

Pastor Steve Reynolds: Your Gameplan for Health

*Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from Chapter 12 of Steve Reynolds' book Get Off the Couch. **Chapter 6 Excerpt***

It's Your Turn

The great thing is that as you read my pep talk, you get to miss out on all the painful stuff that I had to endure during my pre-game locker room moments in college. You'll miss out on the physical torture I went through, such as slapping each other around, punching one another, banging our helmets together (after they were already on . . . that one wasn't very smart!). And don't forget the butt slapping. I'll just stick to the motivational and practical stuff (you can thank me later) and give you a strategy on how to stay focused on your goals—on how to *win*.

Play to Win

Pretend right now I'm screaming at you and saying, "PLAY TO WIN!" It's not enough to just start something; that's the easy part. If you are running a race, those first few minutes after the gun goes off are a piece of cake. It's the middle of the race—when the starting line is far from sight and the finish line seems so far away—that the physical and mental fatigue set in and the urge to quit takes root.

It's the same way with weight loss and getting in shape. Hopefully, at this stage of the game you are feeling pumped up and motivated to get off that couch and get moving. The hard part is being consistent, staying focused on your goals, and working to achieve them for the long run. You have to learn how to keep your focus on doing the right thing all the time.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24, Paul says, "Do you not know that those

who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.” I love that last part: “Run in such a way that you may obtain it.” Paul is stating that an athlete has to stay focused if he is going to win. The same thing applies to you when it comes to getting in shape. You need to have the mentality that you are in it to win it and that you are playing to win. If you have this mindset, you will be much more focused and have a much greater chance of achieving the goals you set for yourself.

Weight loss can be a rollercoaster with lots of ups and downs. Let’s face it: all of us, at one time or another, have tried to lose weight only to gain it back (and then some). Why did we fail? Because we didn’t stay focused on the goal—on winning. We waste so much time in our lives because we don’t stay focused. The good news is that unlike in a footrace where there is only one winner, in this new game we are starting to play, *everyone* can win. We all can integrate new strategies and habits that will produce positive changes and result in us leading healthier lives. That’s winning!

The Desire to Win

There are two keys to playing to win: passion and endzone thinking. First, you have to have a desire to win. You have to want it so badly that you are willing to do the hard work necessary for success. When you are exhausted on that treadmill and in pain from working out muscles you haven’t used in a long time, passion will keep you going. When you are tempted to cheat and pull into a fast food drive-thru after a long day of work, passion will help you steer that car in the opposite direction. You can’t win without passion, and you can’t live without it. It is what’s going to keep you moving in the right direction.

One of the characteristics of people who don’t want to waste their lives is that they are so passionate about their goals that they are willing to eliminate whatever they must in order

to win. Sometimes this involves making hard decisions in life, such as eliminating negative relationships that may be holding them back. At other times, it may mean taking a hard look at their lives and getting rid of things that are keeping them from changing. I hope that after reading this book, you are starting to feel this fire igniting inside of you—a passion for getting up and getting in shape.

Endzone Thinking

The second thing you have to do in order to play to win is begin with the end in mind. I call this endzone thinking. You have to picture yourself at the end of the game, holding the trophy and celebrating your victory. You have to focus on doing that endzone dance and spiking the football.

People who train for marathons use this strategy when preparing for the race. They study the route of the course, analyze where their pit stops will be, and identify hills and other obstacles they will have to overcome. They visualize themselves crossing the finish line again and again. They focus on the end and winning the race. You need to do the same.

Begin by focusing on the end result of reaching your goals. What are you going to look like at that point? What are you going to feel like? You are going to look better, feel better and generally be healthier, so picture that in your mind. Envision having a better quality of life and being able to do more. Keep these images in your mind during the tough times and write down all the things you are going to do to celebrate once you get there. Keep your eyes and mind fixed on the prize.

Next, focus on the end of your life, when you will stand before Jesus and give an account of what you have done during your time on earth. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each

one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” This is a sobering thought—you are going to have to give an account for what you did with your body. I know that once the full implication of this verse set in with me, I started focusing on taking better care of myself!

I want to be able to stand before Jesus and say I did my best to take care of the body He gave me—the one I used to do His work on earth. I want to know that I maximized it and didn’t waste it, trash it or pollute it with the things I put in it. I want you to be able to do the same thing. So focus not only on the time when you have achieved your goals but also on that day when you will be standing before Jesus to give an account for how you lived. Play to win.

Pay the Price

You don’t become a successful quarterback in the NFL without dedicating your life to being a champion. For a football player, it isn’t just something you do in the fall. You don’t play with a little ball for two or three months and then quit. No, football controls your life every day, year round, day in and day out. The rigors of being an athlete—the diet and exercise regimen you have to maintain—costs something. You pay the price if you choose this type of lifestyle.

College football players have the added burden of having to maintain good grades. When I played at Liberty, the school was heavily committed to having its athletes maintain good academics, because the school knew most of us wouldn’t make it past college football. At some point, we were going to have to get jobs and start careers. It was a lot of pressure, but we had to pay the price if we wanted to play the game. In the same way, you must also pay the price if you want to stay focused on what you must do. A focused life involves a total dedication. You have to think of it like this: you can pay now, or you can pay later.

The truth is that here are no victories at bargain prices. As Proverbs 13:4 says, "The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." Lazy people get nothing in the end!

If you want to reach that endzone and win, you can't be lazy. You can desire it, talk about it and even write out a fabulous plan as to how you are going to achieve it, but if you don't do the hard work necessary to get you there, you might as well forget it. It's not going to happen. You won't win if you are still that lazy bum sitting in a La-Z-Boy.

As I said before, there is no pill, potion or gadget for \$ that you can buy that will solve all your problems. You have to pay the price and work through the sweat and tears. The good news is that the reward is surely great!

Steve Reynolds, the "anti-fat pastor," has served as the senior pastor of Capital Baptist Church in Annandale, Va., since 1982. He launched a weight-loss campaign in his church and community after he lost more than 100 pounds. His story has been featured in local, national and international media, including *FOX News*, *CNN*, *the Washington Post* and *the Chicago Tribune*.