



Find Your Strongest Life: What the Happiest and Most Successful Women Do Differently

Marcus Buckingham

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Read *Find Your Strongest Life* and discover: How to make the most of the role you were born to play, How to get others to understand who you really are, The successful strategies of other women like you. Check out what women are already saying about *Find Your Strongest Life*.

Brooke: When I read the "Ten Myths" that opened the book, I was completely hooked. The statistics are interesting and fresh. I also related to the problem that sets up the book: "Which parts of me should I cut out?" As I read, I could see myself in the Marcus's big-picture analysis and statistics. The early part of the book made me anticipate a breakthrough. And Marcus delivered. Overall, he explains a woman's dilemma perfectly . . . in fresh terms with a unique spin. The main ideas in each chapter were so engaging. Chapter 6 in particular is worth the price of the book. I have already started looking for strong moments in my life, and I want to tell every woman I know to do the same. It is definitely life-changing.

Rebecca: It was really good. It was awesome. And to be honest, perfect timing for my life. I'm REALLY in that place. I can't tell you how badly I've been depressed for the last several months just trying to figure out what to do differently so I'm not so miserable. On one hand, I'm grateful I have a job still. I have a mortgage and bills and all that. But on the other hand...I can't continue to work at a job that gets me nowhere, is not rewarding, not challenging, and mentally drains me. I really have started avoiding my family because I've become so rude and snippy. It's a bad cycle. BUT...God willing this year (sooner than later) I will be able to put this behind me and do what I love :) Even if it's making half as much money. Thanks for thinking of me to read this. I needed it!

Delaney: I was on a plane as I finished reading the manuscript. I was going to be with my daughter who is a law student. As I finished the pages, Marcus helped me gain a new understanding of myself that stood out like a neon sign: I am the person who helps others build infrastructure, get through situations, and set everything right. It goes beyond motherhood. I am an event planner by birth. I see big pictures and the components necessary to get from vision to execution. The content helped me to reframe my own thinking. Very helpful. I'm excited to take the online test and see which role I'm born to play.

Jennifer: As a working mother, I found the concept of the book fascinating. There are daily struggles of trying to balance being the perfect wife, mother, and employee, and the book helped me truly understand how to navigate all those demands.

Find Your Strongest Life: What the Happiest and Most Successful Women Do Differently Details

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Lori says

will be honest I am struggling with this review. There is wisdom in this book that I believe every woman can glean from. I believe it is beneficial to take The Strong Life Test because it does give you a great idea where your strengths lie. Marcus Buckingham has been a Women of Faith guest speaker and you can find this book sold in Christians books stores.

But this is not a Christian book.

I am not a feminist, so when Buckingham began in the introduction talking about Gloria Steinem and how the phrase "You can have it all" was misunderstood, I admit I approached the rest of the book cautiously. This is not a feminist book, Marcus Buckingham tries to find out why since 1972 women's overall level of happiness has dropped. He found through his extensive research "greater educational, political, and employment opportunities have corresponded to decreases in life happiness for women."

Marcus tackles topics like:

How to Be True to Yourself
Find your Strong-Moments
Accepting What You Find
Strive for Imbalance

Throughout his book he quotes people like Anna Quindlen, Oprah Winfrey, Maya Angelou, and Sarah Bernhardt. For me personally these would be the last people who I would seek advice from. I did not hear Marcus at the A Grand New Day Women of Faith's conference, but after reading his book I feel like--I as a reader-- am missing something.

Why is this book promoted by Women of Faith?

Why did Thomas Nelson publish this self-help book?

Where is God in all this?

These are questions I asked myself while reading Buckingham's self-help book. It was an encouraging book, it did have some inspiring stories, and it did encourage women to find what they love. These are all good things, but I feel it misses the HUGE element of seeking God's will for your life.

If this book was a regular book I picked up off the shelf I would tell you that it was encouraging, with great stories of women who were not happy where they were and found a way to turn things around to live a strong life.

But if you approach this book thinking it is biblically based because of being promoted by Women of Faith and published by Thomas Nelson, you will be sadly disappointed.

Catherine Gillespie says

In Find Your Strongest Life: What the Happiest and Most Successful Women Do Differently, Marcus Buckingham argues convincingly that instead of chasing after some elusive idea of “balance,” we should identify our strengths and be discriminating, selective, and intentional in how we spend our time in our various roles to make sure that we’re bringing our best to every aspect of our lives.

