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Power Your Life

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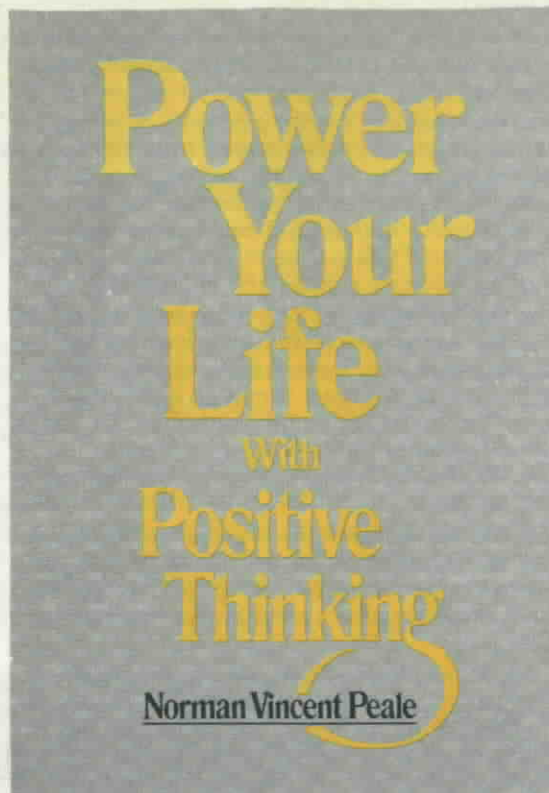
Positive Thinking

Norman Vincent Peale

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FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING
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Dear Friend,

I may not know you personally, but I do know one great fact about you. With God's help, you can do whatever you want with your life—if you *will* to do so.

You can solve the myriad problems of everyday life. You can actually *will* yourself from sickness to health, from poverty to wealth, from failure to success, from sadness to happiness. You can also make your most wonderful dreams come true—even dreams you didn't dare dream! And, most astounding of all, you can achieve the impossible!

How can I be so sure? The Bible tells me so! In Luke 18:27, we are told: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." In Philippians 4:13, we read: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." *All* things! In over 60 years of ministering, I have met thousands of people who are living testimonies to those promises.

How can *you* achieve the impossible? By practicing the principles of positive thinking in your daily life. Those principles are outlined in *The Power of Positive Thinking*, now available in a new condensed edition.

In the booklet you now have in your hands, you will find additional material to help you put those positive-thinking principles to work in your daily life. Each of its six chapters focuses on a practical, Bible-based principle, showing how individuals have successfully used these techniques to experience the unlimited power of Almighty God.

Read this booklet. Study it again and again. Pray for God's help. And faithfully practice these principles. Then you, too, can power your life with positive thinking.

Norman Vincent Peale

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God... and all these things shall be added unto you."

(Matthew 6:33)

1. Define Your Goals

What is your goal in life?

We should constantly ask ourselves, "Why was I born? For what purpose did I come into this world? What am I supposed to do here?" Nobody will ever get far who cannot clearly define what he is aiming for.

Your goal should be well-enough defined so that you can unhesitatingly state it to others. (My goal, for example, is to show people that Jesus Christ is the answer to their lives.) And everything you do should be dedicated to your goal. When that happens, you bring meaning into your life.

Once you establish your goals, how do you reach them? By the application of a twin principle: to *will* and to *believe*. Will power is the process by which you utilize an enormous force that is within you. Believing is the process by which you surrender yourself to the power of God. So "to will" means to bring out your personal power; "to believe" means to bring out God's power. And, if you really begin to practice this principle, your achievements can be astonishing.

A friend of mine tells this story about a young California couple. Things were difficult for them, but they had a goal: They wanted to have a home that

would be filled with love and beauty. And they talked about the house they wanted. It was the big goal in their early life.

One night the wife sat down and drew a picture of the house—a complete floor plan, upstairs and down, and a garden plan—just the way she wanted it. She showed it to her husband and said, "This is my dream house."

Though the couple had little money, he said, "Let's hold to our dream and to the belief that one day we'll have that house." They looked everywhere trying to find such a home. Real-estate agents showed them one house after another, but they did not find it. So they sat down and prayed about it and visualized themselves being led to it.

