

You can live your best life!

# **Life Improvement Principles**

**Stephen H Berkey  
J. S. Wellman**



**GETWISDOM  
PUBLISHING**

**Author: Stephen H Berkey**



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with Timeless Wisdom***

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## **Message from the Authors**

**Welcome to a journey of discovery!**

**Disclaimer:** This book is provided as a free resource to those wanting to live their best life. It is provided free as a PDF and for \$0.99 as a Kindle Ebook. As a convenience we publish a paperback version for \$4.99 (our cost).

As the authors, representing Get Wisdom Publishing we are excited about our products and the impact that we can have on people's lives. We believe our books provide the potential to transform lives and deepen your understanding of how to live life based on wisdom and wise choices.

This book is intended to provide you an overview of our books, concepts, strategies, and wisdom that can transform your life. It will not answer all of your questions but it will give you a good foundation for understanding the nature and requirements for living your best life. Explore our full-length books for a deeper dive into these subjects – see "What Next" at end of book.

Our books are not just another self-help resource. They are a wisdom-based roadmap to living your best life by:

- Acquiring wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to navigate life's complexities.
- Embracing truth in everything you do.
- Taking responsibility for your decisions and recognizing their lasting consequences.
- Confidently overcoming obstacles.

**Today** is the time to stop just thinking about change and start living it. If you desire a more fulfilling and meaningful life, our books provide an excellent foundation and process for making wisdom your friend. Allow this book to be the spark that helps you take the first step toward a better wiser you.

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## Introduction

*Apply yourself to instruction and  
listen to words of knowledge.*

Proverbs 23:12 (NIV)

Wisdom is found in many places. The Christian Bible contains two major books, both written by Solomon, that provide practical wisdom for living life. You can also search the Internet today and find good advice in wise sayings from great minds over the last several hundred years. Wisdom can be found in great books or learned from experience. It's important to understand that wisdom can be found if we diligently seek it.

***“By three methods we may learn wisdom:  
First, by reflection, which is noblest;  
second, by imitation, which is easiest; and  
third by experience, which is the bitterest.”***

Confucius

### Why Wisdom?

What is so special about "wisdom?" Is wisdom overrated?

The answer to these questions lies for the definition of wisdom. There are a number of variations in the definition, but the core meaning of wisdom is being able to select the best course of action in order to achieve the right result.

Note that it is the right result. This may not necessarily be the result we would prefer or desire. Thus, one might make choices that do not produce the most joy or pleasure for oneself, but make the choice that is the right or best for the good of all concerned. Wisdom inherently means we have both knowledge and understanding and are able to see and understand the consequences of alternative decisions. Thus, it directs us to make the choice that produces the right result.

### What is a Proverb?

A proverb is generally secular in nature (although it might appear in a religious book like the Bible) and is intended to teach a general (not absolute) truth. It is normally short and very rich in meaning. It provides profound advice that is extremely useful because it has been developed from astute observations about how life normally works.

Proverbs are *not* absolute truth! By definition proverbs are general statements that are usually true as proven by historical empirical evidence. Inclusion in a religious text or any other highly recommended publication does not make them absolute truths. But they represent wise advice that has proven to be effective in normal life situations.

### Take Control of Your Life: Be Intentional

Taking control of your life seems like it should be a simple matter of making decisions that put you in charge. Making that concept a reality is certainly the first and maybe the most important step, but there are many factors that will determine how effective you are in actually taking control and making good decisions.

The key to taking control of your life is being intentional. Absolutely nothing is going to happen until you decide you are going to do something that will produce results. Amelia Earhart provides some critical insight:

*"The most difficult thing is the decision to act,  
the rest is merely tenacity. The fears are paper tigers.  
You can do anything you decide to do. You can  
act to change and control your life; and the  
the process is its own reward."*

***Discover Wisdom. Live the Life You Deserve.***

## Chapter 1

# Consequences

*“Every action has its consequences.  
Do not fool yourself into thinking you can avoid them.”*

Buddha

*Consequences* are a vital concept in our understanding of making good choices and living a good life. You have complete freedom to choose what you want to do, but you cannot choose the consequences. Poor choices can be a disaster. We do bear the consequences of our actions. It is a law of nature.

If you don't want to suffer the negative results of poor decisions, think in advance about what your actions are likely to produce. What you do and what you say will have a lasting impact on yourself and on others.

### **ALL ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES**

A consequence happens as a result of a particular act or set of circumstances. It is the result or outcome that is the product of your choices.

Needless to say, that makes your choices critically important if you want to live a better life. Our lives are a series of choices and our quality of life is determined by the nature of the choices we make. But it is not just your life that is impacted by your decisions. Others are often affected, both good and bad. It is important that you take responsibility for both your good and bad choices.

Therefore, we need to have standards, principles, or core values that we determine in advance. This requires forethought and consideration so that our on-the-spot decisions will not be made under the stress of the moment.

The key is to understand is that everything you do will have consequences. It does not matter whether you are a good or bad person or what you really intended, you will eventually bear the consequences of your actions. This is a fundamental truth for living your best life!

The solution is *thinking!* Think about what you are going to do or say. As a society it seems we may have lost our ability to think. We need to think, evaluate, and consider, in order to make good choices.

***Your actions have consequences!***

### **UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

There are consequences when we don't look where we're going and the consequences can have consequences. The reality of life is that many of us are simply not paying attention. We are not looking where we are going and we wreck stuff. Sometimes the stuff belongs to us and sometimes it belongs to others. And sometimes the news and social media buzz about the consequences can be worse than the wreck itself.

**THOUGHT QUESTION:** Consider the following: "In order to leave a legacy you must make a difference in someone's life." Why is this true? What are the implications?

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***Get Wisdom Publishing: Where Wisdom Meets Purpose***

## Chapter 2

# Wisdom

*Wisdom is supreme – so get wisdom.  
And whatever else you get, get understanding.*  
Proverbs 4:7 (HCSB)

We all want to be wise, but what does that mean? I have wisdom when I make particularly good judgments using knowledge and understanding to solve complicated problems. I am able to select the best course of action to produce the right result. It means I am able to put aside what might appear to be other attractive results in order to obtain or do what is best. I am able to select or seek the correct result and then apply my knowledge and understanding to accomplish that outcome.

### FOUR SOURCES OF WISDOM

There are four primary sources for wisdom. The first and maybe the most obvious is God. James 1:5 says. "*Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him.* (NIV) But wisdom is also obtained from other sources. The Bible itself specifies other sources:

#### PEOPLE

Proverbs 13:20 *The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm.* (HSCB)

#### EXPERIENCE

Proverbs 9:6 *Leave inexperience behind, and you will live; pursue the way of understanding.* (HSCB)

#### BOOKS & MEDIA

Proverbs 12:15 *A fool's way is right in his own eyes, but whoever listens to counsel is wise.* (HSCB)

Proverbs 19:8 *The one who acquires good sense loves himself; one who safeguards understanding finds success.* (HSCB)

A common shortcoming for many of us is that we make decisions on our own without asking advice from trusted friends. Many of us have smart, caring, experienced friends, family, and associates but we ignore them because we are too shy, too embarrassed, or too prideful to ask for advice.

***Wise and caring friends can save us from many pitfalls.***

## GET WISDOM

How do we "get" wisdom? What is the objective? Generally "getting" means we go about trying to obtain knowledge and understanding in order to develop wisdom. I observe others and experience life. I read books and ask for the opinions of other people. The common thread in all this activity is that I am taking *intentional* action in order to acquire the wisdom I desire.

If you were to list practical things you might do to acquire wisdom what would they be? How would you go about becoming wiser? Many of us would respond to the idea of acquiring wisdom with the attitude that it is not possible for me – I am just not smart enough or tenacious enough to acquire real wisdom. Well, that may be somewhat true in some situations. But remember, gaining wisdom is a process. We don't go from clueless to wise without gaining knowledge and understanding first. It's a journey or a process and we must begin with gaining knowledge and understanding before we can achieve wisdom.

### Steps in Acquiring Wisdom

1. Analyze personal experience.
2. Seek instruction or guidance from others.
3. Get educational books, magazines, and media.
4. Attend schools, universities, or corporate training
5. The Internet and artificial intelligence. Many AI tools and search engines can provide answers very quickly.
6. Study proverbs and wise sayings.

If you claim that you cannot find wisdom, the problem is that you are probably not looking hard enough. Wisdom is there and it is even calling out to us. If we can't find it, then the fault is probably ours.

***Wisdom without action is just information.***

### Knowledge and understanding lead to wisdom

Knowledge and understanding are the foundations of wisdom. We only gain wisdom by first gaining knowledge and then developing understanding. Knowledge and understanding is the *path* to gaining wisdom.

