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The Path

9. Sustaining Creative Tension

This chapter is about the discipline of keeping a vision alive once you've formed it. It argues that the mind wants to reconcile 'what is' with 'what could be,' and it produces more of whatever you focus on most. The author illustrates this with a personal story about setting and reaching a money goal.

Key takeaways

- Hold two pictures at once — What Currently Is and What Could Be — like a 'picture within a picture' TV screen. Robert Fritz calls this sustaining structural tension.
- The mind creates more of whatever image it dwells on, so focusing on 'what could be' begins to make it real; focusing on 'what is' just repeats it.
- The tension between the two feels unbearable to many, so they 'turn off' the future vision and slide back to the status quo.
- Writing a goal down and keeping it constantly in view works: the author went from \$36,000 to over \$86,000 the year she posted the figure on her mirror.

- Success means thriving in the 'creative tension zone' — most of the work is carving in the studio (like Michelangelo), not receiving applause.
- Working toward your own vision is creative tension; living someone else's vision is just random, meaningless stress.

Passages worth keeping

"People who focus only on 'what is' will create more of 'what is.' People who focus mostly on 'what could be' will begin to create 'what could be.'"

The core mechanism of the whole chapter.

How it connects

The chapter reframes faith as focused, believing attention: keeping the vision before you is a form of the belief Scripture ties to receiving.

Scripture referenced

- **Matthew 25:29** -- 'The one who has receives more' — cited for getting what you focus on.
- **Matthew 9:29** -- 'As you believe, so shall you receive' — belief shapes outcome.
- **1 Timothy 6:10** -- 'The love of money is the root of all evil' — the author's inner conflict about money.