One night they were talking with friends about their dream house. One of the friends said, "Why, the house you are describing is well known to me; it belongs to a Mr. Davies. His wife died, but he continues to live there. He has turned down offers for three times its price. He won't sell it until he finds a couple who will love the house as he and his wife did."

"Please take us there," the couple asked. When they saw the house, the man and his wife were overwhelmed. It was exactly as it had been pictured in their diagram. Mr. Davies, a kind man, saw the love for this house in the eyes of this young couple. "I've turned down everyone else, waiting for the couple to come along for whom this house was intended," he said.

They were thrilled. But they had to face reality; it was beyond their means.

"Some things are more important than money,"

said Mr. Davies. "This is your dream house, isn't it? All right, you write your own terms, and I will help you to have this house." The contract was drawn. This couple had practiced the great law: belief is visualization, dreaming, conviction, will. As a result, they reached their cherished goal.

Believe, dream, will, and put it all in the hands of God. Work, struggle, visualize! These are the great principles bound up in the text, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:27). Get it into your mind and get going, and you will reach your greatest goals.

If these techniques fail, as they sometimes will, ask yourself: "Have I failed because I have some dirt in the mind?" By "dirt," I mean wrongdoing. If you allow this miserable thing called sin to grow in you, it will defeat you. Because, you see, dirt clogs, accumulates, creates "carbon" in the mental processes and corrodes the soul.

A young salesman once came up to me and said, "I've concluded that I do not succeed because something is wrong with me personally. I wish you would talk with me and see if you can get at it." Well, the fellow's conversation was filled with profanity. It was clear that his drinking was out of control. And he told me he was "mixed up with a couple of women."

It so happened I had a quotation in my pocket that I had copied from an advertisement for a certain brand of motor oil. It was coincidental that I had it with me, but God works in coincidences. I handed the young man the slip of paper. On it was written: "A clean engine delivers power." I could tell, from the look on his face, that he got the message.

Whatever your goal—if it is a good and honorable one—you have it in you to attain it. If you will be specific, if you will clarify your goal and blueprint it, and if it is within God's righteousness, you can attain your goal. This I sincerely believe.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." You will never get beyond the wisdom of those words. They give the secret to reaching your goal in life.

Heavenly Father, give me the insight to seek the purpose and meaning in my life through You, that I may attain the great goals that I feel burning in my heart. Through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

Action Steps

1. Focus your goals by repeating the Bible verse "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God... and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).
2. Write down one goal you wish to accomplish this week. Place the written goal where you will see it often (bathroom mirror, refrigerator door, car dashboard).
3. Image the successful outcome your goal represents. Visualize this image at least once each day.

"Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

(Romans 12:2)

2. Improve Your Attitudes

While visiting England one time, I read a newspaper obituary about Gem Gilbert, a British tennis star. It told of a curious death: Gem Gilbert died as her dentist was about to extract a tooth, before he actually touched her!

Years before, when she was a girl, Gilbert had been at the dentist's with her mother, who was to have a tooth pulled, and her mother died suddenly from the shock of extraction. The young girl saw her mother die in the dentist's chair.

So, what had happened? Her little mind painted a picture of herself dying in the same way. The picture became a sustained mental image. Gilbert carried it in her mind for 30 years. She would never go to a dentist no matter how badly she needed treatment. But finally there came a time when she was suffering such acute pain that she let a dentist come to her house. She had her medical doctor with her, her friends around her, and her pastor present—but before she could get into the chair, she died. The writer of the obituary remarked that Gem Gilbert had been killed by "thirty years of thought."

Hers is an extreme case, of course. But everywhere there are people who are killing themselves just as surely, if more slowly, by mental attitudes

composed of defeat, of sickness, of hate, of fear. If they do not kill themselves physically, they kill off their creative powers. Thinking *does* make it so. Each day, stand before a mirror, looking at the head above the eyes, where the brain is, and say, "Lord, I dedicate my mind to You. Please may I be "transformed by the renewing of my mind."

A most important part of reconditioning our mental attitudes is to have a long, daily, consistent process of mind-emptying. Our minds tend to accumulate a vast number of resentments, fears, inferiority feelings, gripes, grudges. These things get lodged in the cracks and crevices of the mind. How are you going to get rid of them all? Well, you must be willing to work at it. You have to *want* to do it. Some people actually like to be miserable. You have to renounce any sadistic pleasure you find in being miserable.