For example, I can have a broad knowledge about the rules of the IRS tax code. I can gain an understanding of how the different provisions work and relate to one another. Wisdom allows me to apply that knowledge and understanding correctly in order to obtain the maximum refund.

Gaining wisdom is a process that requires time, intentionality, and patience. One does not get wisdom overnight. It is a mindset and a continuing commitment. Reading, studying, and applying the wisdom in our books is a good start.

The bottom line: make good decisions in order to achieve the desired results. If you are not committed to gaining wisdom, it's going to be an uphill battle. The pursuit of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom should become a *priority* in your daily life!

**THOUGHT QUESTION:** How hard will it be for you to be intentional? What could you do to help or encourage yourself? Would an accountability partner help? Think about having the following mindset:

- LOVE knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.
- SEEK wisdom by learning from experience/advisors.
- LISTEN and WATCH for learning opportunities.
- DEVELOP common sense.
- AVOID foolishness.

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***Unlock Your Potential with Timeless Wisdom.***

## Chapter 3 Core Values

*Ponder the path of your feet,  
then all your ways will be sure.*

Proverbs 4:26 (ESV)

*Commit to your core values. They will drive and stabilize your life!* Core values are important for everyone, for leaders and followers alike. We all need a foundation on which to make decisions. We need to stand on moral principles, demonstrate ethical behavior, and be a role model for others. Core values are necessary to gain respect and maintain our reputations.

### THE FOUNDATIONAL CORE VALUE: HONESTY

Of all the personal life values, we believe honesty and integrity must be your foundational core values. If you adhere to these core values, it will be much easier to achieve success and live a good life. Honesty, integrity, and truth are the gateways to being the best person you can be. You will never be able to be all you can be if these three traits are not part of your life. We will cover this attribute in more detail in Chapter 4.

### CORE VALUE: TRUSTWORTHINESS

One of the fundamental aspects of a trustworthy person is the ability to keep a secret. Being trustworthy and being honest are very close cousins. You cannot be trustworthy and be dishonest. Being trustworthy means others can rely on your words and your promises. You carry through on what you said or promised and your friends and associates have total confidence in you. This core value means you will:

- always stand firm on your word, even if difficult.
- not be intimidated by the threat of opposition.
- be committed to your basic beliefs and core values.
- be loyal and work continually to maintain trust.
- have the courage to confront authority if necessary to fulfill a promise.

Enemies find it difficult to find weaknesses to exploit in people who are trustworthy. If you are honest and trustworthy it will be very difficult to damage your reputation.

***"Trust is like a vase, once it's broken, though you can fix it, the vase will never be the same again."***

Walter Anderson

### Practical Tips

- **Maintain confidentiality.** Respect the privacy of others and keep sensitive information confidential. Don't gossip.
- **Admit mistakes.** Take responsibility for your actions and quickly admit when you make a mistake.
- **Be reliable.** Show up on time and complete tasks within the agreed-upon timeframe.
- **Be loyal.** Support the people you care about, especially when they're not present.

**Thought Question – Being Trustworthy:** What are the things a person would need to do in order to earn your complete trust?

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### **CORE VALUE: HUMILITY**

The important life lesson in humility is that it is better to live humbly (without pride), even to the extent of being poor. Such a life would ultimately be better than having riches and power.

Merriam-Webster defines humility as the state of not thinking you are better than others or not being arrogant. Arrogance is acting as if you are better or more important than others. Those who lack humility are often conceited and have a very high opinion of themselves and their abilities.

The humble person does not seek undue attention or recognition for himself. Prideful people on the other hand are primarily interested in themselves. Life revolves around their wants and needs. They have big egos and tend to think they are the center of the universe. They often have an inflated view of their own self-importance.

A humble spirit will cause you to be respected and honored by both leaders and followers. You will be able to live and work in a more "gentle" environment because there will be less stress and anxiety. You will have an inner peace and contentment.

**Thought Question – Humility:** What do you think are some of the biggest challenges to being humble in today's world?

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## CORE VALUE: FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a decision. It is a voluntary act that you make for yourself. It is not necessarily something you do for someone else. The fundamental need for forgiveness resides within each of us. It releases us from the need to harbor revenge or nurse hurt. We simply decide to forgive. It is that simple and that hard. The key to deciding to forgive is to understand that the act is done to benefit yourself, not excuse the behavior of another. It relieves you from the emotional burden of the relentless thoughts and hurt of a situation that cannot be undone.

Forgiving does not necessarily mean we forget. Depending on the situation, our relationship with the other party may need to change even though we have truly forgiven the individual. We may not want to forget because it may be necessary to create some personal boundaries.

Since forgiveness begins with you, your heart must be right with yourself before you can do much for others. Should you forgive another person if they ask? Certainly! Should you want them to suffer as you are suffering? No! Should you be concerned for the health of the perpetrator? Sure! Should you do what you can to restore the relationship? Maybe!

What happens if you do not forgive? It's possible to ignore an incident if it is of relatively little significance. But it is likely to cause stress and painful memories if the situation is not resolved. If forgiveness does not occur within a reasonable amount of time, the mind will begin to create a grudge that can turn into thoughts of revenge. Hateful thoughts or revenge will cause more harm than good because they will not relieve the pain of the offense and they are not enjoyable to carry around.

**Thought Question – Forgiveness:** When is it healthy to set boundaries or distance oneself from someone after granting forgiveness?

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## CORE VALUE: GRATITUDE

Gratitude is also a decision. You decide that you want to be thankful. You live with an appreciative attitude, whether or not you are completely satisfied with your circumstances. This attitude is not necessarily something you learn or develop over time, rather it is more in the nature of a decision you make about life.

If you believe that life owes you success, happiness, and well-being, then you will tend to be dissatisfied with your life and circumstances. On the other hand, you can decide you will be content whatever your situation. You can be grateful for whatever you have or whatever your circumstances. Life could be far worse!

Someone who is truly thankful for what he has will share his excess with others. There are many different times and seasons in our life and we can be grateful for each experience or we can be unhappy and discontent. It is a choice we make in how we want to live our life.

***"The soul that gives thanks can find comfort  
in everything; the soul that complains  
can find comfort in nothing."***

Hannah Whitall Smith

**Thought Question – Gratitude:** What is the source of your personal joy? What are you deeply thankful for? What are you thankful for in others?

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### **CORE VALUE: GENEROSITY**

Webster's Dictionary says that being generous is giving liberally. Being generous can also be described as being magnanimous, charitable, or open-handed. The opposite of being generous is often described as being cheap, close-fisted, or even miserly. More serious words might include greed, avarice, or covetous.

***"Real generosity is doing something nice  
for someone who will never find out."***

Frank A. Clark

Greed is the desire to have more of something than you need. Someone who has a billion dollars doesn't need more money but if they are driven by a very strong desire to have more, that can become greed. That excessive desire (greed) can consume one's thoughts and actions and drive one to try to acquire more, just for the sake of more.

There are a number of real personal benefits for being generous. You may not experience all of these benefits but most of them will occur over time when you are truly generous.

1. Health: Many studies confirm that generosity will result in a more healthy life!
2. Stress: It will reduce stress – it takes the focus off self.
3. Purpose: It will give you a sense of purpose.
4. Community: It will involve you with generous people.
5. Identity: It will raise your self-esteem.

Part of the difficulty today in the Western world is that we live in an environment of excess. We have far more than we need. We could give away much of what we have and our lives would be impacted very little.

**Thought Question – Generosity:** Which one of the benefits of being generous appeals to you the most? Why?

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***It is not what you gather, but what you scatter  
that will determine the value of your life.***

**CORE VALUE: KINDNESS**

Kindness attracts like behavior, supporters, and friends. The unkind or cruel individual will create animosity and strife. Poor behavior produces a bad reputation and an unkind person will eventually lose friends because of their behavior. Nobody wants to associate with unkind people. Unkind people have a difficult time living and working in a normal society.

**Thought Question – Kindness:** Bob Proctor said, "*The law of prosperity is generosity. If you want more, give more.*" Do you think this is true? Why? Why not?

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**ESTABLISH YOUR CORE VALUES**

Do you have core values you can list or repeat? Are they written down somewhere? They should be! We suggest you determine the core values for your life and adopt at least four to six values you can repeat at any time. Some of the core values we've discussed are probably already present in your life. Celebrate those!

At the same time, perhaps you've realized that there are some additional core values you should adopt. You may also have some behaviors or habits that conflict with these core values and hopefully some that support them. The logical next step is to work at correcting any negative behavior and begin or establish positive habits that will cement new habits in your everyday life.

