

BUILDERS

We're not changing our bad selves into something good, we're using tools to build our great selves into something more useful and beautiful.

"I'm giving you the tools you need to be able to change your future." (God)

"A goal without a target date isn't a goal—it's a wish." (Mike Speakman)

WHY BUILD?

We want to build something because we believe that it will help our lives be easier, more productive, healthier, happier, and/or more pleasant.

1) BRAINSTORMING

What I'm building:

1. What do I want to build this year?

A life that is more productive by using my time more wisely to do what I feel is important to me. **(1. Jesus-time & 2. Writing)**

2. Why do I feel the need to build this?

I don't feel like I'm living up to my potential, I'm wasting my passion and my God-given gift when I piddle my time away, and I want more time hanging out with Jesus.

3. Why is this structure important to me?

My not being productive not only hurts me but I'm not sharing with others like I feel God would like me to. And I want more Jesus-time!

4. How long have I been trying to build this?

Pretty much throughout my married life and beyond ...

5. Is it that it never changes or is it that the change is never enough?

Partly both, though I feel like I just mostly never change.

Why I want to build this structure:

- 1. Is what I want to build born out of a passion or duty?*
A passion.
- 2. Am I building for myself or because I want to please someone else (other than God)?*
For myself.
- 3. Is this to benefit myself personally (body: lose weight/how I dress/my health, etc.), passionately (soul: paint/write/sing, etc.), practically (better organized/get rid of stuff/better housekeeping, etc.), or spiritually (more compassionate/deeper walk/more Bible study, etc.)?*
Passionately (Writing) & Spiritually (Jesus-time)

Why did my buildings in the past blow away with the wind? (So I can learn how to build sturdier structures):

- 1. What have been my pitfalls?*
Email, being invited to Starbucks, my kids, my mom
- 2. What has been my biggest excuse?*
I'm too busy and others need me often. I don't have a chunk of time so why start learning something or get involved only to have to quit in the middle?
- 3. What has been my biggest downfall?*
Other people I want to be with and not being able to set boundaries.
- 4. What has been my biggest distraction?*
Email.
- 5. What has been my biggest hurdle?*
Learning new programs (WordPress.org, AWeber, & Scrivener) and technical stuff.
- 6. What has been my biggest struggle?*
Being overwhelmed/learning something new.

7. *How has setting goals worked AGAINST me?*

Long-term goals are too abstract and the minute I miss the closest goal I give up, since at that point I've screwed it all up and don't want to redo the whole timeline. Daily goals set me up for failure—life happens and I miss some days. Also, I can't do more than one goal at a time, it's too overwhelming.

8. *How has setting goals worked FOR me?*

It really hasn't much. I've learned that I do better with setting a weekly goal instead of a daily goal, then when I miss one day I have the flexibility of making the time up by the end of the week. Also, I've learned to give myself leeway and not expect to do something every single day, 5 out of 7 works better, especially for the 30 minutes with Jesus. I do better with *input* (the time invested) goals (10 hours of writing per week) than I do with *output* (what is produced) goals (500 words a day).

9. *What HASN'T worked in the past?*

Rewards. Dropping tokens (representing time) into a dish and counting them at the end of the day. Trying. Determination. Setting a specific daily schedule (my time is too flexible with what I do now). Tools that are too complicated, like ManicTime, RescueTime, eDraw Mind Map, FreeMind, Evernote, Trello ... these are wonderful fun and might help others (and I had a blast wasting time setting them up instead of writing) but in the end I need quick and easy. (See below for the apps that work for me.) Putting deadlines on my calendar (the first one passes by and at that point I'm done with those goals).

10. *What HAS worked in the past?*

Small bits of time. Short-term goals that are small. Wild cards to be able to miss a day or two. Working in 20 minute intervals with a 3-minute break in between each one. A colorful, paper chart to check off. One deadline at a time. Jiffy Time Tracker—(phone, and my top app that has impacted me the most, and if your phone is an Android the widget is amazing). Jumbo Timer—(laptop, an easily customized timer that counts down as I work, giving me the reward of finishing a 20-minute segment plus the pressure not to stop my work until the timer stops). The task list that came with my favorite phone calendar (Business Calendar—

worth every penny of the few dollars it costs, and on an Android it's got a great widget). I tried tying it to my calendar with dates when the goal would be accomplished but I never made the first one so the rest were down the toilet. What works is a task list that I can just check off when it gets done (not as overwhelming). SimpleMind, an easy mindmapping app (Android) that allows me to instantly create mindmaps on my phone, keeping up with ideas for blogs, etc.