Every morning, while taking a shower, get yourself clean mentally at the same time. Sing hymns in the shower. The hymn is the most therapeutic form of song known to man. As you sing a hymn, it can thrust out of your mind all the old, dead, listless things of yesterday, and clean your mind on the inside while you are washing your body with soap and water on the outside.

Our failure in personal relationships may have to do, largely, with our own attitudes and with our own unwillingness to consider, modify, and change those adverse attitudes. It may well be that we fail to obtain our highest hopes and dreams because we need new attitudes. I have seen this work out in the lives of people so frequently that I have adopted the truism: changed attitudes will change almost anything.

For example, if I have a wrong attitude toward someone, my relationship with him will be unsatisfactory. No matter what I do, it will not work out right. If I have a wrong attitude toward some situation I have to face, it is bound to work out in the same wrong way.

How shall I change this? Simply by going to work to change my attitudes. And how do I go to work on my attitudes? Here is one way: For 15 minutes every day, apply selected thoughts to the thing that isn't going well. By selected thoughts, I mean take everything you know about God, about Jesus Christ, about prayer, about faith, about love, about righteousness; bring all those selected, spiritual thoughts to bear upon the issue that isn't going well. Surround it, saturate it with those powerful selected thoughts. If the situation is particularly difficult, repeat and continue the process three times every day until you get in the habit of thinking right about the problem.

By applying these right thoughts to your own attitudes, they will become right, and the situation will become right. When your attitude is correct, everything will tend to become correct. This change, when you experience it, is so powerful that not even the impossible can stand against it.

People sometimes say these principles will work in an easy situation, but doubt that they will apply to a difficult one. Remember that the Bible was not written for easy situations. The Christian religion was first taught to people living in the catacombs of Rome who, every moment of the night and day, were in danger.

There is a direct relationship between the principles taught in the Bible and the laws of the universe.

I believe that if you apply faith and hope and goodness and love to everything, in any situation, however difficult, it will produce a right result. It will change things for the better. It will solve the most perplexing situations. Faith can overcome the greatest odds. Prayer can open the way where there seems to be no way.

Finally, remember the law of supply. Here's how one practitioner explains it: "When everything seems to be against you, when everywhere there seems no hope, if you fill your mind with faith and do your best, if you put it all in the hands of God, if you are a worthy servant of His and do His will, then the universe opens and the law of supply pours everything you need upon you."

Heavenly Father, this is a wonderful law; that those who think the thoughts of God have the blessings of God flowing into them. Help me, now, to change my attitudes and become a different person, thinking different thoughts, so that by my changed attitudes everything will change. For this I give Thee thanks, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Action Steps

- 1. Remember attitudes are shaped by thoughts, exercise your mind by repeating the Bible verse "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind..." (I Peter 1:13).**
- 2. Each morning, look at your forehead in the mirror and consciously give the activity of your mind into God's control.**
- 3. Work on negative attitudes with the principle of replacement. Find one positive element each day in your personal, business, and spiritual life. At bedtime reflect on, and affirm, that positive thought.**

"In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence."

(Proverbs 14:26)

3. Build Your Confidence

Outwardly the average person appears quite self-sufficient, composed, sophisticated, self-controlled. That is the way we are expected to look in public. But, as someone once observed, in every human being there is a frightened child. There is one in you and in me, too. Appearances notwithstanding, most human beings are plagued with a malady of self-doubt, shyness, sense of inferiority, and low self-esteem. We are afraid of ourselves, of the future, of the world. It is something we have to struggle against all the time. Very few people have wholly transcended this feeling of self putdown and achieved complete, serene self-confidence. I do not think anyone has done so except after definite change in his basic thinking.

This condition in people certainly shows up everywhere in my mail and in my personal contacts. It seems to be especially prevalent in youth. Young people sometimes give the impression of being very self-assured. But most of them suffer from a lack of confidence. The slightest challenge becomes a mountain to them, they are so acutely conscious of themselves. Some write and tell me how shy and unhappy they are because they are fat. Others are self-conscious because they are thin, tall, or short. To quite a few, the nose seems to be a special problem.

