

A GUIDEPOSTS OUTREACH PUBLICATION

How To Make A New Start

BY

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

About the author . . .

Norman Vincent Peale, often called the “minister-to-millions,” was senior minister at the historic Marble Collegiate Church in New York City for 52 years.

Dr. Peale and his wife, Ruth Stafford Peale, founded Guideposts in 1945, an interfaith ministry dedicated to helping people from all walks of life achieve their personal and spiritual potential. Previously, in 1940, they founded Peale Center for Christian Living, which is dedicated to continuing Dr. Peale’s legacy of positive thinking and faith. In 1995, the two organizations merged and Peale Center is now the Outreach Division of Guideposts.

Dr. Peale wrote 46 books, including the classic best-seller, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, which has demonstrated that a change in a person’s attitude will change his or her life.

Throughout his life, Dr. Peale emphasized the individual’s ability to overcome life’s problems and seize its opportunities, through faith in God and belief in oneself. He proved this in his own life. Although he was a minister of the Gospel, and believed in God, he didn’t always believe in himself.

As he matured from a shy boy into manhood, his faith led him to the conviction that God had placed a portion of His power in all of us. He reasoned that if this was the case, then each of us was capable of doing great things, so he wholeheartedly embraced the Bible as an infallible guide for creative living. This was Dr. Peale’s message: If you believe that the power of God within you is equal to any of life’s difficulties, then a rewarding life will be yours.

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INTRODUCTION

THE AIM of this booklet is to give you the inspiration and the tools you will need to make a new start, to help put the past behind you, and to infuse your mind and thoughts with new energy and resolve. Whoever you are, whatever your circumstance, you can begin again!

You may be thinking that, because you are too old, or your situation is too hopeless, or you don't have the resources you need, you cannot start over again. If that is what you believe, you simply do not realize the ideas and the comeback power you have inside you. You do not know the tremendous things you can do. Believe in your power to change, and you have taken the first step toward a new start.

As you read each of the following six chapters, you will experience renewed energy and confidence. For best results, commit to memory the Bible verse that begins each chapter. Repeat the verses morning and night. Practice the Positive Action Principles throughout the day.

By following these suggestions and drawing upon God's help, you will discover the real power of positive thinking. As you do so, you will change, and grow, and become all you dream of becoming.

*“I can do all things through Christ
which strengtheneth me.”
(Philippians 4:13)*

1

Re-Discover Your Genius

A SCIENCE magazine published an article that, though startling, seemed to me significant. The more I dwell on it, the more it seems true, within limits. The article declared that all normal children possess, in their infancy, qualities of genius. Mediocrity, it claims, does not appear until later in life. Children, says the article, are geniuses in miniature.

If so, what happens to the genius in most of us? Some people develop genius; others sadly lose it. Or do they? No, you never lose anything; nothing is ever forgotten. Everything you have ever seen, thought, or experienced is filed away in your mind. The genius you were born with is still there, covered up, buried. Given the proper combination of circumstances and the great insight of spiritual power, it can be released.

What you become depends on you. God has given you the ability to overcome all difficulties, to meet all situations. But you must learn to think creatively

and positively, before you can begin to get anywhere in life. To make a new start, re-examine your mental attitudes, your motivation, and your spiritual thought habits. In short, how strong is your faith?

Positive Principle 1: *Know what you want.*

To get what you want in life, you must first know what you want.

I stopped one day at a gas station. The young man who cleaned my windshield recognized me and asked if he could talk with me. I pulled my car away from the gas pump and asked, "What is on your mind?"

"Look at my job," he said. "Wiping windshields, putting air in tires, filling gas tanks. I'm sick of it."

"It is not very fascinating," I agreed, "but there is nothing more satisfying than a clean windshield." I was trying to sell him on how wonderful it is to clean a windshield right. But that created no enthusiasm.

"I want to get somewhere," he said plaintively.

"That is the way I like to hear a man talk," I said. "Precisely where do you want to get?"