Buckingham defines strong moments as those activities that make you feel effective and capable, where you feel flow, where the thought of getting to spend time on them or improve at them makes you feel excited and optimistic. Weak moments are the opposite. Weak moment activities make you feel panicked, incompetent, or numb.

I thought Buckingham’s application of those definitions to balance and time management were insightful. He points out that when you are working in your strengths, you don’t feel as crunched, but that no matter how good your time management is, if you’re filling up those boundaries with activities that don’t strengthen you, you’ll still feel off kilter.

{Read my more detailed review on A Spirited Mind}

Cathy Allen says

Last Friday evening while waiting for a girlfriend to join me for happy hour, I sent her the following text: "Retiring to back patio with Marcus and vino. C U soon." Vino, she knew... but who is Marcus? "The only man in the world who understands me!" And it's true... to any woman out there who is inclined to be put out because yet another man has written yet another book for women I say "This is Marcus Buckingham! He gets it! Plus, he has tons and tons of survey data backing up his conclusions." The Buckingham formula is simple and delightful: there is nothing wrong with any of us that cannot be improved by what is right with any of us. The path to great success, to highest achievement in learning or earning or living happily ever after, is across the lush green field of our unique strengths. So identify them, honor them, refine them, offer them, and employ them in every aspect of your life. That is much more fun than wallowing in all the unfixable aspects of your personality or trying to develop a talent that just isn't there.

Like other Buckingham treasures, this one comes with an assessment tool - this time free - and this time helping us understand our strongest life roles. It's reading the descriptors - based on comparison data with millions of other women around the world - that made me feel understood. I know the advice is correct, too, because I have made important improvements in my life after applying the learnings from previous Buckingham books.

BTW - my lead strength role is ADVISOR (with a MOTIVATOR back up) - so take MY advice: go get this book, take the assessment, pour yourself a glass of vino, and spend some time getting to know and appreciate the best you!

Britni says

The book is written for women on how to be happier by finding your strongest life, which Buckingham describes as living your life for and through your strengths rather than dwelling on your weaknesses. He

explains that everyone basically falls into one of nine categories - you can find out which category you fall into by taking this test - and that we should be using that part of ourselves in all categories of our lives or we're always going to be wanting something else.

I read through the first few chapters and was intrigued with this idea. Then I took the test, and found that I was a caretaker as my first role and advisor as my second. Both of those actually fit me perfectly and made reading the rest of the book more inspiring and motivating. Everything he said made sense and made me think again about all of the commitments I've made and whether or not I really get to be myself while doing them. And for the ones I don't, it made me really think about why I'm doing them. And that I may not do them for much longer because I like feeling successful and useful, and there are too many things in my life that are just that- things that take up my time but give me nothing back.

So I would definitely recommend this book to everyone. It actually comes out today and was very insightful for me to think about unbalancing my life, leaning it towards the things I'm strong in to make it a better one. 5 stars.

John says

But he also has good news: every woman can surmount her challenges and live a full life by listening to, living in, and being led by her strengths.

This is Buckingham's latest book on the subject of strengths, and it is directly targeted towards women. He starts out by spewing out a slew of sad statistics. He points out how women, as a population, are sadder than men, sadder as they grow older, and sadder now than they were 40 years ago. They are also more stressed and far more likely to suffer clinical depression than their male counterparts.

Why is this? He argues that both the complexities and responsibilities of a modern woman's life have mushroomed, and the push to "have it all" but lead a "balanced" life have led to a massive stress overload.

What is the solution? Buckingham offers a strengths-based life as a path out of the jungle the 21st century woman finds herself entangled in. For those unfamiliar with his previous works, he defines a person's "strengths" as actions that give a person a feeling of satisfaction & accomplishment. These are specific areas that are hard-wired into a person and stay fairly constant throughout life- the roles they were born to play.

The secret to a fulfilling life is to discover your areas of strengths, to nurture them, and to let them guide you. Chapter by chapter he discusses strategies for searching for "strong moments" (specific times you feel "in the zone") and then intentionally "imbalancing" your life towards them. There are also specific tactics chapters for career, relationships, and kids.

I think the book suffers from some inevitable tunnel vision: while I believe living in your strengths is an important component to a fulfilling life, it is only a part. He also makes trusting one's feelings a major focus of the book, and (sorry, Marcus) feelings can't always be trusted. Finally, he skitters too close to "Law of Attraction" like concepts in some of the material for my tastes.

