

SEVEN KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL LIVING

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I want each of you to be successful in life. I have a friend, Dr. William A. Ward, who once described what I do NOT want to happen to you. Said he: "Many a man swims in the sea of self-satisfaction, nibbles at the bait of procrastination, swallows the hook of mediocrity, and ends up in the net of failure." I do not want a single young lady or young gentleman of this graduating class to end up in the net of failure. To that end, let me suggest seven keys to successful living.

Please do not worry about the time it will take for me to consider seven points. I assure you that I shall not be like the speaker who brought a message in the Yale chapel. He used an acrostic on YALE, and spoke for a half hour on Y - Youth, a half hour on A - Ability, and a half hour on L - Loyalty, and a half hour on E- Enthusiasm. He spoke for two solid hours. As they were going out the door, one perspiring freshman said: "Thank heavens, this is not the Massachusetts Institute of Technology!"

I. THE FIRST KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LIVING IS MARKED: "HAVE A PERSON IN YOUR LIFE".

By this I mean that you need a hero in your life, one who inspires, one who challenges you. Make sure that you choose wisely your hero. A thoughtful University Student wrote to his pastor these words: "Young people today demand absolute honesty, but because they don't find it, they are skeptical of all things spiritual as well as all things secular. They're looking for a hero, but in their skepticism they have to settle for an anti-hero."

A similar sentiment is expressed in a cross section poll of young people, 16 to 23 years of age, taken recently by a magazine. The magazine poll indicated that more than 50% of young people in this age group held no living American or foreign public figure in high regard. And the survey concluded: "When young people respect someone, he is an anti-hero!"

As you choose wisely your hero, make sure that he or she is no phony. Someone has made this observation: "Worship your heroes from afar, because up close the observation withers them." This is the reason I selected Jesus Christ as my hero. He was no phony. He could stand any observation, no matter how close!

Make sure that the hero in your life will lift you up, not drag you down. The hero we choose will either appeal to the best in us or the worst in us. I think your hero should be better than you are. Our tendency is to choose someone who is like us rather than someone we should strive to be like. It's a sad trait that so often we choose someone beneath us rather than someone above us. Children used to play cops and robbers. In former days, nobody wanted to be robbers. Today, when children play "cops and robbers" the cops have to be appointed, because everyone wants to be the robbers!

That young college student was very honest when he said: "My hero is a slob! He makes the same mistakes I make and he doesn't think he is better than I am!" On the other hand, I cannot choose a slob for my hero. I don't want someone on the same level with me. I want someone who inspires me to climb to a higher level.

II. THE SECOND KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LIVING IS MARKED:

“HAVE A PURPOSE IN YOUR LIFE”

The most precious heritage in the world can become covered with dust. The finest brass will tarnish, the purest iron will rust. Likewise you will fail in life unless you keep life polished by committing yourself to a great purpose in life. All of us need new concerns, new targets.

It is not enough for a man to say that he lives. The question is: What does he live for? From what source does he derive his inspiration? Does he spend his days merely in the cellar of his being? It seems to me that every individual should have the purpose of making the most of his life.

The old frontiers of geography have disappeared, but their place has been taken by frontiers in science and in industry whose horizons are limitless. Never have there been such opportunities for progress - but they are available only to those who have a worthy purpose in life.

Each of you should remember that you are a creation of God. You are unique, with talents that are your own. We do not all have the same number of talents. But make it your purpose in life to be at your best. No matter what you do in life, do your best in that area. Develop the gifts that God has given you. You have a purpose in life to fulfill that no one else can fulfill.

III. THE THIRD KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LIVING IS MARKED:

“HAVE A PERFORMANCE IN YOUR LIFE.”

In other words: "Put your ideas to work." Too many of us have ideas that we never put to work. F. W. Woolworth was not the first man to have the idea of selling miscellaneous low-cost items under a single roof. But he was the first one to work the idea. People laughed at him. He tried three times and failed. But he became the dime-store magnate because he kept working his idea. He tried the fourth time, and you know the result.

Intentions are not enough. I remember the boy who said to his father: "Dad, there were 10 bullfrogs sitting on a lily pad. One decided to jump. How many were left on the lily pad?" The father replied: "Of course, there were nine left." The father was irked after his answer when the boy said: "That's not right." Finally, the father said: "Well, how many were left?" The boy repeated: "There were ten bullfrogs sitting on a lily pad. One decided to jump. There were still ten bullfrogs on the lily pad. The one bullfrog that decided to jump never did. He only decided to jump!"

We need the action spirit of the little boy whose father was a Doctor, and the family lived near Ohio State University. Every Saturday, when there was a football game, some thoughtless driver would park a car in front of their driveway, and prevent the Doctor from getting out. Despite kind requests not to block the driveway, the practice persisted. His son heard of the problem and said: "Dad, let me try my idea. I think I can handle your problem." The next Saturday, Ohio State played Michigan. Wonder of wonders, despite the tremendous number of cars parked around, no one blocked his driveway. Amazed, the Doctor found a sign his boy had scrawled and put at the driveway: "If you park in front of this driveway, all the air will be let out of your tires!"

So I challenge you to do more than build castles in the air. Any man's dream can come true if he only wakes up and goes to work. Don't let any barriers keep you back from performance. I like the words of Faith Baldwin: "There are many things we desire to achieve. But the achievement is not the accomplishment. The achievement is the breaking through of whatever barriers have been set up. It is the effort that counts." So I repeat, put a performance into your life!

IV. THE FOURTH KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LIVING IS MARKED: “HAVE A PUNCH IN YOUR LIFE.”

And what is the punch? It is enthusiasm. The word "enthusiasm" comes from two Greek words: "En" which means "in" and "Theos", which means God. Thus, enthusiasm is a God-given gift. Webster says it means fervor, ardent zeal. It is something that comes from within.

