

May 2009 - Rest



Nancy Gates

We recently wrapped up the inaugural conference of The National Women's Forum, which I have been privileged to direct since July of 2008. I enjoyed organizing this project possibly more than anything I've ever done in my life. But since I'd never done it before, I walked into it blindly, depending upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit (of course) and the expertise of the various members of our board. What a wonderful group of girls! In the months and weeks leading up to the conference, we poured our hearts and souls into every detail, exchanged potentially thousands of emails, spent hours and hours on the phone, and made two pre-conference trips to Chicago to solidify our plans with our hotel event coordinator, Dawn.

We arrived in Chicago a day early, and after dinner, made late evening runs to surrounding stores to pick up items for the event which would begin at 6:00 p.m. the next day. By the time the women started to arrive on Thursday, I could tell that I had pushed myself to the limit, but I had to soldier on so that I could greet them as they came to the registration table. I think I did okay. But as if being tired were not enough, the nit-picky, perfectionist side of me decided to emerge to smooth the wrinkles out of the table skirts, make sure our study binders were properly stacked, and see to it that "Judy" our plastic T-shirt model was immediately visible to the ladies. I paid a tremendous price for forgetting my flats! I joined the women later on to participate in "Conversations", our open format discussion, completely thankful that I had decided not to add myself as a panelist. The discussion was hearty, spirited, lively (to say the least!), and at times a little controversial, but a lot of fun. I went back to my hotel room that evening satisfied that our conference had gotten off to a good start. I slept like a baby. But most moms will tell you that sometimes a baby's sleep can be a little fitful. I had three additional events facing me that weekend, so yes, I slept, but I'm not altogether sure that I rested.

As I recently shared with our partners and conference attendees, I left Chicago that Saturday with the feeling that every single effort we put into this event had been kissed by God. The women had clearly been impacted by what they heard and experienced during the course of that weekend, which made it just that much more enjoyable.

I have to admit, though, that my mind has not slowed down one iota since I've been back home in Indiana—I've already begun making plans for 2010! But I sense a prompting (God) in my solar plexus telling me to slow down and take some time to recoup. Oftentimes, our successes drive us to keep pushing without taking the time necessary to refuel. Our overly-competitive culture has us "sleeping" with one eye opened, Blackberry within reach just in case the windows of heaven open in the middle of the night and a great idea is conceived. I am so guilty!

In case we've forgotten, we were instructed eons ago, you know, back when the only blackberries were the edible variety, to regularly participate in a little thing called rest. Too little of this healthy practice challenges our physical and emotional equilibrium, which may result in less than resourceful decision-making. But worse than that, whether we realize it or not, it exposes us to enemy attack. He loves it when we're "off". But a fully-stocked arsenal of information, good sense and well-planned, consistent

down time gives us the upper hand, even on a bad day. Think of it as your Rx for victorious living. Now go get some zzz's.

Nancy Gates