"I don't know exactly," he admitted. "But I want to get somewhere."

"What can you do best?" I asked.

"I've never thought about that," he replied. "I guess I don't do anything very well."

When asked what he would like to do, he answered that he didn't know.

"Jack," I said, "you are going nowhere until you know where you want to go, what you can do best,

what you would like to do. At that point, dedicate yourself and your desires to God, and you will begin to get somewhere.”

Compare Jack’s story to that of a newspaper editor I knew. “How did you get to be editor of this paper?” I asked him, for I knew he had known poverty.

“I wanted to be,” was his answer.

“You wanted to be an editor and so you became one?”

“That’s all there is to it,” he explained. “I used to visit the newspaper office and look at the editor and feel sorry for him, because I knew I was going to take his place. And,” he added, “I printed that thought on my consciousness. On paper I wrote, ‘I am the future editor of this newspaper,’ and propped it up in front of me in my room. I had it in my notebooks in school.”

What do you think happened? Why, one day as a young man, he got a job as a printer’s devil, or apprentice, the lowliest of the low. And he gave it all he had. He learned the newspaper business from the bottom to the top. That is how Roger Fergar became editor of the Cincinnati *Enquirer*.

Positive Principle 2: *Find yourself.*

There are people everywhere who have never found themselves. We hide behind all kinds of inferiority and resentment feelings, never get out from our own self-doubt, and behave like birds in a cage. We fail to become what God meant us to be. It is terrible to go through life and never really find yourself.

I had a conversation with a woman who has achieved a distinguished and noteworthy career. I asked her about her family background.

“I never knew who my parents were,” she said. “And I had only three years of schooling.”

Yet she became one of New York City’s most successful businesswomen.

“My first job was in a cotton mill in the South, sweeping up,” she told me. “I came up from that.”

“What about the women who worked with you?” I asked. “Did you ever hear anything about them?”

“No,” she said. “I never did.”

Why did this woman come up and not the others? That is one of the most interesting questions about human nature. My theory is that those other women never found themselves, never questioned what they wanted out of life, never believed in themselves. They were never set free within themselves. They yielded to a difficult environment and were crushed by it.

Positive Principle 3: *Get motivated.*

Motivation is one of the greatest “in” words of today. What does it mean? It means coming alive, getting a sense of purpose.

A businessman I know once told me he was going to get rid of an employee because the man was completely disinterested in his job. I responded with a bit of advice I thought up on the spur of the moment. I asked the employer, “Instead of firing him out of the business, why don’t you fire him into the business?”

“You mean build a fire under him?” he asked.

“No,” I replied. “Build a fire in him. Get him excited about this business. Get him motivated.”

Fortunately, he found a way to do it. And he later said of this employee: “The man is a ball of fire.”

Okay, you may be thinking, but my job is ordinary. I don't see anything in it to get fired up about. Look deeper at your job, for if you get worked up about it, you will work your job up. Get fired up about it and you will put fire into it. Any human occupation has possibilities in it, because you have possibilities inside of you. You can do anything when you get motivated.

A young man wanted to be a banker. So he applied for a job at the bank in his village. He was hired to come in at 6 a.m. to sweep the place out, empty wastebaskets, clean the toilets—before the bank opened.

Not an attractive job, was it? No opportunity in it? Well, the young man thought differently. He decided to become the best “cleaner-outer” in the state. After work, he stayed to ask questions. He learned the banking business. And what did that get him? He became one of the most successful bankers in New York City. I know him well, as he was a member of our church.

Positive Action Principles

1. Know what you want.
2. Find yourself.
3. Get motivated.

*“Thou wilt show me the path of life.”
(Psalm 16:11)*

2

Understand Success

A WHILE ago, I made an overnight journey with a friend whose mind was occupied almost continuously with one question. He seeks information on that subject from nearly everyone he meets.

“Why is it,” he asks, “that some people succeed while others fail?” Then he relates instances of unlikely people succeeding and the same kinds of people failing.

