of the row – IF I got to the end of the row. The only way to keep things straight and to get the job done right was to keep my focus on what was right in front of me.

My father-in-law does not drive very often anymore, but even when he did drive I tried hard to avoid riding with him. I always volunteered to drive – because he always followed where he looked, which means that on more than one occasion he would look over to the side of the road and his hands would turn to where he was looking and that would turn the car into the oncoming traffic.

NOT GOOD for forward moving possibilities.

I need to look ahead if I want to move ahead.

Looking ahead reduces stumbles. Every horror movie I have ever watched growing up involved that one person that was running from the bad guy and turns to see how close the bad guy has gotten and then stumbles over something and ends up getting caught by the bad guy.

I always yelled for them to quit looking behind them – but they always looked back and they always stumbled.

Despite beginning able to see it in the movies, I have been known to fall for it in my real life. I am running along moving away from the bad guy or the bad moments and almost to my safety when I turn to see how far I've gone and that is when I stumble – I stumble when I look behind instead of paying attention to where I am stepping in front of me.

Looking ahead prepares me for what may lie ahead. We know that the world is not going to play nice. It will throw things in the path just to throw things in the path because it can. If I am looking behind me then I will never see it coming.

I was on a trail ride with some friends when I was in high school. I was having a conversation with someone behind me and I turned to make a point – just about the time the rider in front of me released a limb that was across the trail. The limb swung around and knocked me right off my horse.

It wasn't on purpose. The other rider thought I was watching because I had been watching. That one moment of turning to look behind left me vulnerable to the hindrance that was flying at me.

Looking ahead keeps me focused on the possibilities. I have been making big plans the last several weeks and I have been taking steps into those big plans. YET – this morning something came up that reminded me that I am not where I wanted to be and I am not where I want to be right now because of choices I made and what if I had made different choices.

I got so caught up in looking behind that I lost all of my energy for moving forward. Before I even knew what had happened I was wasting away my day because I had no desire to take action for tomorrow.

If I want to walk out a changed life then I can't look behind because it will turn my attention away from my possibility.

Looking ahead releases me from the past – and I have NO DESIRE to get caught back up in my past. Did I mention that my past wasn't perfect?

I have a friend that talks about nothing but the past. She talks about the people that we knew in our past. She talks about the things that we did in the past. She talks about the mistakes made in the past. She tries to drag everything and everyone back into the past with her.

I don't see her much anymore – mainly because I won't join her in the past dwelling. I have long since moved on and moved forward and I don't have time for moving back.

When I turn my attention ahead and choose to turn back from my past then I am building the foundation for my change.

## **Foundations to Help Turn Back**

I know that I need to have more hope and possibility focus to walk out this journey. I know that the world – and often the people around me – is going to try to hold me back. Even worse, they often try to drag me back into the past.

If I get tangled up in what is behind me then I won't have what I need to move ahead. If I am stuck in what was then I will be hindered in discovering what could be. I need to shake off the what ifs and the could have beens and even a few if onlys so that I can begin the pursuit of my impossible dreams.

Looking back has never been a good place to be in Scripture. It all started with Lots wife – who was so caught up in what she left behind that she ignored the directions of the messenger from God and turned to look back.

She longed for what was behind instead of pressing on to what was to come – and because of that focus – the looking back – she lost her life.

That story comes from Genesis 19:26

Jesus threw down the gauntlet when he declared that no one was even fit for the Kingdom if he looked back – In Luke 9:59 – 62, Jesus is calling people to follow Him and they are giving excuses. They want to remain in their current places and still have what Jesus wants them to have. In verse 62 (according to the NIV translation) Jesus replies to their excuses like this: No one that puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.

God is not a God of the past – He was God IN the past but not of the Past. He wants me to be focused on what lies ahead so that I can get there. If I am focused on what was instead of what could be then I will not have the energy or the resources to be of service to the kingdom.

In Isaiah 43:18 is very blunt in how I need to think about the past. God is talking to the Israelites, but He is also talking to me. The King James translation says it like this “Remember not the former things. Neither consider the things of old.” I am not supposed to keep stirring up the past. I am not supposed to keep reliving what was done – because what was done IS DONE.

God goes on to explain why past no longer has value. Verse 19 reads like this “Behold, I will do a new thing.”

There it is again. It is not me – it is God. My mistakes will not get in the way of His possibilities. If I make the choice to step out into what He has called me to be instead of choosing to remain in and be mired down by what was – THEN HE WILL DO A NEW THING.

For me, verse 25 of that same chapter has a powerful reminder of what God thinks about the past – it reads “I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”

The past is gone – it is out of here – it is not even remembered by God once I take the mess up to Him and make a step into change. I am the only one that remembers. If I go back to God about a mess up I’ve already confessed and say “Hey God, you remember when I did . . .” then God will be like “Nope – no idea what you’re talking about.”

And if God has forgiven it and forgotten it then it is high time I do the same.