11. *Do I work better under long-term or short-term deadlines?*

Short term, otherwise I wait too long and then just throw something out at the last minute and it's not good and I'm stressed over it.

12. *What motivates me?*

- Passion
- Anger (when I read something that makes me mad I jump in to write a response)
- Accountability (a deadline tied with judgment by others)
- Starting small (I get overwhelmed easily)—small chunks of time, like 5 minutes to practice the recorder, or learn to juggle. A short walk around the building several times instead of a far walk that is a commitment. 10 minutes of yoga morning and night instead of a 30-minute video once. 15 minutes with God instead of an hour. All these things often go for longer, but if it's a small chunk and then I'm not so overwhelmed that I don't bother starting.
- Cool Tools
 - Organizational items— goals, charts, tokens
 - Accessories (books, notebooks, cool technology, equipment, apps)
- Planning (elaborately)
- Friends with similar interests
- Time Management tools
- A schedule/place set aside for working (Starbucks)
- Motivational/Self-help tools (books, cards, etc. Just LOOKING at my bookshelf of self-help books gets me excited and motivated)
- Creating my own reality (what did I mean when I wrote this???)
- A need to share what I've learned in case it will help others.

- The desire to be spiritually, emotionally, and physically strong & healthy
- A challenge
- Order. I am hugely motivated by order. That's why I can't sit down to work until my chores are done—emails, journal, house, business. I'm distracted by disorder. My desk needs to be straight. At Starbucks there isn't any order for me to control except what's on my laptop—emails, journal, etc.

13. *Why can I believe this year will be different?*

I'm going to use different methods that are chosen from ones I know will work.

2) BLUEPRINT

1. *What am I going to do differently now?*

I'm going to do more than "try," I'm going to set up parameters, change my habits, and change my brain.

2. *What changes can I make utilizing my body, mind, & spirit? (For example: Body—get enough sleep; Mind—record affirmations/listen to my self-talk; Spirit—check in with Holy Spirit daily)*

Body: I'm going to create muscle-memory by building habits. Mind: I'm going to record & listen to affirmations & do things that motivate me. Spirit: I'm going to be listening for Holy Spirit to show me, motivate me, and help me.

3. *How can I use my love languages (from the amazing book [The Five Love Languages](#) by Gary Chapman) to reward, love, and affirm myself when I do well or achieve a goal? For example, (depending on my love language): Words of affirmation—I can tell myself what a good job I've done. Giving gifts—I can give myself a cup of coffee or a little reward. Physical touch—I can pamper myself by a foot massage or a special lotion or soap. Quality time—I can reward myself with time with a friend. Acts of service—I'll take the time to wash my car, organize my desk, or do something for myself that I've been wanting to do.*

My top love language is Quality Time. So to treat myself when I do well, for every 5 hours of writing work I get 1 hour of playing King's Quest (PC game). When I'm having my specific Jesus time I'm getting Quality Time from him and I'm happy. :)

4. *Name my Sirens (In Greek mythology the Sirens were beautiful women who would sing and lure sailors onto the rocks of their island, shipwrecking the sailors to their death. So Odysseus plugged his sailor's ears with beeswax and had them lash him to the mast so he could see and hear but be incapable of changing the course of the ship.) I need to lash myself to the mast (pre-commit) so that I can row past the Sirens and not get lured (distracted). (This analogy is taken from the book—[The Procrastination Equation](#) by Piers Steel.)*

Email is my top Siren, both cleaning out my Inbox and reading/writing them. Updating my journal is another. My pre-commitment? Don't have Outlook or my journal open.

5. *Piers Steel, in his book [The Procrastination Equation](#), asks whether you prefer **inputs** (the time invested) or **outputs** (what is produced)? Knowing this kind of thing about yourself is a great help in building something with a solid foundation because, once again, it will be modeled after the unique person you are and not what works for someone else. Also, you might find (after trial and error) that it depends on the situation. For example, for a few weeks my goal was output (what is produced)—to write 500 words a day. Sounds simple, right? It didn't work for me. When I was tired my 500 words became an email to my friend or a journal entry (neither of which progressed my writing). What worked was saying I'd get in 10 hours a week of writing time (input—the time invested), that goal was flexible enough that I could flow around normal life.*

I'm an input person, I do better with planning a time goal than an output goal. When I tried to do an output goal (500 words) I found that after a certain period of time I was emotionally done, it kind of freaked me out to have put in the time and still not hit my goal!