Core Values set standards and put boundaries on your words and actions. You might have core values such as:

INTEGRITY: I will be honest and live with integrity.

TRUSTWORTHY: I will always be dependable and reliable.

HUMILITY: I will strive to serve others.

FORGIVENESS: Forgiveness will be my anchor for life's relational challenges.

ACCOUNTABILITY: I will take responsibility for my actions.

GRATITUDE: I will embrace gratitude as a way of life.

GENEROSITY: I will make a difference in the lives of others by being generous with my time, talents, and resources.

KINDNESS: I will treat others with compassion and respect.

EQUALITY: I will treat others with equity and equality.

WISDOM: I will value knowledge in order to gain wisdom.

WORK ETHIC: I will be diligent and hard-working.

JUSTICE: Justice and fairness will guide my life.

ATTITUDES: I will be positive and optimistic.

**Resource**

You can investigate the subject of your Core Values more thoroughly in J.S Wellman's book: [\*\*\*CHOOSE Core Values: Build your life or business on ethical principles and honorable character traits.\*\*\*](#)

***Our books and tools combine timeless wisdom with practical application for generating lasting change.***

## Chapter 4

# Honesty, Integrity, and Truth

*Truthful lips endure forever,  
but a lying tongue, only a moment.*  
Proverbs 12:19 (NIV)

If you want to transform your life, you must start with honesty. Why? Honesty spills over into and produces many of the other character traits that are desirable in living your best life.

If I am trustworthy, honest, and truthful, I will also be just, fair, dependable, reliable, and faithful in all things. Being right or wrong is not the issue here – it's being honest. The appropriate actions that are the result from being honest are not that difficult to determine in advance.

***If a person doesn't lie, he won't  
have that much to remember!***

Abe Lincoln

Honesty means everything I need to worry about is in the present time frame. I don't have to worry about what I said in the past. The truth never changes.

We consider honesty, integrity, and truth the foundational core values. You know instantly whether you are being honest. It is black and white. You are either being truthful or not. There is no grey area. Some of you may be thinking there are grey areas. Nope, that is only wishful thinking. You cannot be partially true or honest. If it is only partially true, then it is untrue. It is either raining or it is not. Adding 2 + 2 will always be four. You cannot claim to have crossed the street if you have only traveled 80% of the way.

### HONESTY IS THE FOUNDATION OF CHARACTER

Honesty, integrity and truth are the foundational characteristics of righteousness. Any contractor or builder will tell you that the most important part of a house is the foundation. If the foundation is not level and setting on solid ground (or rock if you live in Tennessee) it will create problems in every phase of the building process.

Honesty, integrity, and truth are to character as a foundation is to a house. If one's life is not built on honesty and truth it will be very difficult to end up with a favorable legacy or a proud family reputation. Oh yes, you can get by, but the scars of a life built on something other than honesty is like the house where everything on the floor rolls toward the street because the foundation is not level.

If you are honest, then you will inherently possess a number of other good and righteous character traits. For example, if you are honest then you will also be dependable, reliable, upright, a diligent worker, and a person of good reputation.

I might even suggest that if you adopt the commitment to honesty you will be:

- righteous in the sight of God,
- admired in the sight of man, and
- honored by your friends and family.

That is an amazingly simple concept! But think about it. Stop and consider for a moment how you could offend God or man if you are honest, live with integrity, and base your life on truth? If you think I am overstating this idea, then choose one of the character traits below and consider how it would be possible for it to be missing in my character if I am truly honest, live with integrity, and base my life on truth:

CHARACTER TRAITS: love/loving, humble, meek, prudent, righteous, upright, just, faithful, good, kind, gracious, forgiving, merciful, fair or equitable, patient, grateful, courageous, wise, discrete, patience, reliable, dependable, discerning, joyful, hopeful, generous.

I am going to suggest you can't. Or, at least you will find it extremely difficult and have to use very unlikely circumstances to prove your point.

***Make it your life goal to be honest!***

## **Our Culture**

Honesty is generally associated with being right, honorable, and of noble character.

One of the many problems with our current society is that we have lost our love and respect for truth. It would seem that we are living in an age of liars! Who in fact can we trust? The answer would seem to be – nobody! In days such as these it is difficult to trust anything you hear or read – fake news seems to be all around us. In fact, it is extremely difficult to even get real "news" because everyone has an agenda and opinion. Influence, disguised as news, is being distributed daily from most news outlets.

And, with the introduction of AI, I suspect it won't be long before we can no longer trust what we see!

***"I have met men who are habitual liars.  
They have lied so long that they no longer  
can distinguish between the truth and a lie . . ."***

Billy Graham

## **Dishonesty**

Confronting dishonesty and unreliability can be difficult. It can be stressful. But allowing it to continue will not make a bad situation better: it will only get worse. You must make it clear to

the liar that you know the truth, that you are disappointed in his behavior, and that your hope is that it never happens again.

You must communicate this gently and in a loving but forceful manner. It may even be appropriate, if the situation recurs, to outline the consequences if it happens again. The circumstances and situation should dictate how you respond.

### **Tips For Being Honest**

- Admit mistakes or errors immediately.
- Be accurate. Don't leave out important facts.
- Be truthful about your involvement.
- Guard against stretching the truth.
- Don't lie to protect or help others.
- Don't make promises you can't or won't keep.

### **INTEGRITY**

Dale Carnegie in his book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* says, "The highest levels of influence are reached when generosity and trustworthiness surround your behavior." Being trustworthy means you can be relied on to do something you promised or provide something that is right.

Integrity is a lifestyle and it's long-term. You can learn and practice trust, but you must be intentional, especially if dependability is not your long suit.

Bad choices are normally very hard to overcome. Poor choices will derail your goal to live with integrity very quickly. Rebuilding trust will be extremely difficult and require a great deal of time after you have proven yourself to be untrustworthy.

### **Tips For a Life of Integrity**

- Be very careful what you say on social media.
- Communicate promises clearly.
- Establish integrity-related core values.
- Learn from correction or rebuke. Be willing to change.
- Don't let pride impact your ability to make good choices.

### **Compromise**

We cannot compromise right and wrong. We cannot choose to be "a little bad" in order to get the benefit of riding the fence. We are either trustworthy or we are not. This is the same issue of being partially truthful. When it comes to truth and honesty black is black and truth is truth.

The problem with compromise is that it can signal to others that you are not committed to your

beliefs. The question becomes, "How important is the truth to you? What would you be willing to give up or lose in order to maintain your beliefs or core values?"

***"If you have integrity nothing else matters.  
If you don't have integrity nothing else matters."***

Alan K. Simpson

## TRUTH

Speak the truth in love with a gentle and humble spirit. If someone is hurt or upset with the truth, it means they want to perpetuate a lie caused by their own inadequacies or mistakes. That is not your fault or your problem. The suggestion that a friend would lie to protect them is nonsense and illogical.

Truth is everlasting, but lies last only until they are found out. Falsehoods and lies are generally discovered very quickly, producing hurt and trouble. But truth will last because it does not change. Time does not change truth. What is true today is true tomorrow. Lies have to be supported by more lies and different lies to sustain their delusion.

### Truth Can be Dangerous

Your words are extremely important in this day and age when truth is often marginalized in favor of political, business, or personal agendas. Therefore, even when you tell the truth, if it conflicts with someone else's agenda, you can find yourself ridiculed and attacked. You may even be forced to defend the truth. People today have little tolerance and think they can do and say anything to push their own agendas.

Therefore, it is important that you are both truthful and careful how you say that truth. You may need to choose your words carefully. It seems illogical that we should be as concerned about speaking the truth as we are about being dishonest. Your words are important. The truth is always the best choice.

### My Truth versus Your Truth

Today many people say, "That may be true for you but it is not true for me." This could be a correct statement for feelings and emotions. But feelings and emotions are not truth – they are simply what you feel. But when it comes to science, morals, ethics, and absolute truth, the determining factor is not feelings, emotions or the opinions of others. Truth is true, no matter how you feel, what you think, or what you want to believe. Our personal belief systems do not determine truth.

***"People will generally accept facts as truth  
only if the facts agree with what  
they already believe."***

Andy Rooney

## CONCLUSION: Where Do You Stand?

If you claim to live with integrity then what do you do when you make mistakes? Do you admit them and move to a solution or do you make excuses and try to shift blame to others? When you make promises do you always intend to keep them or are you only trustworthy when it is convenient? Can people trust you when you say you will do something? Are you dependable and reliable?

