

# Lifelines

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Topic: Distractors

## **Ignore the Yapping Dogs!**

**By Dr. Ed Jordan**

All of us can get a lot more done, if we can discipline ourselves to ignore the myriad of diversions that come our way. The difference between highly successful people and semi-productive people, is often found in the presence, or absence, of their self-discipline to keep their eye and mind on completing the current objectives. One reason this is so difficult, is that successful people are people who notice things others might not notice. So noticing, and fixing a problem that needs fixing is made more difficult by trying to lead people who don't have the vision nor acumen of the leader.

Most leaders have to overcome the critics and naysayers who feel themselves more qualified to lead, than the leader. This happens in churches, in businesses and workplaces, and also in governments. Everyone thinks they know what to do, better than the person already halfway through effectively solving the problem. Many office workers spend their days criticizing their bosses, or undermining the overall work by criticizing the leaders or the whole idea. Some of this is natural, but some of it is purposeful sabotage. Regardless, it happens daily at every level of life.

Parents doing their best to keep their children on track in their development towards maturity, are often countered by social-media, or by others with different agendas than the parents. It is a tough job to implement a clear plan for developing maturity in our children, when each child has their own unique needs, and when everyone is a critic.

Pastors must often take "unpopular" positions in leading a church. Local government officials face the same dilemma, when their job is to do what is best for the people they lead, but many of the people can't grasp the complexity of what the leader has already considered, including all the levels of issues, obstacles, and pitfalls of the decision, nor the complexity of the planning required to execute the plan successfully. Many critics actually don't have a clue about what to do to solve a particular problem, let alone the discipline to develop a solid plan and implement it, yet they mount resistance by coming up behind the leader and nipping at his or her heels, yapping, snipping, and making a lot of noise.

Dr. Richard Jackson, who pastored First Baptist Church of Phoenix for many years, once shared this "yapping dog" illustration at a Pastor's Conference in Nevada. As a pastor he frequently went to contact people in a home with a dog in the yard. He would enter the yard, then go to the door to speak with the people about Jesus. He learned to ignore the yapping dogs, because the importance of the mission to help someone meet Jesus, and obtain Eternal Life, was too important to let yapping dogs stop or derail the process.

Today I read Proverbs 4:25-27 (NLT) which says: "Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil." When you are a leader, seek out what God wants you to do, and how He wants it done. Then go do it; don't let the yapping dogs who criticize everything you do distract you. They are yapping because they are afraid of you, and want to stop you from accomplishing what you came to do. When you are on a God-given mission, find out what God wants you to do, and how He tells you to do it. Make the plans regarding how best to accomplish the

goal, then implement them. Look straight ahead, with your eyes, and all your abilities, fixed on successfully accomplishing the agenda as planned.

There will always be critics, dissenters, or antagonists who wish to stop you, or to distract you from accomplishing what God has led you to do. But all of us will answer to God for what we do, and why. Let God deal with the yappers. Your job, and mine, is to commit our lives and abilities to daily accomplish what God gives us to do, in the wisest way possible. We don't have time to get distracted by yappers. They will still be yapping after we finish the task, and move on to the next one.

Keep your eyes fixed on God, follow Him, step where He steps, and don't get sidetracked by distractors. Furthermore, if you know someone doing God's mission, protect their back so they can continue leading us to success!

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