I have had many letters from teen-agers whose main complaint is, "My nose is funny." Many others are troubled about their ears.

The Book of Proverbs says, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence." What does that mean, "fear of the Lord"? Either awe, respect, or love would, I think, be close to the intended meaning. In *respect* of the Lord, there is strong confidence. When an individual gets close to God, in loving harmony with God, then his weaknesses, his self-doubts, his shyness disintegrate.

An ancient philosopher said, "Know thyself, for this is the beginning of wisdom." Now I'd like to ask you a question. Do you really know yourself? Or are you mixed up in your thoughts about yourself? Do you really know what is in you, what you can do? Have you really become aware of your potential? There is no greater day in a person's life than the day he really finds himself and knows that he is more than equal to the difficulties he has to face. Have you found yourself?

How can a person work toward this happy condition? By practicing creative thinking. When you think creatively, you get creative results. William James was one of the greatest philosopher-psychologists this country ever produced. He said, "Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact." You will note that he does not say "will create the fact," but "will help to create the fact."

Suppose I want to change some circumstance. The first thing I must do is believe that I have significant reserves to do it. That is the first thing—believing—faith. Then I must humbly surrender myself to God,

seeking His wisdom and His guidance. And then I must work at the problem, sometimes through pain and suffering and toil. And, if all the time I hold steady in belief, this very belief attracts dynamic influences that help create the facts.

I remember a talk I had with a college student who was failing in his studies. He just couldn't seem to get passing grades. It was at his father's request that I talked with him. It was an interesting experience. The father is a man I first knew when we were in college. He remarked to me, speaking of his son, that young people today aren't like their parents. Personally, I think that's often just as well! Anyway, the boy came. He was a nice-looking boy and he was a great talker.

He proceeded to tell me at great length what was wrong with his professors. I never heard of such a poor bunch of professors in all my life! Finally I said, "Bill, seems to me the first thing you must do is get a little humility. Suppose we pray and try to get some humility in you."

After we had prayed, the boy looked at me and said, "Okay, I get the message. The fault is all mine." I thought that was a good beginning. It is always a good beginning to stop blaming other people for your failures. Then we prayed that God would grant the boy some wisdom. He said despondently, "But I have so many faults."

Then I told him about a method for overcoming lack of confidence. "First, take pencil and paper and make an honest analysis of yourself. On one sheet of paper, list all the negative things about yourself: your weaknesses, your failures, your faults, your doubts—everything negative. On another sheet, list

qualities representing a picture of yourself as you would like to be. On one sheet, you have the way you are; on the other, the way you would like to be. Then put the first one away; the other one, fold it, put in your pocket, and read it a dozen times a day.

"Second, pray that the Lord will empower you with great strength. Visualize the strength flowing into you.

"Third, go out and apply to your immediate problems the best of your diligence and intelligence."

The boy accepted these suggestions and acted on them. I saw him a few years later. He had graduated in the top third of his class. He was doing splendidly in his job. He said, "I still carry in my pocket this diagram of what I would like to be. In my desk at home, I still keep the one that shows how I used to be. Sometimes I get it out, and cross out some weakness I no longer have. I've got about half the things on the sheet crossed out now. But don't worry, I'm not going to get cocky; I'm still humble. I know I didn't do it myself."

I asked, "Who helped you do it?"

He said, "It was the Lord. Isn't it wonderful how close to you the Lord is if you really give yourself to Him?"

Realize that, as a child of God, you have within you enough strength to meet any situation. Exorcise by prayer the causes of no confidence. Make a blueprint of what you aspire to be, and hold it firmly in your mind. Then commit your living into God's hands and let Him bring out of you the powerful person within you who is able to overcome. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence."

Heavenly Father, let me feel close to Thee. Grant, O Lord, that in this moment I may truly surrender my life to Thee and realize the power that is within me so that I may overcome all difficulties in myself and be confident and sure through the help of Jesus Christ, in whose name I pray. Amen.

Action Steps

1. Build your confidence by repeating the Bible verse... Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid... for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9).
2. Make the two lists outlined on page 14. Be sure to put the positive list in your pocket or purse and read it each day.
3. Enthusiasm is a great antidote for fear. Practice being thrilled by the world, by beauty, by opportunity, and by people.