All in all, Find Your Strongest Life is, (couldn't resist it!), a strong book. Reading and applying its principles will indeed help women navigate the jungle of 21st century living to find their strongest life. I found it useful myself, both for its universal principles and also to help me understand the challenges that women face today. Highly recommended.

Heidi says

[I originally published this on my work blog <http://www.heidirettig.com/blog>]

This year, I'm giving all my girlfriends a copy of Marcus Buckingham's book, *Find Your Strongest Life: What the Happiest and Most Successful Women Do Differently*.

I first heard about this book from Danielle LaPorte. I had purchased a digital copy of Danielle's Firestarter program for entrepreneurs, believing that the language of entrepreneurship is the most helpful approach for what professionals in the arts community "do."

Before I pass any program on to clients, I try it out for myself. Without getting too touchy-feely, let me just say that I wasn't really prepared for how deeply some of this reading would affect my own thinking. 2010 was a tough year. I cracked open the Firestarter sessions and Marcus Buckingham's book in the middle of tough projects, tough family concerns, budget adjustments, and generally murky waters. I'm not healed, exactly, but I'm definitely Thinking. With a capital "T."

Because Marcus Buckingham asked me a question that really hit home: "How can you design your life so that, week by week, it strengthens you?" You know this question in your heart. What we're doing – straddling the chasm between work and what we really love – in high heels – is hard. Really hard. And chances are, no one really understands exactly how many compromises you make each day against your art, your health, or your soul in favor of making a living and taking care of others, or how much that drains your spirit.

Buckingham says, "You can't do this...[you become] disconnected from the specifics of who [you] are, and what [you] need, and allow your lives to be led by other people's wants. And just like that, they slide into a harmful life-pattern, a self-reinforcing downward spiral that is as devastating as it is commonplace."

The concept of "balance" is useless, argues Buckingham. To pursue "balance" is to spend your life searching for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It's never going to happen if you run a business and you've got a husband and kids. It's a waste of time to even try for balance. It's also the end product that all those other work/life self-help books seem to be selling.

The yellow-brick road is a path of attention. Pay attention to the moments that strengthen you in work and in life, and make the effort to create more of those strong moments. They're all you get, so make as many as you possibly can.

To get there is a life task, and you're going to have to figure out who you are, what drains you, what makes you stronger, and how you are allowing the expectations of others to shape your world. Then, Buckingham helps you sketch out a plan to imbalance your life toward your strengths.

It's powerful stuff, because it's all about finding (or rediscovering) YOUR truth. We've been raised to respect the judgments of parents, teachers, and friends about our abilities above our own self-assessment.

Other people's expectations for you can be extraordinarily persuasive, and they can waste years of your life. I always thought I was a rebel, but I think I spent the first ten years of my career trying to be the person my mother thought I should be. (And no, it still didn't make her happy with me.) In the end, my truth leaves me

with just a few skills and a few choices – good ones – and if I’m paying attention to my truth, I’m freed from the burden of confusion about what to do next. I know who I am, I know who I love and what I love and that points me toward what I want to do.

“Look closely and you’ll see that only a very few choices actually honor your truth. These very few choices are the ones you must make. And when you make them, it will be with the confidence that you are being true to the truest part of you. Acceptance of who you are cures you of excess choice.” –Marcus Buckingham

Buy this book. There is a Kindle edition and a special chapter about husbands. And yes, Marcus Buckingham does tell you how to go about identifying your “strong” moments.

When you’re ready to talk about it – let me know.

Kelly says

I had to read it with all of the rumblings about women's happiness and after finishing it, I felt like much of the media hype had nothing to do with the real content of focus of the book and that it's discussion of strengths in relation to your work and life as a whole has the potential to be useful and productive for women (though I do wish he and others were also addressing men's need to discover what their strongest life looks and feels like). The author does note the influence of factors (mostly) outside of women's control, such gender roles, the pay gap, and a culture that does not strive to support families through infrastructure or policy change. I don't know that happiness as framed by the recent media discussion around the book is the true focus of the book. I feel like Buckingham is challenging women to fight for lives they want to be living by walking them through a process of questioning and practice that aims to connect women with their version of happiness and satisfaction, while simultaneously acknowledging that it isn't a constant and that it does take bravery, patience and a willingness to take the risk and go off script.