His definition of success is mine, also, as I am sure it is yours. Success is not a matter of money. Haven’t we all known people who, possessing a great deal of money, are failures as people? And haven’t we all seen people with little money who are also failures?

Then there is the notion that every person who has achieved fame is a success. I used to believe that myself. If I saw a man’s name in the newspaper, I thought he was a success. If I saw his picture, too, I was sure he was a big success. But my mother used to say that

most of the people you read about in the papers are not successful. They have just done something different, or something bad. And, in time, I came to agree with her. If you lead a decent, respectable life, that is not news. But if you don't, that is one way to get your name in the papers.

What, then, do we mean by the word “successful”?

Who is the person who lives successfully? It is one who has solved the inner conflicts that have made him ineffective and unhappy. He is the person who has overcome the difficulties of life, risen victoriously over every obstacle; surmounted hazards; conquered the fears that plague men's lives; eliminated the hate and guilt that shrivel the soul. Such a person has learned to live with consummate success. It is the highest attainment of human experience.

The way to live successfully is not complicated, nor is it all that difficult. Nor is it beyond the reach of any one of us. If you get a thrill out of everyday living, find glory and romance in life itself, and do good work in your job, and then if you can do something to bring honorable fame, that is all to the good. But, by and large, the successful person is the one who—by the grace of God—gets the most out of himself.

How do you go about doing that?

Positive Principle 1: *Do your best.*

Many people fail to do their best because they are too intense. They live under pressure on the inside and thus press too hard on the outside.

I often remind myself of the late Branch Rickey's qualifications for a good baseball player. Mr. Rickey, the leading baseball executive of his era, was, at different times, chief of the St. Louis Cardinals, the Brooklyn Dodgers, and the Pittsburgh Pirates. He always insisted that a player must not press too hard. "The secret," he told his men, "is to love the game. Go out and do the best you can, but don't try to get your name in the headlines. Don't over-press."

I have found the same thing is true of making speeches—something I have been trying to do for a long time. I made my first speech when I was about ten. That speech was made at the Bellefontaine, Ohio, Methodist church at nine o'clock one weekday night when nobody else was around. I went into the church, stood in the pulpit, and preached a sermon to a vast congregation that wasn't there. It was the greatest sermon ever delivered in the state of Ohio. And I was the only one to hear it!

I don't know much more about public speaking now than I did then. Every time I come onto a platform, I tighten up inside. I look out at the people, and they look at me—at least they are looking in my direction. And then I fight my battle to relax. I say to myself, "You are not here to demonstrate how good you are. You are here to help people. Relax. Take it easy." Any speech that is any good is a relaxed, easy speech. That does not mean that it has no fire. It does not mean that there are no high moments. But you must love what you are doing and never press too hard.

Positive Principle 2: *Create positive images.*

Imagination is one of the greatest skills known to man. We succeed by the images, the pictures, we form in our minds. Suppose I lay an 18-inch-wide plank down in the middle of the street. Anyone could walk up and down that plank, even run on it, without falling off. But if we raise the plank 25 feet above the ground, how many of us could get across? Not many. Why?

Because your imagination tells you you can, at street level; you have an image of yourself succeeding. At the higher level, your imagination tells you you cannot; your image of yourself is one of failure. That is a simple illustration, but it applies to any undertaking in this life. Get yourself an image that, with the help of God, you can do it. Print that picture on your mind until it becomes a part of your consciousness. Then you know you can do it.

Positive Principle 3: *Commit yourself to God.*

If you commit yourself to Him, God will give you the power to do anything with yourself. But your belief has to be in-depth; no mere surface belief will suffice. It has to go down deep. To get the kind of power I am talking about, you must really believe.

Before World War II, Jimmy Go was editor and publisher of a big newspaper in Manila. He knew the Japanese had their eyes on the Philippines, so he publicly opposed them. When the war came and the Japanese invaded the Philippines, they wanted to capture Jimmy Go. So, with his family, he took to the hills.