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

4. Never Accept Defeat

You don't need to be defeated by *anything!*

There is a power in this world called the power of defeat. But there is an even greater power in this world beside which this power falls into insignificance. And this power nobody ought ever to forget. It is the enormous power of God and the illimitable power of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By this power, you can avoid any defeat.

This isn't to minimize circumstances. Life can be overwhelming. Shakespeare wrote, "When sorrows come, they come not as single spies, but in battalions." There are times when life seems to throw the whole book at you. And if you are in one of those situations now, it may seem incredible that anyone would say, "Never accept defeat." But if you don't want to be defeated, don't accept the defeat concept. It's that simple.

"Oh," you say, "but look at all the difficulties." I *am* looking at them. No, we don't need to be defeated by anything.

It is really unworthy of a Christian to say, "Well, I've had it. This problem is too much for me. I can't handle it anymore. I will just accept defeat." *Never* accept defeat.

So how do you go about working this out in a prac-

tical manner? Use three principles:

Principle No. 1 — Never think defeat. If you feel defeated and you think, *I'm tired and weary and I've had it*, that is exactly how it will be. But if, when the going gets rough, you think, *I won't accept this. I will continue to think victory and not defeat*, then all the resources of your nature flow toward effecting victory.

One way to cancel out defeat thoughts is simply to repeat that text from Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It will knock any defeatism out of you.

I received from a woman a letter that illustrates this principle perfectly. I want to share it with you. Here is a woman who really found resources within herself to defeat defeatism. This is what she wrote:

Dear Dr. Peale:

I am fifty-four years young. I have been married thirty-one years. I had a son. He was killed in an auto accident at eighteen.

Recently my husband wanted his freedom, which I gave him without bitterness or resentment in spite of the fact that nearly everything I had worked for was being taken from me. I valued the experience enough not to let my peace of mind be disturbed. Our lives were so interwoven, I thought it would be easier to forget the past if I started life anew somewhere else, as I try always to look forward to something better.

The lessons I learned are priceless, so I really have no regrets. What I lost materially, I gained spiritually, and no one can take that from me. I found peace and contentment within. It wasn't easy to give up my son or my husband, my home,

or my friends, but I found that security is within oneself and not in persons, places or things, and we really don't possess anything except in our consciousness.

Life is a challenge. But that is what makes it interesting. I am in love with it. I feel more alive now than before I gave up so much. By disciplining and controlling my thoughts, I create harmony in my life, and thank heaven no one can control that but me. So, I cannot blame anyone but myself if I'm not happy. Now I am grateful for my problems.

Adversities are really stepping stones to something better. The more I study the Bible, the more the mysteries of life unfold to me. Sometimes I feel like I will burst with joy.

Life is not easy. Everyone has some hardship or sorrow or economic difficulty or other heavy problem to face, but the people who find themselves by finding God have power to gain victory over anything life brings.

Principle No. 2 — Stick it out and never stop trying. This is almost like a primary-school lesson. But how many times have you failed at something because you simply didn't try hard enough or long enough? The test of an individual's character is how tenacious he is. The correct attitude is like that of a bulldog: get hold of an idea and never let go. If you have an objective, and a roadblock gets in the way, you must get around, or underneath, or over, or through the barrier. No roadblock should stop you. You must keep on keeping on.

Many a time I have seen that tragedy of human life where someone would have achieved a great thing if

he had just kept at it a little longer. Success was just out there at the end of his outstretched fingers, but he was so tired and discouraged that he let go. If he had lunged for it, if he had tried once more, he would have had it!

Principle No. 3 — Keep God in it. Nobody can be as strong, vital and heroic as I have suggested without the presence of God. This is an overwhelming world, and we are very small. It is like the prayer the Normandy fishermen offer when they go out on the deep to fish. Before they cast off their little boats, they pray: "O Lord, take care of us. The sea is so vast. We are so small." He does and He will.

I tell you from my heart: the secret of meeting life victoriously is how close you are to God, how deeply and sincerely you receive Jesus Christ into your life. If you give your life to God, if you commit your life to Christ, if this becomes your consuming passion, I guarantee that you will have an immunity—not from difficulty, but from defeat. And that is all we can ask.