I can’t live out my possibilities until I turn back from my past and walk into my future.

### **Growing Change – Five Habit of Belief**

Sometimes it is the little promise that gets me through the day. That little something that just helps me hold on to the possibility of tomorrow – or maybe the possibility of the next moment – despite the chaos swirling around me. That little promise that whispers in my ear – you can do this. You have this in you. Just keep going.

We all need that little cheerleader on our shoulder now and then.

I needed mine just the other day. I purchased some items in an online auction and set off with my two older sons to go pick them up. We attached the 12 foot trailer to the Suburban and started the trip.

Let’s just say that the trip did not go as planned. The trailer tire began going flat, we were running late, and the place we needed to pull up to load was NOT a drive through. I had to back the trailer in. Oh, and did I mention that my auction eyes are bigger than our trailer – apparently.

We managed to Janga the different items onboard and then started out what looked like an exit. It was an exit when the building was operating, but now it was a locked gate. I had to back the overflowing trailer up a hill, from an overflowing suburban, with a couple dozen spectators watching from the loading area.

Nope, no stress in that moment.

The first three tries almost sent me into a fit. I had flashbacks of the first time I backed a trailer anywhere – and the flashbacks were NOT good. They added to my stress. I pulled back forward one more time to get my angle right. I stopped. I took a deep breath. Then my little possibility cheerleader perched on my shoulder. “You got this.” I heard – and I even said to myself.

I did get this, and despite my stress I came out okay on the other side.

I learned something from that situation. I can do it – I may have to take more time than someone else, and I may have to restart a few times to get it right, but if I keep on focusing on the task at hand, and I allow myself to be patient with myself then I will get it.

If you have ever backed up with a trailer attached you already know that part of the issue is that you have to turn the truck or car opposite the direction you want the trailer to go. That last time I stopped I had to take a moment to see the trailer backing up – I had to see me turning the wheel the way it needed to be turning. I had to get my mind looking at the right things so that I could do it.

I also had to believe that I could do it – and believe me there was a moment that I considered putting the suburban in park and walking home. Once I shifted to a place of belief, it was a simple task to back the trailer up, turn around and get home.

Belief will determine what I do. Henry Ford said “if you think you can or you think you can’t – you are right.”

I had to think I could so that I would.

When I invest in growing change for my life then I have to come to a place of belief in that change – I have to think I can so that I can.

I build a habit of belief for my change and my BIG DREAM goals by taking five steps.

1. I have to dare to dream. Growing up belief begins with releasing imagination.
2. I have to draw up my dreams. I can draw with written words, or with pictures, or even by actually drawing. Creating a picture of what that growing belief looks like gives it roots.
3. I have to speak my dreams. The words I put out there are the words that begin to shape my life.
4. I have to keep stretching my vision by daring to believe even more. Belief begins to stagnate if left on its own for too long.
5. I have to expect the results. I have to continue following through this process until the dream I first imagined and started to believe becomes as natural as breathing.

The process is not complicated, but it does require imagination. If I am going to build up belief in the possibility of my change then I am going to have to release my imagination and let it fly.

Have you ever noticed how freeing it can be to fly? I remember the thrill of flying through the air when I would swing. I felt the same way when I would drop the reins and let my horse gallop across the field – the wind in my face and my hair whipping behind me.

I felt free.

That's where belief will take me – if I will give it wings. Belief will help me grow up the change that I must have if I want to live free.

I heard a story once about the bumble bee – that according to engineers the wing span of a bumble bee did not match the weight of the bumble bee and therefore the bumble bee could not fly – according to the engineering specifics. The problem is that no engineer has been able to explain this to the bumble bee.

That – to me – is the ultimate story of belief. If you believe you can then you can.

I have talked about and written about Mark Lenzi – his name might not be on the tip of your tongue when it comes to sports greats, but he has long been my hero. In 1988, he was a wrestler and was watching the summer Olympics where Greg Louganis made a splash. Mark decided then and there that he wanted to be an Olympic diving champion.

He believed he could do it.

He walked away from wrestling and put his heart into his dreams. Others told him he was crazy, but Mark had a belief that he was not willing to give up. The experts called his 1992 gold medal in Barcelona an “upset” but Mark believed in his ability to take home the gold and kept on it until he walked away with that gold.

That is the power of belief. It gives us the fuel to go farther, to reach higher, and to do more than we can do on our own. It is that little voice that follows us around reminding us that “you got this.”

Building a habit of belief in my life happens when I walk out five steps.

*1. I have to dare to dream – dreaming gives life to all sorts of possibilities.* Some of the great inventors and business people in the history of the world share the importance of imagination. It is the imagination that gave man the ability to fly – and it is imagination that gives me the ability to fly in my own life. I have to dream the impossible dream if I am going to find my way to live it out.

*2. I have to draw up my dreams in order to draw out my dreams.* I tend to use written words to craft my dreams. Even when I wake up from a persistent or intense dream, I will take a moment to write it out. It doesn't have to make sense and I don't have to understand the how of getting to the dream. I just begin to give life to my dreams and to invest in believing when I paint an image in some fashion.