What about the secrets you hear from your co-workers, friends, and associates? Do you keep them secret or do you use them when it is advantageous for your own purposes? Do you tend to boast about the work you do? Do you ever overstate the value of your work or your contribution? If you brag about your good work, do you also speak about your failures?

If you have core values, do you adhere to them? Do your friends know what your core values are? What happens if and when you break a core value? What happens if someone criticizes your work or what you say? How do you respond? How often do you find it necessary to tell social lies? Why?

***Make a commitment to be honest, live with integrity  
and base your life on truth.***

**THOUGHT QUESTION:** What determines your truth? How do you decide whether something is true or not?

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### **Resource**

For a more in-depth study of honesty and integrity obtain a copy of [\*CHOOSE Integrity\*](#) in our Life Planning Series.

**"Truth is the secret of eloquence and virtue,  
the basis of moral authority; it is the  
highest summit of art and life."**

Henri Frederic Amiel

## Chapter 5

# Guard Your Speech

*He who guards his lips guards his life,  
but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.*

Proverbs 13:3 (NIV)

What we say and how we say it are influenced a great deal by our ability to control our feelings and emotions which can cause us to speak when it would have been prudent to remain silent.

- Poorly chosen words can be hurtful, misleading, and even incendiary.
- Reputations can be damaged beyond repair by a few poorly chosen words.
- People of lower character tend to say anything as long as it benefits their own personal agenda.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says, "If you wish to know the mind of a man, listen to his words." Our true character is revealed in our words because in the overflow of our words, the heart speaks. How you think, what you believe, and your true character are revealed by your words.

In this day and age, words spoken in one place can literally be heard or viewed around the world in seconds. The power of the word, whether spoken or written, can scarcely be understated.

Therefore, guarding your speech and choosing your words carefully is of prime importance. If you are not careful with words it will be very difficult to have a life that is in balance. If you choose gentle, caring, and intelligent speech, life will be much smoother. You will inherently receive the benefit of kind words and loving concern from those around you.

### THE POWER OF WORDS

Words, like many physical things, can be used for good and bad. A knife can be used to prepare food for dinner or be used to harm someone. Fire can be used to warm a home or burn it down. Words have the same characteristic: they can be used to heal and soothe or they can do serious damage – even start wars.

An interesting characteristic of words is that they can impact both the speaker and the hearer or reader. They can be both a curse and a blessing!

Quarrels can be big impediments to effective communication. Conflicts, disputes, altercations, or heated disagreements often result from ill-chosen words. On the other hand, gracious words are received with a gentle spirit compared to those that are mean-spirited. Prudent speech

brings life but excessive, irresponsible, or ill-conceived speech can bring death, both physical death and metaphorical death.

Words have the power to change or cause behavior. They have the power to direct you down certain paths and to go places you don't want to go.

The tongue, like a small rudder on a large boat, can guide your life to where the pilot (your heart) wants it to go. Thus, we should not say things without thinking about the power and impact our "little" words will have on others. The tongue is so powerful that it cannot be tamed – it can unleash a barrage of deadly poison.

### ***That should get your attention!***

#### **THERE ARE NO MULLIGANS**

One of the dangers of words is associated with one of their unique characteristics. They cannot be cancelled, terminated, or taken back once they have been spoken. There are no mulligans or "do-overs." Once the words have been written or spoken they are permanently recorded in the annals of the Internet and social platforms that exist in today's society.

They cannot be erased because they are stored on somebody's server, hard drive, or in somebody's memory and we cannot erase their existence. Oh, you can claim you misspoke or you didn't mean what you said, but the words cannot be eradicated. There will be an "eternal" record of their existence. Once you put words on any form of social media, or record them in any way, they are permanent – just try to remove all trace.

#### **GUARD YOUR SPEECH**

Given the power of words the use of our speech must be considered a powerful tool that we must guard and protect. We need to have a true understanding of the nature of communication so that we can harness the power and avoid the heartache of poorly chosen words.

But if I choose my words carefully I will draw people to me and not create barriers. People will tend to believe what I have to say and I will gain respect.

#### **Tips For Guarding Your Speech**

If your speech is a challenge for you, here are some tips for improving what you say:

1. **THINK** before speaking.
2. **KNOW** your audience.
3. **LISTEN** before you speak.
4. **STOP** negative speech, finding fault, and hurtful words.
5. **TRUTH** is always a winner.
6. **FOCUS** on understanding not winning.

## Choose Words Carefully

Sometimes we must be able to think on our feet in order to say positive things about other people. The story is told about a tall Texan who walked up to the counter at McDonalds, slammed down his big fist and said to the girl behind the counter, "I want half a Big Mac." She said, "What?" He said again, "I want half a Big Mac and I want it now!" Not being sure what to do, she said, "Excuse me for a minute." And she headed back to her manager without realizing that the man was following right behind her.

She got back to the manager and said, "There's a big klutz out there who is dumber than lead and he has ordered half a Big Mac." And just then she suddenly realized the Texan was standing right behind her. She quickly added: "And this gentleman wants the other half."<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever caught yourself just in the nick of time? I usually catch myself just after the nick of time because I have a tendency to speak without always thinking of the impact of my words. The girl behind the counter in this story was a quick-thinker. Unfortunately we are not all gifted with that ability so our speech tends to get us into trouble. Sometimes it is easy to maneuver around our inappropriate speech, but other times it can be a serious problem.

## Think Before You Speak

There are dangers to speaking up immediately. Some people just cannot tolerate silence and think it is their personal calling in life to remove silence from the world. Stopping and thinking about answers and what you should say is not always easy – but it will save you much embarrassment.

Quick responses or reactions are often not very intelligent. They are usually overly simple reactions given without much thought. The result may be ill-advised words that would have been better left unsaid.

**SUGGESTION:** Before you speak, ask yourself: "Is it kind, is it necessary, is it true, and does it improve on the silence?" That last one is the real key. Do you really need to speak and is what you have to say worth hearing? Maybe you should just listen!

## Silence is Golden

Proverbs 17:28 says, *Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.* (NIV)

The saying, "Silence is golden," generally means that silence is valuable like gold. The obvious reasons for this being true are:

- there is less chance of being embarrassed,

- your ignorance remains hidden,
- irrelevant and unnecessary words are avoided, or
- the other person's time and patience is not tested.

***If you are undecided about whether to speak or remain silent, it's best to remain silent.***

## **ARGUING**

Whenever two people are together, the possibility of differences of opinion exists. In fact, it would be fair to say differences are inevitable!

Most friendships involve some "arguing." Perhaps you're a Cubs fan and your best friend cheers for the White Sox. There may be a lot of good-natured "arguing" about who is the best baseball team. You know you're not going to change his mind, and he knows he's not going to change yours. Yet you engage in hassling one another on a regular basis. This is what I call "recreational arguing." It's fun, silly, and no feelings are hurt.

When arguing escalates beyond good-natured fun, that's the sign trouble is on the horizon. What happens when you and your friend have political opinions that are on opposite ends of the spectrum? Can you talk rationally about your views or does every discussion turn heated or angry? Are election years a strain on your friendship?

So how can you handle disagreement and conflict in a positive way? Make a sincere effort to see and understand the other person's position. Listen very carefully to what is said. Keep negative emotions out of the discussion.

Quarrelsome or negative people tend to have the following characteristics:

1. They see no grey.
2. They have a narrow or distorted view of life.
3. They have little or no compassion for others.
4. They are often very intense.
5. They may enjoy being the object of others' wrath.
6. They never back off or back down – they enjoy the fight.
7. They tend to be negative rather than positive.
8. They think they are always right.
9. They don't listen or keep their opinions to themselves.
10. They know everything.

***Don't be one of these people!***

## **WARNING AGAINST GOSSIP**

A gossip will reveal personal details about somebody's life that should have remained a secret. The gossip does this without permission. The information revealed might be simple facts or sensational details about a person's life. A gossip talks about intimate details that should not be discussed or revealed. If you have a tendency to talk too much, ask yourself four questions:

1. Would I share this information about myself?
2. Am I breaking a confidence?
3. What are my motives?
4. Am I willing to be identified as the source?

## **GLOATING AND BOASTING**

Gloating is the act of demonstrating your pleasure with your own success or the failure of another. In either circumstance it is not an attractive attribute. It often involves some malicious satisfaction and delight in the failure of another person.

Boasting is usually the result of excessive pride. Some may refer to boasting as bragging. It makes itself known through statements dripping with pride.

## **UPLIFTING SPEECH**

On the other hand, kind and gentle words can have a significantly positive impact on the lives of others. Negative words can cause chaos, arguments, and unhappiness. They have a significant impact on attitudes and feelings. On the other hand well-chosen words have great healing power. We should exercise wisdom in choosing our words because positive words have healing power and they bring joy and light. They reveal truth. The world needs positive and uplifting speech.