Never accept any defeat, because on the other side of defeat, if you defeat it, there is a glorious victory.

Heavenly Father, grant that I may have the great resiliency that comes when Jesus Christ is in my life. Help me to use the full power Thou hast given me to overcome any defeatism in this world. And for this I thank Thee, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

Action Steps

1. Fight off defeat by repeating the Bible verse "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).
2. Don't quit trying. Practice persistence by avoiding the word "if." Focus on the dynamics of "how." There is always an alternative for you to try.
3. Learn from every difficulty. Every problem contains the seed of its own solution. Pick apart a problem until you uncover the solution it contains.

"Cease from anger, and forsake wrath..."

(Psalm 37:8)

5. Master Your Emotions

A school superintendent was doing his best to administer the schools in his county. But there was a self-appointed, officious individual who talked all around the community about how bad the county schools were and how their school superintendent was the worst in America. He finally concluded that he owed it to the public and to posterity to tell this school superintendent about it.

He went to the superintendent's office, sat across the table from him and said, "I suppose you know what I have been saying about you. You are the worst school superintendent in the United States and this is the worst-run system in America."

The superintendent said, "No, I had not heard that. Is that so?"

The man replied, "Absolutely. And I am here to tell you about it."

"Well," the superintendent said, "that is awfully nice of you. You are a fine citizen. You are doing your duty by coming here to tell me; go ahead."

For 40 minutes, this man let him have it without interruption. Finally, when the man ran down, the superintendent said, "Is that all you have to say?"

"Yes, that is all I can think of right now."

"I want to thank you for your interest."

"Aren't you angry at what I have done?" the man asked in surprise.

"No, you see I want to do the best job that I can do. You have been frank and have caused me to re-think my acts. You have stimulated me, and I thank you."

"Well," said the critic, "you have taken away all my grievances."

According to reports, the critic went on to become the superintendent's most ardent supporter.

Now, a much less disciplined individual would have reacted angrily and there could have been a battle royal. This superintendent was master of the situation because he had learned the art of taking the heat out of emotion, by practicing a cool, objective attitude.

How well have you mastered your emotions? To find out, list every time for 24 hours that you feel frustrated or irritated. For example, if you are annoyed because the coffee is cold, write that down. If you are angered because a button pops off your shirt and rolls under the bed, write that down. If the newspaper is late, put down what you felt at that time. At the end of 24 hours, review the list and see how many times you have been irritated.

In psychology the state of constant annoyance is known as infantile narcissism. It means that you resent anything that frustrates you. You want everything to be exactly right. If it is not, you become irritated. To overcome such a condition, say to yourself, "Why *should* everything always come my way? That is an infantile state. I have to expect irritation in this life and I might as well get used to it, and learn to

take it like an adult." Only when a person comes to that state has he arrived at maturity.

A second form of emotional disturbance is emotional transference. It might reveal itself this way. Your secretary may irritate you, but you have to be at least half-way polite with her because she is outside the family. But when you get home, you take it out on your wife. That is what is known as transfer of emotions. If business does not go well, the emotionally unstable person takes it out on his children. One should study this, asking, "Do I transfer my emotions?"

Then there is what is known as the addict type of person. It may be described by saying, "I want what I want when I want it." I have been in meetings where people say, "I cannot stand it another minute; I simply must have a cigarette." Does it remind you of a two year old demanding immediate gratification? It is at this age that the growing-up process must start.

Perhaps the most difficult thing in life is to grow up. Don't get the idea that because you are 40 or 50 or 60 years of age that you have necessarily entirely grown up. Sometimes I am not so sure that I have! The thing that holds us in a vise-like grip, the thing that is most difficult to evolve from, is continuing childhood. Childhood grips you even into old age, not with the wonder and creative genius of a child, but with the childish infantilism that haunts our emotional life. It sometimes manifests itself in hate, resentment, ill will, and meanness.

Perhaps the most serious emotional problems have to do with fear and hate, and they have the same emotional base. If you hate anyone, you really

fear that person. You are unconsciously afraid he will dominate you; you are afraid he will get ahead of you. You fear that he will affect your life in some way. Consider these facts personally. If there is anyone you hate, tell yourself the truth, and the chances are that you unconsciously fear that person.