6. *Are you an **abstainer** or a **moderator**? Some people have to abstain from what they want to change, totally give it up. Other people are moderators, they can just alter what they're doing and do fine. For example, if an abstainer wants to lose weight they'll stop eating any cookies at all, because it's easier for them to stop altogether than to cut back. A moderator cuts back, limiting themselves to one cookie per day/week, etc. Neither one understands how the other can do it.*

I'm definitely a moderator and I felt so sorry for people who were abstainers, so until I understood this I would try to get an abstainer to just cut back instead of torturing themselves by totally cutting it out. I find that I can cut back fine, but if I try to say "no more!" I'm horrified at the idea and rebel.

7. *As you set up your commitment look and see if you're building a habit or just incorporating something into your life. For example, my friend Chong is developing a habit, so she's adamant that she never miss one, single day. I, on the other hand, am incorporating Jesus-time into*

my life, but my days are so unstructured that I feel that I need to give myself leeway to miss and not feel like I've "failed," so I've built in WILD CARDS, "free" days (or as I like to call them—"forgiveness cards"). Where Chong commits to every day, my commitment looks like this—"I'll spend 30 minutes a day with Jesus, 5 out of 7 days a week." That way if I come home tired or am out late I can go to bed and not feel like I've failed on my commitment.

While I'm currently incorporating more writing time and more Jesus-time into my life, I do understand that if I were building a habit I'd need to do it every day.

*8. Take your list of what motivates you and for each motivation write a way you can incorporate that into your **Building under Brain Change**.*

Woah, I won't use every one at the moment.

- Accountability—I'll meet with Jan C and Chong every Saturday morning.
- Cool Tools— *Business Calendar* app, *SimpleMind* mindmapping app
- Time Management tools— *Jiffy Time Tracker* app, *Jumbo Timer* (PC)
- A need to share what I've learned—I'll read my motivational board of comments others have made on my writing.
- Order—I'll have my desk straight when I leave it so when I come back there aren't the distractions of clutter.

9. For each one below, write at least one specific step you can take to overcome it.

Pitfall/Excuse: "I'm too busy and others need me often. I don't have a chunk of time so why start learning something or get involved only to have to quit in the middle?" I'll break a task into smaller bites.

Downfall: "I don't want to set boundaries because I like being with friends & family." I'll set a limit to what I'll do with people and then say no.

Distraction: "Email." I'll keep Outlook and my journal closed.

Hurdle/Struggle: "Learning new programs (WordPress.org, AWeber, & Scrivener) and technical stuff." I'll set my mind to tackle it but try to do it in smaller chunks.

10. *What bad self-talk am I telling myself?*

- I don't know where to start. (My #1 line)
- This is hard.
- I don't have time to get involved with it.
- I'll set aside a chunk of time later.
- I'll never figure this out.
- This isn't my "thing." (Learning new programs.)
- I'll never get time to write.
- I'm overwhelmed and I'll never get anywhere, there's too much to do!

3) BUILDING

Commitment: Here is where you need to be specific about what you're building. It needs to be measurable and achievable. For example, don't say, "I need to walk more." Make it, "I will walk 5 out of 7 days a week for at least 20 minutes (or 1 mile or whatever)." You can build more than one building but don't overload, it's better to keep it to 1 or 2 or it's easy to become overwhelmed.

What do I want to achieve in the next week? Finish the sentence below:

I WILL: spend 10 hours a week writing plus 30 minutes with God 5 out of 7 days a week.

What steps will I take to enable me to keep this commitment?

Parameters:

- Have a weekly goal and nothing further
- Break a task into smaller bites. (Excuse, Hurdle, & Struggle)
- Don't open Outlook or my Journal. (Distraction)
- Keep track of my Writing & God-time using my Jiffy Time app.
- Guard my time using Jumbo Timer.
- Set small bits of time—working in 20 minute intervals with a 3-minute break in between each.
- 1 deadline at a time.