Andrea says

I read Find Your Strongest Life by Marcus Buckingham as a member of the Thomas Nelson Book Review Bloggers program.

This book was insightful and had many helpful suggestions on how to find my strengths and ignore my weaknesses. Mr. Buckingham has created an online test to help find your strengths and when I took it I was pleased to see how right on it was.

While I found this book helpful, it is lacking in a few important areas:

This book was an inspiration but it was not “Inspirational” or Christ focused. It mentioned God less than 5 times, and never suggested how to plug into God for that extra measure of strength. Instead it encouraged you to find the strengths inside yourself. This is not what I expected from a Christian Publisher like Thomas Nelson.

The suggestion to ignore weakness is great if that weakness is not caused by hurt or pain. Not once did Mr. Buckingham give suggestions on how to find healing in order to move on to a successful life. I associate hurt to walking around on a broken leg, if that leg isn’t healed properly you will never be able to use it to hold you up and be your strength. Hurts like legs need to heal in order to become strengths.

There are no suggestions on what to do in extreme situations. If someone is hurting you either physically, mentally, or emotionally, thinking positively about that person will rarely fix the issues.

If your life is pretty good, but you feel the need for more happiness, Find Your Strongest Life by Marcus Buckingham is perfect for you.

If you are looking for suggestions on plugging into God's strength, or if you are hurting or being hurt and need help, Thomas Nelson has published many other books that will speak to you and help you find healing.

Katie Casey says

In his latest non-fiction book, Marcus Buckingham shares some good old common sense advice and maybe some not-so-common sense secrets about (as the subtitle declares) "what the happiest and most successful women do differently." He advises his readers not to seek perfection or balance or even a happiness rating of 10; but instead, he illustrates ways to find what your real strengths are and how you can capitalize them in the workplace, in your home, and in your life.

And who doesn't want to be one of the elusive "happiest and most successful women"? I know it sounded appealing to me. The problem is success is pretty difficult to rate. Buckingham uses a Maya Angelou quote in one of his chapters that captures this idea: "Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it." My issue with this book, as a Christian woman, is that some of the paths Marcus Buckingham suggests you follow in order to achieve success would not leave me liking myself in the slightest. For an example, he has ZERO positive things to say about being a stay-at-home mom – in fact, most of his examples of unhappy, unsuccessful women were those who traded career for family. I was and am uncomfortable with the thrust of this book teaching a "me first" way of thinking that does not align with what I believe the Bible teaches ("He must become greater, I must become less" - John 3:30, NIV).

My recommendation: take the test at StrongLifeTest.com, find out what your role(s) are, apply some of the principles in this book, but rely on the Bible for truth.

-Katie Casey

Thomas Nelson Book Review Blogger

<http://brb.thomasnelson.com/>

Shannon says

Another great book by Marcus Buckingham. I'd probably give it 4.5 stars. It was a fast read, too. Some highlights/passages from his book:

- Take the Strong Life test online.
- Don't do more to feel more. You will wind up feeling less.
- To find the right career, look backward.
- There are not thousands of possible 'right' choices. Look closely and you'll see that only a very few choices actually honor your truth. Acceptance of who you are cures you of excess choice.
- There's nothing inherently fulfilling about 'balance'. When you're 'balanced' you're at a standstill. It's not worth striving for. It's the wrong life goal. Strive for fullness instead.
- Strength in one part of your life does not compensate for weakness in others. Each part of your life must

contain strong moments. If not, over time, it will suck the energy out of all the good parts of your life.

This book coupled with his StrengthFinder books really gives a person a clear picture of what they're good at and where they should spend their energies.

Darlene says

Very rarely am I caught off guard by a book. Before I received a message from Thomas Nelson, as one of their book review bloggers, that this book would be made available to those who were already reading something (usually it's one at a time) I had already decided that this wasn't a book I wanted to read. I had looked through the selections available and something about the title--perhaps it's the editor in me that doesn't like the combination of "strongest" and "life"...something about that irks me...don't really know why--just didn't appeal to me. The thought that this was also written by a man and I questioned how effectively he could really relate to what women are going through also made me look for something else. Then, when this offer came up to review it when I already had a book for review, I decided why not. Perhaps it would be helpful.

I had never heard of Marcus Buckingham.

I was looking forward to a spiritually uplifting book, that would affirm what God's will was for women (after all this was publisher that specializes in this sort of thing), that would point out even through the examples he gave of women who contacted Oprah after that one show, God can still use those situations; how he pointed out to those women and shared the gospel with them. How he used examples of women in the Bible and Scriptures to validate God's view of women and how He created us and how He views us.