For three years, the Go family lived in the woods. Like animals, they had to grub their food out of the earth under the darkness of the night. Their hands became torn and tough. Time after time, they narrowly missed being found by the enemy. At night, they could hear the voices of Japanese search parties. The word was: “Get Mr. Go!” But after three years, the war was over and the Go family came down from the hills.

Years later, as I sat at dinner with Jimmy and his wife, I asked him, “Jimmy, tell me, through all that critical time, how did you sustain your spirit?”

“I had my Bible,” he replied. “It was all I did have. And whenever I was troubled about what we should do—for the slightest mistake could mean death—I read the Bible; and, every time, God gave me a message. He guided me all the way.”

Not once in those three years of constant danger did God fail, because Jimmy Go was a believer.

What is the difference between Jimmy Go and some of us? He was completely committed. He really believed. He had such faith that he took God at His word.

Positive Action Principles

1. Do your best.
2. Create positive images.
3. Commit yourself to God.

*“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God,
and His righteousness; and all these things
shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33)*

3

Seek Opportunities

HAVE you ever noticed the way some people seem to attract opportunity? They are always getting new ideas, and new slants on life. Opportunities seem to flow to them, and they are surrounded by friends. They draw people to them by some irresistible magnetism, and actually bind people to them by ropes of steel. These attractive, successful, dynamic people are in every walk of life. Some are famous and others are lesser known, but they are marked people because of this magnificent quality.

Then there are those from whom opportunities always seem to fade. They never get hold of life; it eludes them. They walk their ways lonely, misunderstood, longing for fellowship in the deepest sense. Why? Because one type has found the rare quality known as magnetic power; the others have missed it.

Is this magnetic power a gift granted by Almighty God to a favored few? No. Anyone can program his

mind to attract new opportunities and friends. But how do you do it?

Positive Principle 1: *Open your mind.*

When the mind and spirit are alert and sharp, we can grasp the opportunities hovering around us all the time. I believe that everyone has within himself the ability to see through any situation. The American free enterprise system, which has developed wealth out of many minds, is one of the greatest social systems in the world. It all depends on the degree of your mind's awareness to the situations around you.

For example, there was once a man in Massachusetts who was hired to take marks off bills that had become smudged. He was given a big wad of crude rubber with which to work. He got to thinking that if he took a little piece of rubber and put it on the end of a stick, the work would be easier. Later, he had the idea of putting a bit of rubber on the end of a pencil. Now, every time you buy a pencil with an eraser on it, you are paying a royalty into his estate.

Then there was the man who had to hook up his wife's dresses everyday. Dresses used to hook from top to bottom, and he didn't like the job. It was most exasperating. He is the fellow who developed the zipper. He met a situation with a sharpened intellect.

Positive Principle 2: *Develop your personality.*

Why is it that no one ever attracted people like Jesus did? What was there about Him? He was a simple man

and He said simple things and He lived a simple life. But He drew all men unto Him. To a lesser degree, we can do the same.

A person with a magnetic personality is filled with eagerness, vitality, enthusiasm; and these qualities are infectious. Nobody can resist them. The person who attracts either opportunities or friends always has these qualities. And if you do not have them, you can get them. Cultivate them by getting close to someone in whom these qualities are dominant. You will take them into yourself. To start, practice being magnetic, eager, vital, enthusiastic, and interested. See how it begins to galvanize life for you.

I once knew a baseball pitcher who practiced this vibrancy and happiness. When he came out onto the field, he would say: "Hello, Lord! Thank You for this wonderful game of baseball. Thank You for my teammates, for my strong right arm, and for my health. Thank You for the opposing players." Then he added, "I knew I was getting somewhere the day I could say, 'Thank You, Lord, for the umpire.'"

This pitcher was a popular man in baseball and, because of his vitality and enthusiasm, he attracted new opportunities and made many friends.