Habits:

- Set a limit to what I'll do with people and then say no. (Downfall)
- When possible do my writing first thing in the morning.
- Try to get in my God-time right after supper (before I'm too tired later).

Brain Change:

- Add things that motivate me.

- Change my self-talk by listening to Affirmations. (This is new to me but I'm going to give it a try.) I'll record 3 minutes of affirmation and listen to it every morning as early as possible.
- Record 3 minutes of affirmation pertaining to letting myself down and listen to it when I feel disappointed in myself.

Reward:

- Use WILD CARDS (free days I can skip w/o failing)
- Use my paper Planner book by my bed to keep track of what I get done each day (info taken off Jiffy Time Tracker app).
- When I do well I will treat myself to playing King's Quest. For every 5 hours of writing work I get 1 hour to play.

My plan for disappointment in myself is:

I'm going to record a "Don't-Give-Up-Affirmation" to listen to that goes like this:

I will show others what an intimate relationship with Jesus looks like for me. I will map out some of the relational spiritual realm for others and help lead them there. I will finish the basics so I can focus on writing. I love learning new things. This is not hard, today I'm going to take the time to focus and make it happen. This is a priority today because I know that I was created for this. But I will also love on Mama and help my children and I will accept that some of my time will be focused there and I don't need to feel dissatisfied, because my family is very important to me. Thank you Holy Spirit for helping me.

My Disappointed-in-myself Affirmation:

I am a success. I am in a season where, while writing is a priority, I'm getting to love on Mama and to help my children, so I accept that some of my time will be focused there. I am giving of myself to others in my family and I accept gratefully that this is for today and there will be other times to write. I am an amazing person who works hard but I accept that I haven't felt like I've done my best and I am doing better now. I am living up to my expectation and I know that God loves me and that tomorrow I will do even better.

Thank you Holy Spirit for helping me.

As I've followed this I've learned that:

- 500 words/day doesn't work, it showed me that a daily goal is too hard with my life so unstructured. I need a time-oriented goal instead of what is produced.
- Putting in time (10 hours of writing a week) is a commitment I can meet but it doesn't make me productive. I need to add a specific goal to that time. For example, "Write 10 hours a week and during that 10 hours I'll get a blog posted."
- I waste time waiting on people, I don't get involved in working because I'll have to stop anytime. Like waiting on my mom to get home and I want to leave the door unlocked for her but I don't want to be in the basement with the door unlocked so I sit up there when the time gets close, or waiting on the girls to come today and it turned out to be over an hour before they got here. But I didn't get started on something because they'd arrive anytime ...
- I need a wild card or two to allow me to miss without feeling like I've "failed," I can't commit to every single day.
- I don't want to change my day to accommodate more writing time. This was a big revelation to me. I thought that I piddled my time away, wasting it. But after filling out a Time Sheet for a week I've realized that I don't waste time, but I do spend a lot of time with family & friends and with helping my mom. So I have two choices: 1) I can keep my life the same way it is and enjoy it and treat my writing as a habit, or 2) I can add writing time to my day outside of a "normal" day (where I struggle to get much writing in). So I've decided to do something I've never been willing to do before—get up earlier to write before I fix breakfast for my mom and me. I'm going to get up at 5:45 every morning and work from 6:00 to 7:00 AM. I need to do this every day because I'm building a habit—a routine of getting up to work every day. If I miss or give myself wild cards here my body won't ever set its circadian rhythms to a set bedtime and waking time. This will be an interesting experiment ...
- I've gotten up and worked an hour before breakfast for a week now, every day, and I am stunned at how much I'm enjoying it. These things have surprised me:

- How easy it's been to do (after I'm standing up out of bed).
- That when I check my alarm the night before to make sure it's set, I'm excited with the anticipation of getting up to write.
- That once downstairs, fifteen minutes after waking from a deep sleep and feeling sleepy, I can instantly start writing and be immersed in it, in the groove and working with a focus I didn't know I had.
- How much writing I've gotten done that I wouldn't have done without doing this.
- I go to bed at night feeling satisfied with my day, no matter how busy it's been.
- How easily I've slipped into the routine of it, it seemed to come natural even on the first morning.
- How peaceful it is working that early in the morning, at night I have adrenaline but in the morning isn't that, just a quiet peacefulness.