## **CONCLUSION**

Eventually your careless words will catch up to you and you will pay the price for lies, half-truths, harsh words, folly, or deceit. Our words are effective instruments in creating change and gaining influence over others and situations. Words can be sweet or sour. They can energize and bring enlightenment or they can turn a conversation into a mess.

What is your speech like? Do others admire and respect you for what you have to say or are you ignored because you say nothing of importance or because your speech is never uplifting or positive? There are real benefits to positive speech:

- You appear friendly and open.
- You are easy to talk to.
- You draw people to you rather than drive them away.
- You feel good about yourself because others like you.

Positive and uplifting speech is a significant life skill. The benefits can have a very large impact on the quality of your life.

**THOUGHT QUESTION:** How would you explain the power of words to a teenager?

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**Resource**

***[CHOOSE the Right Words](#)*** in the Life Planning Series can provide you with more help and guidance if you need to tame your tongue!

***Our books and tools are designed to help you develop skills and strategies you need to achieve your goals.***

## Chapter 6

# Reputation – Diligence

*The slacker craves, yet has nothing,  
but the diligent is fully satisfied.*

Proverbs 13:4 (HSCB)

### DOES OUR WORK MATTER?

If your job or career is not pleasing or rewarding you may have the feeling that your work has little or no value or meaning. What is your understanding and perspective about your everyday work? Are you a janitor, housewife, or business owner and are you wondering about your "life's work" and whether it really matters? Does it have any intrinsic value or do you believe that your work has little value and is of no interest to anyone?

***Wisdom takes our work seriously.  
Work does have intrinsic value.***

You may wonder what the Bible says about work. In Proverbs, work has intrinsic value as a source of wisdom, provision, and honor, advocating for diligence and responsibility. In Ecclesiastes, work is part of life's search for meaning, with true satisfaction coming only when work is seen as a gift from God and done with contentment. Together they describe work as meaningful, virtuous, and necessary when pursued with the right perspective, but caution against seeing it as the ultimate source of life's purpose.

The Bible even describes God as working. Genesis 2:2 says He finished His *work* on the sixth day so He rested on the seventh day from all the *work* He had been doing.

### Our Attitude

King Solomon, recognized as one of the wisest men to have lived, confirmed the focus of a commitment to diligence and hard work. He said that whatever we do, we should do it with all our might and confirmed that our diligence would be rewarded. But we must always keep our work in the proper perspective. We should do our best, but not to the detriment of other life responsibilities.

Workaholics make their work too important. We are not called to marry our work. We are called to love people. We are not called to love work, sports, study, power, hobbies or any other various activities.

We are told to work hard, but we should be cautious that our work doesn't so preoccupy us that we endanger our health, relationships, or family. We should be diligent and hard workers,

but our work should not saturate our lives to the point that it drives our total existence. Work is not intended to provide our ultimate fulfillment.

### **KEEP WORK IN PERSPECTIVE**

Work produces money and money provides both the necessities and the amenities of life. Holding down a high-paying job can give us significant satisfaction and a sense of achievement, but it is not the reason we exist. *Relationships, not work, drive personal satisfaction and contentment.* Our work is necessary and we should do it well, but it is not the most important thing in life.

You should choose to be diligent and make it your goal to gain respect as a hard worker. You should be energetic and industrious in your life's work. You want your work reputation to be known by others. You can take pride in work that is well done! Once diligence is recognizable in your life, it will become obvious to others, particularly to those who want to hire good people.

Everyone admires a diligent worker. Do you know anyone who is diligent and hard-working who has a poor reputation? I doubt it. Hard work spills over into almost all phases of life. It can allow you to be:

- 1. Organized:** Good workers tend to be organized in other areas of life as well.
- 2. Helpful:** Good workers tend to be helpful and will go out of their way to assist those who need help.
- 3. Generous:** Good workers tend to be generous with their time, money, and resources.
- 4. Dependable:** Those willing to work hard will also be reliable and dependable.
- 5. Self-disciplined:** Diligent and hard workers are inherently self-motivated.
- 6. Fair, just, and trustworthy:** A hard worker wants to give fair value for what he earns.

### **A Good Work Ethic**

Why should you care about your work ethic? You care because you do not live in a bubble. Everything you do is observed by others – your family, friends, associates, coworkers, and particularly bosses. Bosses do not favor employees who try to avoid work. A good work ethic creates respect. Your reputation will precede you and employers will seek your services. Your reputation for diligence and hard work will become generally known in the community.

That's why it is often said that a good name is more valuable than great wealth. Your name will open doors and expose you to opportunities that others without a good name will never hear about. Those with a reputation for being lazy, idle, or apathetic do not have anyone seeking them out for work or other opportunities.

If you want good things to happen in your life, then you must make them happen. Unfortunately, too many of us are incentivized not to work by handouts given in the name of

assistance or charity.

***"Out of clutter find simplicity, from discord  
find harmony, and in the middle of  
difficulty lies opportunity."***

Albert Einstein

## **Be Like the Ant**

The ant is able to go about life and his work without a supervisor, without a leader, and without a parent. Ants do not have overseers patrolling the lines to make sure everyone is doing their share of the work.

If you want to know if an employee or friend is a good worker, watch what they do when they are working with others. Do they fade into the background or do they participate fully in accomplishing the task? Do they anticipate what needs to be done next, or do they have to be told? Do they encourage or allow others to do their work?

## **Diligent Hands**

Idle people generally seem to have no purpose in life. They drift from one endeavor to another, often just to avoid work. They sometimes spend more energy trying to avoid work than if they would actually work.

Alternatively, diligent hands are engaged and active. This does not mean a diligent person is constantly at work. Rather it means the work gets done and done well.

People who are idle get little if anything accomplished. And, their reputation precedes them. Idle people are often pictured as sleeping, probably because that best describes what they are accomplishing – nothing.

***The one who works his land will have  
plenty of food, but whoever chases fantasies  
will have his fill of poverty.***

Proverbs 28:19 (HCSB)

Chasing fantasies in the above proverb means one is doing things to avoid work. Fantasies are often silly and have little, if any, chance of being useful or worthwhile. They are a substitute for the realities of life.

## **DON'T BE A SLACKER**

A slacker is one who avoids work and never takes responsibility. The slacker cannot be trusted or relied on and is often shunned because of his reputation. Who wants an employee or a friend who is lazy and will not do his share of the work? Slackers prefer to be idle, unemployed, and then grumble about it. A slacker can be very inventive in finding excuses to avoid work.

Sometimes slackers think they are smarter than the rest of us because they have figured out how to survive without working. They convince themselves that being idle is a calling and that they should be proud that they can get along without working – they mistakenly think they are the smart people.

This craziness even goes so far that the slacker thinks they are so smart, they should be supported by others – there is no reason for them to work. They deserve to be taken care of because they are entitled.

***"I should have suspected my husband was lazy;  
on our wedding day, his mother told me:  
'I'm not losing a son; I'm gaining a couch.'"***

Phyllis Diller

You may not be a slacker, but if you hang around with lazy people or people who don't work or try to avoid work, you will never be able to overcome these tendencies if you spend time with these kinds of people.

## **BENEFITS OF BEING DILIGENT**

There are many benefits for being a diligent worker. We have mentioned some of them already. If the following three benefits are not the most important, then they are close to it.

- **I earn the respect of others.** Respect must be earned. You are held in high regard and admired.
- **I will gain a good reputation.** Having a good work ethic will produce a reputation for diligence and hard work that will be admired or sought after by others.
- **I feel good about myself.** A good self-image will allow you to accept responsibility and undertake jobs that others would shy away from.

## **DO YOUR BEST**

Do your best. *Shoddy work will come back to haunt you.*

Do your best. *Somebody important may be watching you.*

Do your best. *You may have to live with the result.*

Do your best. *You will be judged on the result.*

Do your best. *Your future may depend on it.*

The underlying message here is that doing shoddy work, for whatever reason, produces no good result for anyone. It could result in a loss of respect or reputation. It could cause a boss to terminate your employment.

***"The dictionary is the only place that success  
comes before work. Work is the key to success,***

***and hard work can help you accomplish anything."***

Vince Lombardi

### Five Tips For Doing Your Best

- 1. Set Core Values:** Establish core values for your life and work. Set standards of excellence and do not violate them.
- 2. Gain Knowledge:** Know and understand what you are doing and how you should do it. Don't make it up as you go.
- 3. Self-discipline:** Be a self-starter. Motivate yourself to achieve excellence in your work. Be intentional.
- 4. Be Flexible:** Be willing and able to adapt to new or different ways. Be creative. Remember that old ways and old methods can become outdated. Be willing to learn.
- 5. Seek Solutions.** Seek solutions, not someone to blame. Never play the blame game. Be part of the solution.