We can do the same. Simply cultivate these habits: Do not talk negatively; do not talk gloomily; do not talk cynically; do not talk pessimistically. Instead, think, talk, and act positively. Cultivate in yourself the vitality of Jesus, and you will begin to attract people, because you will be attractive yourself; you will be

eager; your mind will be alert and sharp; and you will see opportunities you have previously missed.

Positive Principle 3: *Discipline yourself.*

Develop the ability to stand up under the difficulties of human experience and hold your temper, keep your good spirits, maintain your imperturbability. The person to whom other people turn is he who, when things are going bad, keeps his head, holds his spirit high, and continues to work with diligence and efficiency until accomplishment comes.

“But,” you say, “I have trouble getting along with myself, so I have a hard time holding my temper and being in a good mood.”

Many people do.

Most of us will admit that we have been the cause of most of our trouble—although we often try to shift the blame to a spouse, a parent, a friend, a business associate, or to the U.S. government.

There is a way to deal with these difficult personalities of ours. First, we must find out why we have so much trouble with ourselves. Ask yourself: “Why do I do what I do? Why do I react in a certain way?”

I once visited with a woman in her nineties. She was healthy, wore no glasses, and would sit up half the night conversing with anyone.

“Why are you so vigorous and lively?” I asked her. “What is your secret?”

“When I was a young woman and later, in middle-age, I lived in misery,” she replied. “I was filled

with fear of what I might do wrong. Every time I did anything badly, I criticized myself, and dwelled on it and got angry. I finally decided that was a waste of time and energy. So I concentrated on the best of each minute as it came by. If I got things right, good. If not, I knew there was another minute coming.”

Isn't that wonderful? When unpleasantnesses occur, just keep going.

Do the best you can; grab the best of each moment and ask the Lord to help you do better next time. Move ahead. Take yourself in hand. Be master of yourself. Do not let yourself push you around—direct yourself. So many people fail at this. Self-discipline is one of the greatest accomplishments on earth.

Positive Action Principles

- 1.** Open your mind.
- 2.** Develop your personality.
- 3.** Discipline yourself.

***“Forgetting those things which are behind,
and reaching forth unto those things which
are before, I press toward the mark....”
(Philippians 3:13,14)***

4

Forget, Forgive and Live

WHAT is one of the most positive secrets of living life well? In one short chapter, I can only suggest an aspect of it. But, I want to share with you the philosophy of a man I know, who seems to have an extraordinary grasp of life, handling everything with skill and distinction. I asked him his secret, for I think every such person has a secret.

And this was it: “Forget. Forgive. And live.”

He quoted St. Paul’s great words: “Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13, 14). And at once, I knew I had heard a wise formula.

Positive Principle 1: *Forget the past.*

One of the hardest exercises known to man is to forget what has gone before. The tendency is to

lug—that's a good word, it means to carry something heavy—into today and tomorrow all the mistakes and failures and frustrations and hates of yesterday. But eventually, you can't stand up under the load. You aren't strong enough. So learn to forget the past.

Did you make some mistakes yesterday? Of course you did. So did I, plenty of them. Extract whatever know-how each mistake contains and forget the past.

No one likes to fail at anything. But, in due course, everyone will. The question is what to do about it. Apparently, failure was designed by the good Lord as an educational process. It is meant to teach us something.

A wise American businessman, John Henry Patterson, developed the National Cash Register company in Dayton, Ohio. I saw him once, when I was a young man, and always wished I might have known him better. He used to employ young men, giving them difficult and responsible tasks. He watched to see how they handled their mistakes, saying that no one was any good who was afraid of making a mistake. Then he watched to see if they had quality of mind to overcome the mistake and do better the next time. Thus, Mr. Patterson surrounded himself with astonishingly competent businessmen; men not afraid to fail, men who could learn from their failures.

Positive Principle 2: *Forgive yourself and others.*

Did someone do you an injury, or say something mean about you, or treat you contemptuously yester-

day? No doubt that could have happened. It may be just the right time now to consider honestly any resentments you may have, and practice forgiveness.

