

CHAPTER 11
Live Strategically

DISCIPLINE NUMBER ELEVEN

The noble warrior forms strategies to overcome spiritual enemies and acts according to such strategies in order to live in love and integrity.



Lesson

The great Chinese military strategist, Sun Tzu, says, “Do not depend on the enemy not coming; depend rather on being ready for him. Do not depend on the enemy not attacking; depend rather on having a position that cannot be attacked.” Building a strategy for your life, especially in areas where you feel you are challenged, is a sure way of making your life easier and protecting yourself from needless mistakes. Often people take life as if they have blinders covering their eyes, running into one snare after another, ambushed by their own personal demons, because they don’t look beyond the immediate and they don’t plan for the future. To live strategically means to anticipate what may come, and to plan for it. If one knows he or she will be entering into territory which may bring about trial, disruption, surprise attack from within or without, one can make preparations, and avoid the potential clash, or plan to face the inner demons which may arise head-on, but with a set of choices set out ahead of time--a strategy for victory.

To use strategy in spiritual warfare is to be prepared for spiritual conflict in all its variety and whenever it may occur. There is no such thing as complete preparedness. But through learning how to deal with particular spiritual enemies, gaining insights and truths from revelation, or warrior sages throughout the ages, and learning and adjusting from one’s own experience, one will be more prepared to deal with the circumstances of spiritual warfare. Having a plan, based on such knowledge, will certainly increase the odds of achieving victory in spiritual struggle, no matter what that struggle may be.

For instance, on how to avoid walking into situations where a destructive tendency may be roused or excited, one needs a plan. If one suffers from alcohol addiction, it is not good to hang out with people who are not sober, or to go to bars, or even social gathering where there will be drinking, at least not in the first stages of one’s sobriety. Though it may be hard for some to believe, it is very often that the newly recovering alcoholic does not have a plan, and ends up entering situations where the temptation to drink is too great, and learns the hard way that a well thought out plan is needed in order to achieve lasting sobriety. The alcoholic needs to think through where and with whom he or she can associate. The alcoholic needs a strategy to stay sober, based on the wisdom and experience of others as well as personal experience. The idea that one needs to carefully choose where one will spend time is beginning to build a strategy on the ancient warrior rule: Stay on ground which is unassailable to the enemy.

In order to live strategically one must have patience and take the time for reflection, to gain that oversight of one’s life which will help with the plan. In spiritual battle, even as in time of war, gaining knowledge is gaining intelligence. With a view of one’s life, where issues arise, what terrain seems to bring out the demons, how one’s strength diminishes or judgement becomes unclear in certain situations, the warrior can then begin to plan out how best to approach these issues, before they arise. Then, when issues arise, instead of acting impulsively, in the chaos and obscurity of battle, the warrior can act according to plans made and strategies already in place. The result is more victories in times of trial, less surprise attacks, and a much more productive and focussed way of living. This is the way of the noble warrior, acting from awareness and preparedness.

Gems from the Masters

Immature strategy
Is the cause of grief.

Miyamoto Musashi

To win a hundred victories
In a hundred battles
Is not the highest excellence;
The highest excellence
Is to subdue the enemy
Without fighting at all.

Sun Tzu

Each affliction has its own peculiarities
And each requires its own remedies.

Lorenzo Scupoli

If we take one thing to be the truth
And cling to it,
Even if truth itself comes in person
And knocks at our door,
We won't open it.
For things to reveal themselves to us,
We need to be ready to abandon our views about them.

Thich Nhat Hanh

It is only the one
Who has no plan and takes his enemy lightly
Who is certain to be captured by him.

Sun Tzu

In strategy
It is important to see distant things
As if they were close
And to take a distance view
Of close things.

Miyamoto Musashi

Questions for Personal Reflection and Discussion

How has having a plan helped you in your life and how has not having a plan hurt?

What do you wish to accomplish in your lifetime? List a few steps you need to take to get there.

What area in your life most needs a strategic plan right now?



Meditation

Close your eyes, relax. Clear your mind of all unnecessary thoughts. Allow yourself an opportunity to explore the following scenario. Imagine you have received a notice that you will be receiving a respectable sum of money. An eccentric millionaire has given you an opportunity to receive ten thousand dollars in cash if you diligently follow his specific directions to procure the cash. It's hard to believe, but you have checked out the source and it is true. You will receive this cash if you follow along with his plan. You are told that someone will give you the money, but that you need to be at the train station at 9:00 AM the following day, and you must catch the 9:05 train to the nearest city in order to collect the funds. You could certainly use the cash, so you make the time available and the following morning you head to the station, arriving several minutes before 9:00 AM. You buy a ticket for the 9:05 train and hurry to the platform where the train you are to board will soon be arriving. You look around to see if someone is watching you. The platform is empty. You wonder how this can be, since there are only a few minutes left until the train arrives at the station. Perhaps you are at the wrong platform, but you check your ticket, and all seems to be in order. As you wait you finally see some people hurrying onto the platform. Several business men and women, a few families, and a group of young ruffians who seem to be looking over the crowd quite suspiciously. You look at your watch, and the time is 9:05. You can hear the train approaching the platform. As you see the train pull into view you notice a little girl right beside you crying. The train pulls to the station. As other board the train and the platform empties you realize that the little girl doesn't seem to be with her parents or guardian. You realize she must be lost. You gaze around the platform and it is empty. The conductor gives the signal that the train is leaving. The girl looks up at you and tells you she is lost. The train begins the process of releasing its breaks. It's now or never to board that train. What do you do? Do you leave the little girl and board the train? Do you decide to give up the money and stay with the little girl? Or is there another way where you can help the little girl and collect the money? Think about it. . . . Time is up. What did you do? But more important, why did you take that action?



Process

Get a piece of paper and a pencil. Sit quietly and reflect on your life. What is it that you really love to do for other people? What gives you joy and a sense of self-worth? On the top of the paper write in bold letters: DREAM. Underneath that, write down one dream you have about yourself in being of useful service that you would love to have come true? Concentrate on this area. Take some more time for reflection. What blocks you from achieving this goal and being this person? Perhaps it is some internal block, perhaps a certain situation or relationship issue which blocks you. Underneath your first answer write in bold letters: BLOCKS. Under this category write down the specific blocks which prevent you from fulfilling your dream. Use one sentence or word per BLOCK. Take your time. Reflect upon each of these BLOCKS. How can you overcome them or remove them? Under each of the BLOCKS write down in bold letters: STRATEGY. Underneath STRATEGY write down three measurable actions you can take to help remove each particular BLOCK. Do this for each BLOCK you have identified on paper. You now have formed the beginning of strategy to fulfill your dream. If in a group, get together and share what you have learned from this process.



What are your closing thoughts about Strategy?

End this lesson with a prayer.