***"The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand."***

Vince Lombardi

**THOUGHT QUESTION:** Do you know anyone that you consider a diligent hard worker? What did they do that caused your notice?

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**Resource**

You can learn more about being diligent from [CHOOSE Good Work Habits: Diligence and hard work produce life improvement.](#)

***Transform Your thinking. Transform Your Life.***

## Chapter 7

# Be Intentional

*"The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor."*

Vince Lombardi

Do you want something to happen or change in your life? The best way to do that is to decide to be the very best you can be. There is really not much more we can suggest if you really want to live a better life. If you walk away and just "want to" without any "going to" the result will be just like the results of the slacker – *nada*. This is where the commitment to diligence and hard work must have real meaning in your life. This is where you must make a commitment!

Wisdom can change you, but you have to grab it and work it into your life. We will give you some tips for being intentional in the rest of this chapter, but if you don't own it you're not going to get it.

### BEING INTENTIONAL

Being intentional means I make choices and decisions and carry them out. It means I commit to some course of action and complete it. Being intentional does not mean that I necessarily make all the right choices, but my failures or mistakes are left on the field of play. My failures are not because I wasn't in the game!

You cannot succeed unless you actively and intentionally decide to be engaged. A fulfilled life does not happen if all you do is think or dream about it. It happens because you make choices aimed at being the best you can be – then you do it.

If you are not intentional then it's easy to drift. If you are not intentional you can wander through life just trying to avoid the potholes. Spending our lives climbing out of potholes is not what we want to be doing.

### Why Intentional?

We want all life has to give us and we want to be able to say when it's over that we did our best. We are not interested in just surviving. We want to live with the expectation that life will reward us. We want to make it the best it can be.

What about you? Do you want to be admired by others and blessed? Do you want to set the right example and do the right thing? Do you want others to know you care enough about life and about them that you will make sacrifices for them? Do you want to be honest and demonstrate to others that life can be good if we want it to be?

We personally want to live life knowing that making a few really good decisions and commitments will dramatically impact the quality of our life. We will not be the victims of

apathy and allow life to just happen. We are going to make decisions and choices that will shape the quality of our lives. What do you want out of life?

***Decide, and then do it!  
If you are not intentional – nothing happens!***

## **FEAR**

Michelle Hill is an artist and writer ([graceandthegravelroad.com](http://graceandthegravelroad.com)). She had just returned from a ten-day mission trip to Guatemala where she used her art to encourage young children in a very poor area of the country. She wrote about *fear*.

*"Two weeks ago, I wrote you a note about fear. Fear was creeping around the edges of my heart and slithering in every crack it could find because I was about to embark on something new. Something different. Something out of my comfort zone. . . . Faith dispels fear. There is something else that dispels fear as well. Action! I'm safely back in the US after an unforgettable two weeks. I'm thinking back over the events since I wrote that email about fear and I'm realizing that once the alarm rang at 4 am on the morning we left for the airport, the fears dissipated. There was no time for them. Action took all of my attention. . . ."*

*Know that there are two tools to combat those fears. Faith and action! And once you get past the starting gate, fear has failed and you will be on your way.*

*You see, there will always be fear before adventure. Fear before success. Fear before a journey. Fear wants to keep you in a small little comfortable tightly controlled container. But a full life with all its beauty and adventure is outside of that container. Sure, there may be bruises and setbacks along the way. But . . ."*

Don't let fear, whether rational or irrational, keep you from living your best life.

## **MAKING IT HAPPEN**

The easy part is making the decision to do something. The harder part is carrying out the decisions you make. But the real test comes when those decisions result in difficulties and problems. Are you going to turn tail and run at the first sight of trouble? You may be thinking no, but I assure you that there will be problems and the only answer is to persevere. Don't let fear, confusion, or setbacks dissuade you from your goal.

What percentage of your life is on *autopilot*? This is where I (Steve) found myself in 2018 and early in 2019. I was going through a part of my life without thinking and I had lost touch with some of the major goals in my life. Therefore, my actions, responses, and activities were being done without much thought and very little, if any, passion. For me, I had to get away and spend some quiet time, pray, meditate, and give some serious thought to my life. What had happened? How had I gotten off-track? What did I want and not want out of life?

That time and journey is not really important for you to understand, but what is important is that I got my life off auto-pilot by becoming intentional about activities in my life that I had allowed to become routine. I was doing them without thinking, caring, or being engaged. I focused on the problem, made some new choices, and began the process of change. I set some new goals and I focused on the problem in order to drive myself out of the rut I was in.

The reason it worked for me was that I knew what I wanted and I knew where I wanted to be. I just had to be intentional about getting there. Do you know where you want to be? Have you established any life goals that are guiding your daily routines? Have you made bad choices in the past because you did not have a clear idea of where you were going?

If you need to make something happen in your life, the first step is gaining knowledge and understanding in order to make informed decisions. That may require serious work and study. It also may require some serious self-examination in order to know that you are not being foolish. Once you have established a good foundation, set some goals and objectives. Make sure you know what you are trying to achieve.

### **Establish the Right Frame of Mind**

You will want to be mentally prepared. Decide in advance that you will accept and take responsibility for your decisions. If you make a mistake, fix it, learn from it, and move on. Reject the concept that "This is just the way things are." Establish attitudes that will enhance your chance for success. Take control of your life and your calendar. You are not too busy to succeed!

### **Keep Your Eye on the Prize**

Take control and make the decisions necessary to achieve your objectives. Even if they are hard ones! Be in control of your life. Don't allow life to happen to you. Nothing will happen until you do something.

Exercise good habits. Habits are formed by believing in yourself and repeating the desired activity until it becomes second nature. Be diligent and do your best. Check your progress regularly.

### **Manage Your Time – Be Flexible**

Sometimes we must be more aware of being intentional than others. One of the biggest hurdles in making changes in life is to find the time. You're too busy. I'm too busy. We are all too busy! Thus, managing time is an important part of being intentional.

New issues and problems will enter our lives at the most inopportune times. Joy can occur at the most unexpected times. What's the point? Be prepared to be unprepared. Be flexible!

Life may be dealing you some exciting opportunities so be aware of what is going on around

you. Don't be so focused on your intentionality to change your life that you miss the big opportunity or serious problem staring you in the face.

**THOUGHT QUESTION:** How hard do you believe it is to be intentional? Can you give examples from your life when you were intentional and had success? What about when you were not intentional?

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***Use intentionality to gain clarity, confidence,  
and direction in all areas of your life.***

## Intentional Living Worksheet

Use this checklist as a step-by-step guide to begin being intentional.

- A. **Your Key Core Values:** List your top 2–4 core values and note how they guide your decisions. Review Chapter 3 if needed.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

- B. **Goals:** Choose one core value and set one short-term and one long-term goal aligned with that value.

SHORT TERM:

LONG TERM:

**Daily Ritual:** Each morning or evening note in a journal or notebook when you were intentional relative to your goals above and when you could have been intentional and were not.

**Weekly Ritual:** Weekly reflect on successes and failures during the week and make note how to adjust your responses in the future.

**Wisdom Advice:** (1) Intentional living requires letting go of old habits and being open to new experiences. (2) Connect with friends and associates who will support your goals. Discuss your plans with at least one person who will support your goals.

## Chapter 8

# Hope

*"What you place your hope in  
will set the direction of your life."*

Paul David Tripp

Hope looks ahead to a future expectation that is uplifting or optimistic. We can have all kinds of hopes for all parts of our life. Some are little hopes and others are large. In fact they can be huge. Lives can be built and lost on the nature of our hope.

*In what do you place your hope?*

### WHAT IS YOUR HOPE?

Relax and quiet your spirit. Take some time to really think about what you place your hope in. What is your hope? Can you write it down in 25-50 words?

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### DON'T HOPE IN WEALTH!

Relying on money as your primary hope is a risky foundation for life. Wealth can create a temporary sense of control and security, but it's ultimately unstable. Investment markets crash. Jobs disappear. Health fails. Unexpected expenses arrive without warning. When your confidence rests on something that can vanish, so can your peace of mind.

Money is a tool—not a foundation. It can solve problems and open doors, but it can't guarantee purpose, fulfillment, or lasting security. People with money still face anxiety, relationship problems, burnout, and often a deep sense of emptiness. That's because wealth can provide comfort but not meaning, purpose, or contentment.