Two men who had been lifetime friends had a falling out. Neither one would have anything to do with the other. They went to elaborate lengths to avoid each other. After several months, one of the men fell ill and was hospitalized. A mutual acquaintance persuaded the other man to visit his old friend.

“But what do I say to him?” he protested.

“Don’t worry,” he was told, “just act as if whatever had come between you was over, in the past, and forgotten.” It worked.

There is a healing in forgiveness. It mends broken relationships and makes everything new.

But what about self-forgiveness? Did you commit a sin? I hope you are sorry. Then repent and ask the Lord’s forgiveness. Then forgive yourself. Don’t let it linger in your consciousness as guilt, because if it does, it will burrow down into your unconscious mind and discolor your whole life. Get it forgiven and then forget it. Overcome your sense of guilt by two processes: first, by asking for, and receiving, God’s forgiveness; and second, by forgiving yourself.

Positive Principle 3: *Live today.*

The Lord brings down a curtain of darkness every 24 hours to shut off the day that is past and to get you ready for tomorrow. Did you ever stop to think of the beneficence of the Lord in doing that? Sir William Os-

ler, the great turn-of-the-century physician, said that we should live in “day-tight” compartments. Each night, he said, we should pull down a great mental curtain, shutting out the past, and another great curtain, shutting out tomorrow, and go to sleep, unburdened by the past or anxieties about the future.

Suppose you knew that this is your last day on earth. What would you do with this day? How would you spend the remaining hours of this last day? Well, answer that and you will have answered how you ought to live every day. Wouldn't you want to pack it full of the greatest experiences—of love, goodness, fellowship, wonder, joy—every good thing?

Just as people brood about yesterday, they worry about tomorrow. But if you take care of today, tomorrow will take care of itself. So, forgetting those things that are behind, reach forward to those things that are ahead, remembering that your job is to be worthy, and God will take care of you. Assimilate know-how from the past, live well today and you will come to tomorrow in the strength of right thinking and right living.

Positive Action Principles

1. Forget the past.
2. Forgive yourself and others.
3. Live today.

*“Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good.”
(Psalm 136:1)*

5

Cultivate Optimism

RALPH Waldo Emerson, considered by many the wisest man who ever lived in these United States, once said: “Nerve us up with incessant affirmatives. Don’t waste yourself in rejection, nor bark against the bad, but chant the beauty of the good.” And, of course, the Bible tells us that God is good, that hope and faith are essential factors in the attainment of the good life. It is a fact, therefore, that if you cast out pessimism, and cultivate within your mind the attitude of optimism, miracles will take place in your life.

Positive Principle 1: *Don’t limit yourself.*

When you develop an optimistic attitude, tremendous resources are released within you. I doubt if anyone really appreciates the amazing power that is in him, or her. Too many people are willing to accept the doctrine of limitation. How do you know if you are limited? You don’t know it! You have just accepted that

negative idea about yourself. And, by so doing, you have limited yourself. The amazing power in each of us is so tremendous that none of us can fully comprehend it. So tell yourself that, through God, you have limitless power.

Positive Principle 2: *Get outside yourself.*

Late one night, I received a telephone call from a man in a nearby city. “I just don’t know what to do,” he said. “I’m so discouraged, I’m sunk. My wife is sick,” he continued, “and tomorrow at three o’clock I have to meet the greatest crisis of my life. If things don’t go right, I’m finished.”

“Listen,” I said, “I have discovered that nothing is ever quite as bad as it seems.”

“I’m sunk,” he repeated.

“You will never get anywhere thinking like that,” I told him. “If you are pessimistic, you will draw pessimistic factors to you. If you get optimistic, you will draw optimistic factors to you. The first thing to do is to stop concentrating on yourself. Let me ask you this, ‘Have you given anything to anyone lately?’ ”

“No, I haven’t,” he admitted.