Then there is, of course, the emotion of grief, one of the most painful, and yet one of the most natural, emotions known to man. One may be perfectly normal until grief comes. But, after that, he may become abnormal and let his grief cause self-destroying force to go to work on the mind.

You can best master your emotions when you merge and identify your life with Christ. When you do this, certain great benefits come to you. You learn first of all how to let off emotion. If you bottle up emotions, you will crack and break, just as much as if you put an expanding substance into a glass bottle; it will break. The art is to know how to let off the emotions properly; never use the tongue in this process. It is not to be trusted. To let off emotion, use the hand; opened, not clenched in a fist. If you will work in such a manner with your hands, you can release emotions that rest upon the mind.

A great actress is said to have had a unique method of overcoming emotions. When she became angry, she went into the kitchen and baked. Once, when a great anger seized her, she baked all night long: 23 pies, nine cakes and three dozen doughnuts. Whenever the news spread through Hollywood that she was angry, people would gather at her house, knowing that there probably would be pies, cakes, and doughnuts to pass around. In this activity, the emotion passed. It flowed out of her fingertips in-

stead of out of her tongue. So she did not say sharp, mean, cutting, devastating things. She showed a fine mastery of her inner nature.

It is remarkable how great a human being can be who is identified with Christ. Such a person knows how to vent an emotion.

The best way to handle an emotion is to take the heat out of it. That is what is wrong with an emotion; it is hot. You have to cool it off, and the way you cool it off is by getting a cool mind. The longer I live, the more I realize the importance of developing a cool mind. Become so composed that you can always govern the heat that nature wells up within you.

Take temptation, for example. A person young or old who gives way to a temptation because of its hot pressure is really an individual who is simply lacking in skill. Take for example, a boy or girl who is tempted by the opposite sex. As this pressure wells up, they say to themselves, "This is nature and not to be denied." What to do? Think coolly and reason, "Now, just wait a minute, this may cause me to spend fifty years regretting it. I may bring upon myself a situation that will give me pain all my life." Do not be a fool. Stop, think, get as cold as ice. Practice picturing in advance the results of your imminent act.

Of course you may ask, "How can I take the heat out of emotion when it comes up so fast?" There is an answer to that, too. You have to get yourself changed. But you cannot change yourself, therefore you must have someone change you. But you say, "I have been this way for many years and I am pretty well set. Who can change me?" Jesus Christ. Even as a man will break a wild horse and make a beautiful animal,

so can Jesus lay disciplinary hands upon a person and modify the spirit and cause him or her to emerge as a great soul.

Heavenly Father, keep Thy cool, quieting hand on me. Hold the mirror to me so that I may see myself as I am, and tell myself the truth about me. Make me willing to yield myself to Thee, that under the transforming genius of Thy touch I may enter into serenity and personal control. Through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

Action Steps

- 1. Get on top of your emotions by repeating the Bible verse "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).**
- 2. Make a list of all the things that irritated you yesterday. Now, throw it away! Forget the past and face today with a fresh outlook.**
- 3. Take the heat out of a charged situation by consciously thinking "cool." Make it your responsibility to calm the situation.**

"...therefore choose life."

(Deuteronomy 30:19)

6. Activate Your Power of Choice

You and I possess the power to choose. Every day, we make many choices. Some of them seem small. But no choice is altogether small, for upon the most seemingly unimportant choice may ultimately depend the outcome of your life. Someone said that history swings on small hinges. Similarly does human life develop according to small decisions. So we determine our future by our immense power of choice.

Suppose, for example, that you are depressed. How do you overcome that? You can *choose* to be happy. If you are driven by fear, *choose* to be courageous. If you are filled with hate and prejudice, *choose* to be loving and kind. If you are weak and sick, *choose* to be strong and well.

Is this promising too much? This teaching is based upon the authority of the Bible. In Deuteronomy 30:19, it says: "Choose life, that thou . . . may live." So you have an immense power, the power to choose.