Hoping in wealth often leads to more striving and more fear of loss. It can shrink your world to transactions and status, keeping you focused on protecting what you have rather than investing in who you want to become.

Instead of placing your hope in what you own, place it in what you can control: your values, your character, your choices, and your relationships. Build a life centered on integrity, growth, relationships, and purpose. Use money, don't let it use you.

***A life devoted to possessions is like an abandoned house:  
there is a shell but no one is living there.***

Hope placed in wealth will vanish. It is fleeting. It is fickle and it will not last. Hope in wealth comes from worldly values that disappear and can be lost forever at any time.

## **DON'T HOPE IN HUMAN STRENGTH or HUMAN WISDOM**

Relying solely on human strength or wisdom may feel empowering—but it's ultimately fragile. Strength fades. Circumstances shift. Even the most brilliant minds misjudge, overlook, or fail under pressure. If your confidence or success depends on personal ability, what happens when you reach your limits?

Wisdom and logic suggest caution. Human knowledge is always incomplete. We update, revise, and often contradict what we once thought was true—whether in science, history, or relationships. Wisdom evolves, but truth is constant. Anchoring your hope in what *changes* will leave you uncertain when life becomes unstable.

Human strength also has boundaries. Illness, aging, exhaustion, or emotion will overwhelmingly remind us that we're not invincible. Confidence built solely on willpower or intelligence can lead to burnout, pride, or despair when things don't go as planned.

Proverbs says not to lean on your own understanding, but to seek direction beyond yourself. The Bible declares that hope is found not in human reasoning, but in something more trustworthy.

When you acknowledge the limits of your own strength and seek wisdom, you find clarity, peace, and resilience. Real confidence isn't about having all the answers—it's about knowing where to turn when you don't.

## **THREE PSYCHIATRISTS**

In the period leading up to WW2 there were three Jewish psychiatrists: two learned masters in the field, and one young apprentice. The first master was a man named Sigmund Freud. He had spent years studying people, striving to understand what made people tick. He had reached the conclusion that the most basic drive in the human being was the drive for pleasure. He concluded that it is our need for pleasure that explains why we do what we do, how we live.

The second master was Alfred Adler. He too spent years studying human behavior. His studies led him to disagree with Sigmund Freud. Adler was convinced that the explanation for human behavior was power. All of us grow up feeling inferior and powerless. He concluded that life was a drive to gain control, to feel we are important.

The third man was a young up-and-coming psychiatrist by the name of Victor Frankl. He hoped to follow in the footsteps of his mentors. But before his career gained any momentum WW2 started. The Nazis invaded and life became dangerous for Jews. Freud and Adler were world renowned scholars and managed to escape before Hitler invaded. Frankl was arrested and thrown into a Nazi concentration camp for four long years.

After the war was over, Frankl was released from the concentration camp and resumed his career. As he reflected upon his time as a prisoner, he realized something quite strange: the people who survived were not always the ones you'd expect. Many who were physically strong wasted away and died. Others who were physically weak survived. Why? What was it that enabled them to hang on through a living hell?

Frankl reflected on the theories of his mentors. Freud's pleasure principle couldn't explain it. What then of Adler's theory about power being the basic human need? That didn't hold up well either. Frankl and his fellow Jews were completely powerless during their time in the concentration camps.

Victor Frankl came up with his own theory. The difference between those who survived and those who perished was *hope*. Those who survived never gave up their belief that their lives had meaning, that despite everything going on around them, this period would one day end and they would again live meaningful and purposeful lives.<sup>2</sup>

The one thing that gives life value, that gives us purpose, is that we live with a sense of hope and that our life has meaning. If there is no meaning in life, then why bother? Life reverts to chaos where there is no purpose and hope – no meaning. Do I exist to give myself pleasure and then disappear into the mist without meaning? Does that make any sense to you? There are people who believe that nonsense. We don't. We firmly believe that we exist because life does have meaning.

***"Once you choose hope, anything's possible."***

Christopher Reeve

The source of hope in Proverbs 24:14 is wisdom, ". . . *If you find it [wisdom], you will have a future, and your hope will never fade.*" (HCSB)

Wisdom is permanent. It is extremely valuable because it can guide our life decisions. Wisdom gives a future; thus, we have something to hope in. It will not fade away like a mist after a storm.

## **THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF HOPE**

The New Testament describes hope as a confident expectation rooted in God's faithfulness, demonstrated through Jesus Christ. Key verses indicate that hope is not wishful thinking, but a firm assurance anchored in God's character and promises. For example, Romans 15:13 calls God the "God of hope" who fills believers with joy, peace, and overflowing hope through the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:3–5 explains that suffering produces perseverance, character, and hope, which does not put us to shame because of God's love that has been poured into our hearts. First Peter 1:3 praises God for giving believers "a living hope" through Jesus' resurrection,

emphasizing that hope is alive and certain. Finally, Hebrews 6:19 likens hope to an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

Practically, this means followers are encouraged to trust God's promises even in hard times, knowing their hope is secure in Christ. They are invited to find strength, joy, and endurance by fixing their eyes on eternal realities rather than temporary earthly struggles, and to allow that hope to shape their daily attitudes and choices.

For the non-Christian, biblical hope is best understood as a confident expectation that is rooted in the character and promises of a faithful God—something far more trustworthy than mere wishful thinking or human optimism. The New Testament describes this hope as a gift available to all, not just those already inside the faith, and emphasizes that it is anchored in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While nonbelievers may not yet have a relationship with God, the message is that hope is not out of reach, but is an invitation to a new kind of life.

It is important to understand the following key concepts:

- **Hope is not just optimism:** Biblical hope is based on God's track record of faithfulness and love, not just positive thinking.
- **Hope is available to everyone:** The message of hope is universal and meant for all people, regardless of background or current beliefs.
- **Hope is relational:** It's rooted in a relationship with God, who offers forgiveness, purpose, and a future filled with meaning.
- **Hope is practical:** It provides strength and comfort in hard times, not just an escape from reality.
- **Hope is anchored in Jesus:** The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation for this hope, offering assurance that God's promises are real and accessible.

Hope in the Bible is like having a trustworthy friend who always keeps his word. It's not about wishing for the best, but about trusting in someone who has proven faithful. This kind of hope offers a life of purpose, forgiveness, and a future you can look forward to with confidence. You don't have to earn it or already have everything figured out; you just need to be willing to take the first step toward a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

***"Hope is not the conviction that something  
will turn out well, but the certainty that something  
makes sense, regardless of how it turns out."***

Václav Havel

## Chapter 9

# Your Faith

*The way you see the world  
shapes the way you live in it.*

### EVERYONE HAS FAITH IN SOMETHING

Whether or not we realize it, every one of us puts our trust in something. We trust our abilities, our education, our relationships, our work ethic, or even just "the way things usually work out." Faith isn't just for the religious, it's woven into how we live every day.

When you get in a car and drive through a green light, you're trusting that cross-traffic will stop. When you make plans for the weekend, you're trusting your health and your schedule to hold steady. When you invest in a career or a relationship, you're placing faith in future outcomes that aren't guaranteed.

So let's begin by recognizing this: **faith is not a religious concept by itself—it's a human one.** And the object of your faith determines its strength. Misplaced trust can lead to disappointment or disaster. Trust in wisdom builds a solid foundation on which to build your life.

Thus, the question isn't *do you have faith?* It's **what is your faith in?** That question matters more than you might think. This is similar to the question we address in Chapter 9 about hope.

### FAITH AND A LIFE OF WISDOM

In the previous chapters, we explored how your choices, values, and personal character shape your life. But underneath all those issues and decisions is something deeper: your worldview, your sense of what matters. What do you believe is true, your hope or your faith?

People who live wisely tend to live with an internal compass that helps them navigate the challenges and opportunities of life. That compass is often rooted in a sense of purpose greater than themselves.

Faith provides a framework and a foundation. It influences how you define success, how you respond to failure, and how you recover from setbacks. It gives clarity in the face of confusion and strength when you feel overwhelmed. It shapes your identity, priorities, and commitments.

Even secular research supports this. People who live with a sense of meaning and transcendence (something beyond themselves) report higher life satisfaction, stronger

resilience, and better long term mental health. In other words, faith—broadly defined—makes life better. There is a hope!

The challenge is this: **not all faith is equal.**

Some trust in money, power, or status. Others trust in political systems, science, or human intelligence. Some even trust in "the universe." But these all have limits. They fluctuate. They fail. They cannot provide ultimate security or contentment.

That brings us to a different kind of faith—the one that many people build their lives on.

### **A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON FAITH**

For those who follow the teachings of Jesus, faith isn't just one part of life—it's the foundation. Not because it makes us feel better, but because we believe it's **true** and **trustworthy**.