The points in the opening chapter were really very interesting. I was intrigued by them and agreed with them -- that women are more stressed out now with all the choices. That "women's lib" for all it's whoopla really hasn't improved life that much for women. We're often too stressed out running from one thing to the other that we can't enjoy life anymore. It's been so ingrained in us that we have to work to be happy...when that's not necessarily true for everyone.

But as I read through the introduction and the first couple of chapters it occurred to me there was no mention about the Christian experience. What advantages Christian women have over non-Christian women. I can't imagine what it would be like to go through all that I am without having a relationship in Christ. That's what I expected to see.

Perhaps it was because this book was written by a man and from a man's perspective. It's impossible to completely get into a woman's psyche from a male vantage point. Women are very much emotional creatures and I found this book too analytical and not emotional enough. The only time I found my emotions engaged was reading the quotes from those women who contacted Oprah.

This is not a book I would highly recommend, though I can't say I wouldn't recommend it at all. As demonstrated by the number of higher reviews, there were some people who liked it. But it is not a book will be recommending for our church library. As a spiritual resource for busy moms and women, it was highly disappointing.

Lori McD says

Excellent book - really synthesizes its message without being preachy or overly cliched. Buckingham is a dynamic speaker in-person, and the book manages to capture his passion, intelligence, knowledge, and charismatic motivation. Buckingham CARES - he really, truly wants people to find and focus on their STRENGTHS, building upon those rather than focusing on shoring up weakness.

He redefines strength and weakness, too, in an eye-opening, catchy way. Even if you have a skill or talent in a particular area, if it drains you rather than energizes you, it is not a strength -- it is a weakness. And Buckingham provides lots of illustrations on how to minimize weakness and focus on strengths.

This isn't just your average do-gooder, think-positive, self-help book. It's a JOURNEY that allows women to honestly evaluate their likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, and think about how to make the most of their strengths to be happier, more content, more fulfilled life in every area - personal and professional. You might not know exactly what you want to do when you grown up, and you might not have all the answers to that question when you finish the book. But you have the TOOLS to set yourself upon the path that makes the finding the answers to the questions that much better... that much more fun!

Angelic says

I'm usually skeptical when a man writes a book telling women how to be happier and more successful, but this was a very good read!! There were a lot of helpful tips - what you focus on amplifies. I even took the strong life test to find out my lead and supporting roles, then reread the parts of the books that describe what those roles mean. I am definitely interest in adding this to my collection.

Cara says

I took the quiz that accompanies this book, and when I saw my result, I burst into tears. Caretaker! Noooooo!

Apparently, the author realizes how much this sucks, because he says, "Don't fight your caregiver role--you'll never shake it. Instead learn to locate your own satisfaction in how the other person comes to view you... a consistently supportive presence." p. 105 (Sounds like it sucks to me.)

Notes

p. 54 Signs you're living a strong life: successful, instinctively looking forward to tomorrow, growing and learning, you feel like your needs are fulfilled.

p. 143 Strong women "believe that the purpose of their situation in life is to teach them who they are and what they can offer the world. They never give up on this purpose." => very little judging, ruminating, second-guessing, or beating themselves up.

p. 246 what to do about feeling overwhelmed

Make a list, group stuff into categories, look at what makes you feel strong and awesome, do some of that first. Whatever you're doing, focus on that thing.

p. 248 setbacks

think "build back," not "bounce back"

be patient with yourself, keep moving toward a goal or doing something satisfying, find someone to help.

look for things you can still do, do them, and be proud of yourself. Use the crisis to clarify who you are and what's important to you.

p. 251 how to decide

Instead of listing pros and cons, consider:

- "- Which choice will enable me to experience more strong-moments in each aspect of my life?
- Which choice will provide me the best opportunity to learn more in my areas of strength?
- Which decision will allow me to make the greatest contribution in my areas of strength?"

Tânia Sequinho says

Tive um caso de amor ódio com este livro. Sinto que aprendi poderosas dicas e conselhos que irei guardar comigo para sempre, mas ao mesmo tempo senti que a escrita do mesmo era demasiado repetitiva e longa em alguns capítulos. Mesmo assim, acho que será um livro que guardarei para ter à mão sempre que precise de um bom conselho ou orientação.