“Go to the Salvation Army tomorrow morning and give something to someone; forget yourself. Thank God that your wife is not dead—that she will get better. Be thankful that you are able to talk over the telephone, that you can eat your breakfast tomorrow morning. Thank God for the wonderful opportunity He is giving you tomorrow. And then pray for faith and

hope. Practice expectancy and optimism. If you do this, things will turn out better than you think.”

I met him some time after. “When I talked with you,” he said, “I was dripping with gloom. I couldn’t think.”

“Of course not,” I replied. “No one can think when his mind is filled with negativism.”

“I did everything you told me to do,” he continued. “But at that meeting, I got only part of what I wanted. However,” he added, “later the results were better than anything I could ever have imagined. No one will ever find me depressed or pessimistic again. I’m a practitioner of optimism and faith. It clears the mind, clarifies any situation, and gets the power of God flowing through you.”

How right he is. If you are down about anything, pray enthusiastically, pray with thanksgiving. Do something for someone else. Get outside yourself. Get calm and quiet. And above all, flush out your mind with optimism. Think positively. Repeat this text every day: “Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good” (Psalm 136:1). Believe in the creative power of optimism, and it will work miracles in your life.

Positive Principle 3: *Think health.*

I once asked a physician what he thought were the physiological advantages of optimism over depression. This is what he said: “Depression in the mind increases the possibility of infection by at least ten-fold. Optimism, dynamic faith, has a power to burn

out infection. You will notice people who maintain a confident attitude have a strange power in the presence of sickness and disease. I would recommend, as one of the great sources of health, an attitude of optimism and faith.”

This doctor’s opinion has apparently been confirmed by a 35-year-long study completed only recently. Ninety-nine graduates of Harvard were interviewed in 1946, to determine who were pessimists and who were optimists. Analysis of their answers revealed that the optimists tended to respond to disappointments—like being turned down for a job—by formulating a plan of action and asking other people for help and advice. Pessimists more often reacted to such difficulties by trying to forget the whole thing or assuming there was nothing they could do to change things. Years later, according to a report in science journals in 1988, it was found that the men who had explained bad events pessimistically in early adulthood had substantially more illness at age 45 than those who had offered rosier explanations for bad events.

Now there is always someone ready to argue about the idea that thinking optimistically and practicing positive thoughts can affect your health. They will say, “But I’ve got something really wrong with me.” We do not minimize organic disease at all. But, even if there is something wrong, the forces of vitality and health can still be stimulated by how optimistically you think.

Consider a woman I called on at the hospital. After her husband had left the room, she said to me: “I have

cancer, but my husband is the real problem. He is in utter gloom all the time, thinking depressing thoughts. Will you work on him and help him to think creative, positive health thoughts? I want him to see me as well, not as a victim of cancer or a wife he's going to lose. He isn't going to lose me, because I don't intend to die—at least, not for a long, long time!”

I could have thought that this was like whistling in the dark, like talking big, because she was going to die. But when I looked into her eyes and heard her speak, I was convinced that this woman wasn't going to die.

“Don't worry about me,” she said. “You don't even need to pray for me. Pray for my husband. Get him well in his thoughts.” Her husband and I got together, and we talked and prayed about it.

A long time later, I saw her in church—a dynamic, vital woman who walked down the aisle and asked, “Do you remember me?”

“How could I ever forget you?” I asked, adding, “You look very well!”

“Why,” she exclaimed joyfully, “of course I'm well! I made up my mind that, with God's help, I would get well. And,” she added, “Bill is thinking better.”

Thinking is a vitality-producing process. Think healthy thoughts. In so doing, you will keep your body in balance. You will keep it flowing in a normal, vital manner. If you think defeat, you will foster the circumstances that lead to defeat. If you think inadequacy, you will ultimately fail to perform in an adequate manner. But if you think victory and success—really think it,

and believe it, really believe it—you will perform in a manner that leads to victory and success. See yourself as whole in the name of Jesus, the way God created you. See your body as clean, strong, and fine, and your mind in the same manner, the way God made it, and it will tend to be that way.