Christian faith begins with a shift: from self-dependence to trust in something higher, something more stable. Not a vague spirituality, but a personal relationship. Jesus taught that real life, true life, starts not with what you achieve but in whom you trust.

Here are a few core truths that shape the Christian faith:

- **Faith is trust, not just belief.** It's not about believing facts intellectually; it's about placing your confidence in someone dependable.
- **Faith is relational.** At its core, Christianity isn't about rituals or rules—it's about knowing God by having a relationship with Jesus as a personal Savior.
- **Faith is a compass.** It doesn't remove difficulty, but it gives clarity, strength, and hope when life is uncertain.

There are ancient words from the Bible that have guided generations of people through uncertainty:

*"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God." (Psalm 20:7 NIV)*

In ancient times, chariots and horses were the symbols of power and security. Today, we might say careers, bank accounts, or social influence. But those things shift. The Christian faith encourages us to trust in *Someone* that is unchanging, not in things or idols.

Another guiding passage comes from the book of Proverbs:

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV)*

This verse doesn't suggest rejecting logic or learning. Instead, it reminds us that our own perspective is limited. Trusting God means acknowledging that we don't have to figure everything out on our own.

Jesus speaks directly to His followers, encouraging them to place their trust in Him just as they trust in God. This reveals His divine reliability and personal care in times of fear or uncertainty.

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled.  
You believe in God; believe also in me.”*  
1 John 14:1 NIV

So, what does this have to do with you—especially if you're not a particularly religious person?

### **WHAT ARE YOU TRUSTING?**

We all build our lives on something. For some, it's intelligence. For others, it's family, physical strength, or control. But everything in life can change quickly. Strength fades. People disappoint. Circumstances shift.

The question to ask isn't, "Do I have enough faith?" but "Is what I'm putting my faith in strong enough to support me?"

If you're a person of faith, especially a follower of Jesus, this is a good moment to ask: *Is my life truly anchored in Him? Do I live each day with that trust guiding my choices?*

If you're still exploring or uncertain, consider these questions:

- What belief system currently shapes my view of life?
- Has it held up under pressure?
- What do I turn to when my own strength and wisdom fall short?

Even the most self-reliant people reach moments when their internal resources run dry. Faith, in that moment, isn't just helpful—it's essential.

### **AN INVITATION TO EXPLORE**

This chapter isn't a sermon or a sales pitch. It's an invitation to reflect on, discover, or gain a deeper understanding in what you believe and how that belief system supports your daily life.

If you're already a follower of Jesus, let this be a reminder: your faith is not just private or theoretical. It's the foundation for wise living. It gives context to your values, strength to your integrity, and direction to your decisions.

If you're not a follower, but just curious, I encourage you to explore what this kind of faith really means. You don't need to be religious to be curious. Many thoughtful people have found that looking into the life and teachings of Jesus challenged their assumptions, answered their

questions, and reshaped their purpose. That's why we published ***CHOOSE Faith: Your spiritual guidebook for questions about religion, God, heaven, truth, evil, and the afterlife.***

If you are a Christ-follower, whether mature in your faith or want to gain a deeper understanding, we suggest you investigate The **Jesus Follower Bible Study Series**. It's designed to address all the key aspects of the Faith. It's not just for believers, but also for seekers—people who want to understand what Christian faith looks like in real life. No pressure. No hype. Just real faith for real life.

You're invited to explore it. See the details at the end of this book under "What Next."

## FINAL REFLECTION

There is no such thing as a faith-free life. The question is always: *What is your faith in? What do you believe is true?*

When your foundation is secure, your life becomes more resilient. You can more easily handle pressure. You can make decisions with more confidence. You have clarity about what matters.

Faith in yourself can only take you so far. Faith in others is limited. But a faith rooted in something eternal—something bigger, wiser, and stronger than you—can carry you through anything.

***"Faith is not the absence of reason, it's the courage to trust what lasts when reason runs out."***

No matter where you stand right now, your life is shaped by your faith (what you believe in). Choose that foundation wisely.

### Resources

GET ANSWERS to spiritual questions: [CHOOSE Faith](#)  
KEY CHRISTIAN CONCEPTS: [The Jesus Follower Bible Study Series](#)

Faith is about action: "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." Martin Luther King Jr.

Faith brings resilience and hope in the face of hardship: "Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light." Helen Keller

## **What Next – Faith Based**

Do you want to make better decisions and live with clarity and purpose?  
Choose the following path that fits you best:  
Faith Based or Personal Growth.

### **Study the Jesus Follower Series**

Author: Stephen H Berkey

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0DHP39P5J>

**The RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS of a Jesus Follower:**

Are you right with God?

**The ONE ANOTHER INSTRUCTIONS to a Jesus Follower:**

Are you right with one another?

**The WORSHIP of a Jesus Follower:**

Is your worship acceptable or in vain?

**The PRAYER of a Jesus Follower:**

What Scripture says about unleashing the power of God.

**The DANGERS of SIN for a Jesus Follower:**

God HATES sin! He abhors sin!

**The FOCUS for a Jesus Follower:**

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus!

**The HEART Requirements of a Jesus Follower:**

Follow with all your heart, mind, body, and soul!

**The COMMITMENTS of a Jesus Follower:**

Practical Christian living and discipleship.

**The OBEDIENCE Requirements for a Jesus Follower:**

Ignore at your own risk!

### **Be Challenged by the *OBSCURE* Series**

The *OBSCURE* Bible Study Series – Focus on Interesting characters.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08T7TL1B1>

### **Know What You Should Pray**

Your Personal Prayer Guide

<https://www.amazon.com/What-Should-Pray-Personal-Journal/dp/1952359260/>

### **Effective Life Change**

Applying Biblical Wisdom to Live Your Best Life!

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1952359732>

***Deep Biblical Wisdom. Real-Life Faith Application***

## **What Next – Personal Growth**

Non-Faith Based Resources – Continue the Journey

*Decide to be the Very Best You Can Be*

### **Explore The Life Planning Series**

Author: J. S. Wellman

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09TH9SYC4>

***CHOOSE Integrity:***

Honesty is the foundation for personal development.

***CHOOSE Friends Wisely:***

Make authentic personal connections.

***CHOOSE The Right Words:***

Filter your speech for effective personal growth.

***CHOOSE Good Work Habits:***

Diligence and hard work produce life improvement.

***CHOOSE Financial Responsibility:***

Take control of your financial life.

***CHOOSE A Positive Self-Image:***

Self-identity, self-esteem, and self-worth.

***CHOOSE Leadership:***

Be an effective leader.

***CHOOSE Love and Family:***

Build strong relationships.

***CHOOSE Core Values:***

Build your life or business on ethical principles and honorable character traits.

***CHOOSE Faith:***

Your spiritual guidebook for questions about religion, God, heaven, truth, evil, and the afterlife.

### ***LIFE PLANNING HANDBOOK***

A Personal Life Plan Is The Key To Personal Growth

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1952359325>

### ***POWERFUL BUSINESS STRATEGIES***

Implementing Core Values For Business Success

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1952359511>

***Life Planning with Wisdom and Purpose.***

## Notes

**QUOTES:** We have used a number of non-biblical quotes throughout this book that came from our files, notes, books, public articles, the Internet, etc. We have made no attempt to verify that these quotes were actually written or spoken by the person they are attributed to. Regardless of the source of these quotes, the wisdom of the underlying message is relative to the content in this book and worth noting, even if the source reference is erroneous.

The quotes used herein can be sourced from a number of different websites on the Internet that provide lists of quotes by subject or author. The same or similar quotes will appear on multiple sites. The sources for the non-biblical quotes used in this book include:

azquotes.com	brainyquote.com	codeofliving.com
everydaypower.com	goalcast.com	inc.com
goodhousekeeping.com	goodreads.com/quotes	parade.com
graciousquotes.com	keepinspiring.me	quotir.com
notable-quotes.com	plantetofsuccess.com	success.com
quotemaster.org	thoughtco.com	wow4u.com
thoughtcatalog.com	wisdomquotes.com	wisesayings.com

- 1 Sermoncentral.com; contributed by Paul Wallace on Mar 25, 2009
- 2 Victor Frankl, Based on a talk given by Australian speaker Michael Frost.

## Bibliography

Some of the material in this book was sourced directly from the books in "*The Life Planning Series*" authored by J. S. Wellman: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09TH9SYC4> and "*Effective Life Change*" authored by Stephen H Berkey: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1952359732>.

 **GET WISDOM**  
PUBLISHING  
Author: Stephen H Berkey



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