3. *I have to speak my dreams to develop belief in those dreams.* I had a lot of dreams growing up – some were mere fantasies because I didn't have the true desire to back them up. Writing was one of the dreams that I dared to speak. I told myself that I would be a writer. I had written down in my journals what my writing life would look like. I spoke to others about my writing dreams, so much so (apparently) that when I was looking back through my high school year book there were dozens upon dozens of comments about “when you are a famous writer.”

It took longer than I would have expected – mostly because I lost belief in my words – but I am now a writer. I have written several novels, several inspirational books, and a dozen eBooks – you can purchase a copy or just learn more about my writing by visiting [www.KathrynLang.com/books](http://www.KathrynLang.com/books).

The point is that I spoke my dream and my dream became a belief that I was able to follow into my possibilities.

4. *I have to keep stretching my dreams.* Dreams can stagnate fast. It's not that I think we need to stay in pursuit of more stuff, but more that I know I have to keep dreaming the impossible or I will settle into the probable. I have to keep dreaming so that my ability to believe can continue to grow.

5. *I have to get to that place where I expect the results.* It may be a few days, it may be a few weeks, or in the case of my writing – it may be a few decades. The when is not as important as the arriving. I have to believe in it happening for it to happen so I have to keep feeding my mind and my heart the possibility until the belief becomes as natural to me as breathing.

I confess that when I saw Greg Louganis dive in 1988, I dreamed of being an Olympic diver. I had a dozen reasons why I couldn't pursue that dream. Mark Lenzi had a belief that he could.

One of us won gold and the other cheered him on from the comfort of her Alabama home.

Belief makes way for the impossible to happen.

## **Foundations to Create a Habit of Belief**

I believe. That belief makes room for possibilities. That belief gives life to purpose. That belief fuels my ability to pursue my dreams.

According to Webster's 1828 dictionary – belief is a persuasion of the truth – it is distinct from personal knowledge. The Strong's Concordance only shows one reference to the word “belief” in the King James translation – and that's from 2 Thessalonians 2:13 – but the word belief translates from a word that means belief with the predominate idea of trust.

That sounds a lot like faith to me – and I think there is an element of faith in ever belief that is pursuing a BIG DREAM goal. You have to have some faith if you are going to walk out an impossible dream – because the reality of the moment and the cry of the world is that it is not possible. Going against that much noise takes a dash of faith.

It turns out that growing up belief and growing up faith are very similar – there is a little dreaming, a little drawing up, a little speaking, and a WHOLE LOT of stretching when it comes to walking out a life of faith.

Colossians 3:16 puts it this way: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing each other (and self) in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs” and verse 17 goes on to say “whatsoever you do – in word or in deed – do all in the name of the Lord Jesus – giving thanks to God.” This comes from the King James translation.

If I want to walk out a life of faith then I have to dwell in the wisdom of the Word. That will require that I take time to invest in the Word.

I have to be invested in relationships – because it is ONLY in relationships that I can grow up and teach up others. People that I only have a casual relationship with or that I don’t know – those people have no interest in what I have to say. We learn from those we trust and we trust those with whom we have relationships. I have to do something with what I am learning – always with a focus on doing it for God.

I grow up faith when I learn faith, I speak faith, and I put action to that faith.

I want to make it complicated. I want faith walking to be some tough thing to get or some difficult thing to live out. I have heard it preached often enough from pulpits around the world that walking in faith and walking out faith is HARD.

I am beginning to realize that a lot of what we have labeled as hard is actually quite simple – because most of the work has been done for us by One greater than us. Faith is not something I have to go out and get for myself – it is planted in me from the beginning . . . and the exact same amount is planted in you and in each and every person. That seed – the one that is the size of the mustard seed – has the potential to grow into amazing possibilities.

I have to invest in learning, speaking, and walking out that faith.

The difficulty is not in the faith part but in the choice part. I have to be ready for my change if I am going to walk out that life of faith – because I will have to change.

I can grow change for my life – the change that takes me into impossible dreams.

First – I take off my mask and get real with myself and with others.

Second – I choose the direction because I will have more passion for the direction I choose.

Third – I get focused – because my focus will be the driving force for my journey.

Fourth – I turn my attention forward and stop looking back.

Fifth – I build a habit of belief that will push me through the noise of the world.

I can because of Whose I am.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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“Words have power – and I work to share words that ignite hope and possibility in those they encounter.”

Kathryn Lang continues to grow her career as a wordsmith. She shares words in talks, teachings, columns and stories to provide the hearts that hear with some fuel for hope.

Take a moment to visit <http://www.kathrynclang.com> to read more of her writings. You can also contact Kathryn to speak at your next event or conference by emailing her at [kathrynlang@kathrynlang.com](mailto:kathrynlang@kathrynlang.com).

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