Positive Action Principles

- 1. Don't limit yourself.**
- 2. Get outside yourself.**
- 3. Think health.**

“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” (Mark 11:24)

6

Tap Into the Power of Prayer

DO you want power in your life? Do you want insight, understanding, flashes of knowledge otherwise denied you? If you fill your life full of God, and use prayer to put your problems into His hands, you will be relieved from all panic, all apprehension, all sense of defeat. That leaves you free to go out and do everything you can about the situation, free for a full application of all your power.

Positive Principle 1: *Talk, visualize, then listen.*

Think of prayer as a normal conversation between God and you. Open your heart and, in simple language, tell God how you feel and think. When you pray about something that means much to you, visualize it as being granted. Be willing to take what God gives. It may not be your desire, but it will be better for you than what you ask. He knows what is best for you. When you finish talking to God, relax your mind and body,

become completely quiet. Be receptive to His guidance and listen for God's voice. It will come to you.

Positive Principle 2: *Remove all barriers.*

At an airport restaurant, I met a man who insisted that he owed me a debt of gratitude. "I was one of those fellows to whom prayer did not seem important," he explained. "But things were getting me down. Then I read one of your articles. You told about two scientists who believe that prayer is a science. They had a problem to solve and you told of the remarkable results attained by that prayer.

"I had never heard of a technique for prayer," he continued. "So I got a Bible and read the eleventh chapter of Mark, which says: 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' I realized I must think about a problem, not negatively, but affirmatively and creatively, to get results.

"I tried that, but it did not work. So I went back to the Bible and read the next verse, which said, 'When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.'

"Then I saw that this power of prayer was being stopped by a barrier of resentment and hate. So I got down on my knees and prayed until I got the hate out of my heart. Then, all of a sudden, things began to happen. The obstruction had been removed."

I suggest you do what this man did. Think about any

hatred, any grudge, any sin in your life. If you want the power of God at work on your problems, you must remove all barriers blocking the way.

Positive Principle 3: *Believe in miracles.*

Let me tell you about one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. After an evening address in a western city, I went to my hotel room to go to bed, for I was catching a plane at six a.m. the next day.

The telephone rang and a woman's voice said, "There are about fifty of us waiting at my house for you. We are all praying that you will come."

Before I could say no, two men were at my door waiting to escort me.

"We are alcoholics who have been changed by prayer," they said. "We have read your writings and you have helped us. We wanted to meet you."

When we arrived at the house, there were about 50 people in a rather small room. One man was perched on a grand piano; many were sitting on the floor, on the stairs and on tables. A prayer meeting was in progress, and they told me there were 60 such groups meeting in that city every week.

I never was in a prayer meeting like it in all my life. They weren't at all a pious crowd. Suddenly, one would start to pray aloud, and I found myself strangely moved. Then they would all burst into a hymn. I never heard such singing in my life.

Then one woman, who had braces on her legs, said: "They told me I would never walk again. Do you want

to see me walk?” And she went up and down the room; awkwardly, but still walking. She pointed to her braces. “They, too, will go,” she said.

Then a young woman got up and said, “You know about drug addicts, don’t you? I was one of them.”

And a man told of recovering from alcoholism.

A couple who had been separated by hate and infidelity told how they had come together again.

Then everyone burst into another song.

They wanted me to pray. We all held hands, and it was as if I had taken hold of an electric wire. I felt that I was the least spiritually developed person there. They had told me with modesty what they had been; I could see for myself what they had become.

You, too, can achieve everything you desire. Right this minute, go look at yourself in the mirror. Say to yourself, “I am a being with infinite perfectibility. With God’s help, I can begin again. There is no limit to what I can become!”

And then start applying the positive action principles you have read about in this booklet.

God bless you on each step of your journey.

Positive Action Principles

- 1. Talk, visualize, then listen.**
- 2. Remove all barriers.**
- 3. Believe in miracles.**



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