Everyone faces difficulties and hardships. So the issue is not whether you are going to have them or not, because you are. The question is, will you allow them to crush you, or will you choose that they add

to your development? Decide now, "I'm through with my weakness. I don't want to live this way anymore. From this moment on, I'm through with this thing."

I was passing through Jersey City some time ago and started thinking of an old friend of mine, A. Harry Moore. Harry was governor of New Jersey for four terms, more times than any other man who ever ran for that office.

As a youth, Harry Moore didn't have two nickels to rub together. He lived with his mother, a widow, and they had absolutely nothing. The only thing Harry could do was to make his own way in life by hard work and intelligence and struggle. And there were times when he got discouraged.

One night he came home for supper and sat watching his mother cook over a coal stove. She was using a ladle to stir soup in a big pot. As Harry sat there, he complained, "Mother, I'll never amount to anything. I'm ready to give up. Why don't we have any money? Why don't we know someone who could help us? Here I am, I want to be somebody in the world, but I don't have anyone to help me."

Thereupon his mother took that ladle out of the pot and pointed it at him, indifferent to its dripping. "Don't you sit around here and tell me you haven't got anyone to help you," she said. "Haven't I told you ever since you were a little boy that God will help you? Haven't I told you that you are an American, and that an American has the greatest opportunity of anyone in the world? Don't sit there and tell me you haven't got anyone to help you. All you have to do is *choose* to be somebody. And if you choose to be a nobody, like you're talking now, you'll be that.

But if you choose to be somebody, you will be. What you need, Harry, are just two things: God and gumption."

Now *gumption* is an old-fashioned word. Some of today's younger people have never heard it. I suppose the best modern synonym for it would be *guts*. But there is more in gumption than in guts. It contains not only fortitude, but sagacity. *Gumption!* So Harry Moore's mother told him that if he chose to be somebody and had God and gumption, he *could be* somebody. And he was. Four terms as governor of his state and one term as a U.S. Senator.

The enormous power of choice was made even more evident to me a few years ago. I had made a speech in Boston to 700 top salespeople. It was a dynamic crowd, I assure you, for these were all creative people. One of them, with his wife, sought me out after the meeting. They were a nice-looking couple in their early 40s. The wife said to me, "I have had a great tragedy in my life and I wonder if I could shake your hand. I have read some of your books and feel that I know you, that you are my friend. Also, you are a pastor, and I thought if I could just take your hand it would help me."

A request like this makes one feel a strong desire to help. This woman was so earnest, and her sincerity was so appealing, that I was touched.

"Recently we lost our little boy," she told me. "Seven years old, he was."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. Had he been ill long?"

"No, it happened in the twinkling of an eye," she continued. "He had gone out to play with some other children. He left singing and whistling and

happy. He was always happy and everyone loved him. The children were playing near a building where some construction was going on. Suddenly, from up above somewhere, a heavy plank fell and hit him on the head and killed him instantly. He had left the house so full of health and happiness and life. They brought him back inert, the laughter silenced, the whistling ended. He was dead."

I asked her how long ago it had happened.

"Six weeks," she answered.

"Give me back your hand," I said. "You're one of the most courageous mothers I ever met." I took the father's hand, too, for he was of the same stamp. "You people are meeting this very bravely. You are an inspiration to me. What is your secret?"

"You see," the wife replied, "it's like this. We could allow this sorrow to crush us. But we have three other children. We don't want to bring gloom and sadness into our home. We don't want to scar their young lives. We must think of them, as well as ourselves. We want to handle our sorrow creatively so that our family may grow stronger as a result of our little boy's death. So," she concluded, "we prayed it through, we talked it through and we chose to meet it in a spiritually creative way, knowing that the good Lord will sustain us."

There you have it. Tragedy, death, pain—they come to everyone. What do you choose to do with them? "Choose life, that thou . . . may live."

Heavenly Father, guide me to choose good, not evil; and strength, not weakness. Help me to choose creatively with the knowledge that I am sustained by Your enormous strength, through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Action Steps

1. Focus on the power of choice by repeating the Bible verse "Choose life, that thou... may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).
2. When facing a hard choice, get alone in a quiet place. Allow God's spirit to speak to you in prayer. Wait on Him for guidance.
3. Think about others who will be affected by your choice. Often, considering the other people involved both motivates us and guides us to right choices.

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