

a better day
a better life

HOW TO
THRIVE
ONE DAY
AT A TIME

KELLY L. WILSON

A Better Day — A Better Life, How to Thrive, One Day at a Time
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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Why This Book Will Make a Difference in Your Life

LOVE THE WORD *BETTER*. People understand it. Even though it is subjective, people get it. *Better* is simply, better.

If you picked up this book, I trust that you are seeking a bit “of better” for yourself. Maybe things are already fairly good and you are hoping to enhance from a place of strength. If this is your situation, I believe you will be pleasantly surprised. If on the other hand, you are in a tough place and need a big change to go from where you are today to something better, I believe you will find particular benefit in this book. That’s exactly where I was when I learned the lessons that I will share. Over the years, I have seen people use this same information to change their lives for the better. The framework is simple and powerful.

Initially, I didn’t have a name for the lessons. But the title of this book evolved from a speech I gave at my sons’ elementary school in the winter of 2004. At that time, they attended an independent Christian school in the suburbs of Cincinnati, Ohio, and I was the guest chapel speaker. That occasion was only the second time I had publicly talked about what I had learned from


the death of our infant daughter, Kennedy. It was particularly challenging to share my story in that venue, because most of the audience—teachers, parents, administrators and elementary students—had been witnesses to the event, from a distance. It was also difficult because for the first time I would have to put this “misfortune” into a positive context for children.


Shaking as I approached the podium, I knew that sharing my story was the right thing to do, because at some point in life each of us, whether adult or child, will face moments of loss or pain. And when those moments arrive, as they inevitably will, we need to know that there are some steps, some practices, and a mindset that can help us survive and overcome. I also felt that filling in some of the gaps about our situation would provide a measure of healing for my boys and the community that had given our family so much support.


So on a cold February morning, speaking to a chapel audience of two hundred kindergarten through fourth graders, I began like this...


“I am so happy to be here with you again this morning. Many of you guys know me. I am KJ and Kyler’s mom. I coached some of you older kids in track and I spoke at chapel last year. When I talked to you then, I told you about a new way to pray. Today my title is ‘How to Improve Any Day.’” Fighting back tears, I continued, “This story is going to start out a little bit sad. But it will end on a happy note.


“Last September, our family had a baby girl. Her name was Kennedy Anne Wilson. When she was born, she had a serious health problem. It was called Trisomy 13.¹ This problem affected the part of her brain that controlled her breathing. At times she would forget to breathe. There was nothing that our doctors could do to fix this problem. And after twenty-four days, our baby died and went to heaven.


-  Say thank you. Thanksgiving is different from affirmation in that its focus is to offer gratitude for what has been done versus appreciation for who a person is. Specifically, you can send a calligraphy-crafted thank-you letter to your mother-in-law for babysitting. You can tuck notes drawn on napkins into school lunch boxes. You can write on the steamy bathroom mirror a sentiment to your husband. You can print a message in an oversized font and tape it to the outside of the entry door so it will be the first thing your loved ones see when they arrive home. Say thanks by sending a gift certificate via the Internet.


-  Offer to help your friend accomplish a goal or vision for her life. Nothing says I care about you more than helping someone achieve what she cares about.

-  Share family pictures and stories. My great-uncle recently passed away. He was the oldest living relative on my dad's side of the family. His nickname was "Dirty" because he got so dirty playing outside as a young boy. Uncle Dirty's service was a great celebration and our family unearthed photos and stories that most of us had never seen or heard. Sadly, I couldn't attend because I live out of state. My sister sent dozens of old family pictures to my phone. Now with an easy upload, I have priceless photos and stories that will inspire my children and me for years to come. Don't let your old pictures perish away in an old shoebox. Share them!

 Cooperate with your energy levels and your work-style preferences rather than fight against them. I am a morning person. If I need to focus and get things done, this is when I am at my peak. I am also a person who likes to complete a challenging task in one sitting whenever possible. For me it would be best to take a full day of vacation to clean out my basement than to do it a little at a time. For my clients who like to change gears often, I suggest they break projects into chunks and work on them for an hour each day until the job is complete.

 Pray about your tasks for the day. It is wise to ask for supernatural help. “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you” (Psalm 32:8 NIV).

 Utilize timers to help you stay on task. I often set my cell phone alarm to ring at 2:30 PM as a reminder to stop what I am doing to go pick up my children from school. This is helpful for those who get engrossed in an activity, like meeting with clients, cleaning the house or shopping at TJ Maxx prior to the dismissal of school. Timers also make great bad guys. When my sons were young, I’d set one for fifteen minutes before bedtime. When the buzzer went off, it was time for them to hit the sack. There was much less arguing with the inanimate timer than there was with a weary mom.

 Use outside resources when it makes sense. A lawn or cleaning service could free up a huge source of energy.