Think what enthusiasm will do for you. It will make you healthier. There is much truth in psychosomatic disease, or emotionally induced illness. Fear, anxiety, despondency can actually make you sick. Think negatively, and you will find that sickness may result. Be enthusiastic, and think positively, and you will enjoy a more healthful life.

Furthermore enthusiasm will build respect for you. When you have earnestness, interest, zeal, they make for you a personality, which is respected. People will like you, too. No one wants to be around a person who resembles the lady who was asked: "How do you feel?" She concluded a sad "organ recital" by saying: "I feel good, but I always feel the worst when I feel the best, because I know how bad I am going to feel when I start feeling bad again!" No one enjoys the company of an individual like the man who says: "What's the use of living? It is all a matter of stones. You come into the world, that's a birthstone. You leave the world, and that's a tombstone. And in between, it is gallstone! "

Enthusiasm is so important that Emerson once said, "Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm!" So put the punch of enthusiasm into your life.

V. THE FIFTH KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LIVING IS MARKED: “HAVE A PRESSURE-REMOVER IN YOUR LIFE.”

And do you know what that pressure-remover is? It is a sense of humor. Someone has said that when God made man, he took a little earth and formed man, but he crowned him with a sense of moral values, with an intelligence which would help him to make choices and decisions. He also gave him a sense of humor. A man is not complete without a sense of humor. A man without a sense of humor is like a car without a bumper. Or to put it positively: "Laughter is the finest antidote to the acidity that eats ulcers in the stomach." I like this quote: "Laughter brightens the eye and forces stale air from our least-used lung cells. A good laugh does away with care, and relieves the great strain of modern life.

There are two reasons why I laugh and enjoy it. The first reason is that it helps others. It costs me nothing, but it creates so much. It helps the discouraged, the sad, and the despondent. The second reason I enjoy laughing is that it helps me. It is just plain healthier to have a sense of humor, and to enjoy a good laugh.

My friend, Don Loney, worked under much pressure. His Doctor once said: "Don, you ought to have a good laugh at least once a day." One night, Don was in a restaurant, sitting at a table by himself. He ordered a meal, and while he was waiting, he suddenly realized that he hadn't laughed all day. He let out a laugh that you could have heard a block away! A man at the next table rushed over and asked: "What are you laughing for?" Don answered: "I'm laughing for my liver!" The man said: I guess I had better laugh for my liver, I ordered mine a half hour ago, and it hasn't come yet!"

VI. THE SIXTH KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LIVING IS MARKED: "HAVE A PLUS IN YOUR LIFE.

By a "Plus" in life, I mean, do a little more than is expected of you. The greatest men I have known are always striving to learn a little more than the job calls for. Have a plus in your life. Have a little more faith than you need personally, so you can share your faith with someone else!

When you put a plus into your life, you will, in turn, receive not only the rewards you earn but also a little more. A college girl worked her way through college at a Hotel Desk. One night, the girl who relieved her was sick, and she volunteered to take her place, even though it would mean by doing this extra shift, she would miss a great concert, featuring Marian Anderson, the world-famed Contralto. Miss Anderson was to be featured at a concert in the city that night. How she hated to miss the great artist, yet she felt she had to help her friend. It seemed a long evening as she sat at the Hotel Desk. Later, that evening, Marian Anderson came into the Lobby. She said to the girl behind the desk, "Did you hear my concert tonight?" The girl struggled to keep back the tears as she said: "Oh, I wanted so much to hear you sing, but my friend was sick, and I offered to take her place at this desk." Then followed an unforgettable moment. Marian Anderson stood in the lobby and sang several of her featured solos for the girl who had added a plus to her life!

VII. THE SEVENTH KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LIVING IS MARKED: "HAVE A PARTNERSHIP IN YOUR LIFE."

Happiness is found in relationships. First there is the relationship to our fellowmen. Then there is the relationship to our work. There is the relationship to ourselves, but the most important relationship is our relationship to God. Pascal once said: "Happiness is the union of ourselves with God.

Now, here is a wonderful thought. Such a relationship with God is best realized as a partnership with God. We work in a mighty partnership with God, when we render service to others.

Let me tell you about my friend, Bill. Bill was in a service club whose motto was "Service above Self." One day the telephone rang, and the President of the civic club said: "Bill, we promised to help the underprivileged children of our community. Jimmy needs an operation at a hospital 50 miles away. Can you take him in your car, tomorrow morning?" When Bill gladly agreed, he gave him the address where the lad lived.

The next morning, Bill drove over to the little shack where Jimmy lived, and lifting him in his arms, he carried the little polio victim to the front seat of his car. A grateful mother climbed into the back seat.

As they rode along, Jimmy looked toward Bill and said: "Mister, are you God?" "Oh, no," said Bill. "I'm not God! Why do you ask?" Said the boy: "Last night when I said my prayers, my mummy kissed me good night and said that God would see that that I got to the hospital, and that God would see that my legs were straightened so that I could run and play like other kids. You must be God." Bill answered, "No, Jimmy, I am not God." Then Jimmy said: "Well, Mister, then you must be working with God." Bill reached over and patted his shoulder and said. "I'll accept that, Jimmy: I guess you could say that I am working with God. And, after getting to know you Jimmy, I want to be a better worker for God in the future." Then Jimmy's face lit up as he said: "Golly, Mister, God must be an awfully good boss to work for!"

Young ladies and gentlemen of this graduating class I am not sacrilegious when I say that I think we have the best Boss in the world. God is not dead! He is very much alive! He is here, looking down on each of you. He has a job for each of us to do. And God is "an awfully good Boss to work for!"