

BE A MAXIMIZER

How to excel at whatever you do

BETTER AS A TEAM

The Art of working

Enemies of Success

Know your nemeses

Appreciate the Good

Perfect love for imperfect people



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

There is a common force that drives most of us: we want to be successful. Regardless of who we are or what our specific goals may be, we want the security and comfort that material success provides, as well as the satisfaction of knowing that our lives are turning out well and count for something.

If we all want the same basic thing, why then are some people so much more successful than others? Circumstances alone aren't the deciding factor, because some people succeed despite incredibly difficult circumstances. Neither is success determined by natural ability alone, because many gifted people fail, while others who seem less likely to succeed do.

What, then, makes the difference? Some experts say it comes down to organization—establishing priorities, planning, managing time wisely, and so on. Others say creativity is the key, or motivation, or hard work, or single-mindedness, or the ability to work well with others. In reality, to have the greatest chance at success, it takes a combination of these and more. Success, it turns out, is a tricky matter.

Who can help you put it all together?—Who better than God? Look at the balance of His creation. From the tiny atom to the far reaches of the universe, can you imagine anything more intricate, efficient, or enduring? And who has more or better ideas than Him? Or who knows you and your needs better than Him?

And here's the best part: He wants to help you succeed. He says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope,"¹ so "commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed."² You and God can make an unstoppable combination.

1. Jeremiah 29:11

2. Proverbs 16:3 NIV

POINTS TO PONDER

BETTER AS A TEAM



No one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play it. —*H.E. Luccock*

Teamwork is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results. —*Andrew Carnegie*

If I could solve all the problems myself, I would. —*Thomas Edison, when asked why he had a team of twenty-one assistants*

A group becomes a team when each member is sure enough of himself and his contribution to praise the skills of the

others.—*Norman Shidle*

One piece of log creates a small fire, adequate to warm you up; add just a few more pieces to blast an immense bonfire, large enough to warm up your entire circle of friends. Needless to say, individuality counts, but teamwork dynamites.—*Jin Kwon*

Teamwork represents a set of values that encourage behaviors such as listening and constructively responding to points of view expressed by others, giving others the benefit of the doubt, providing support

to those who need it, and recognizing the interests and achievements of others.—*Katzenbach and Smith, The Wisdom of Teams, 1993*

Synergy is the highest activity of life; it creates new untapped alternatives; it values and exploits the mental, emotional, and psychological differences between people.—*Stephen Covey*

The key elements in the art of working together are how to deal with change, how to deal with conflict, and how to reach our potential. The needs

of the team are best met when we meet the needs of individuals.—*Max DePree*

I love to hear a choir. I love the humanity, to see the faces of real people devoting themselves to a piece of music. I like the teamwork. It makes me feel optimistic about the human race when I see them cooperating like that.—*Paul McCartney*

TALENT WINS GAMES, BUT TEAMWORK AND INTELLIGENCE WIN CHAMPIONSHIPS.

—**MICHAEL JORDAN**

No member of a crew is praised for the rugged individuality of his rowing.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say “I.” And that’s not because they have trained themselves not to say “I.” They don’t *think* “I.” They think “we.” They think “team.” They accept responsibility, but “we” gets the credit.—*Peter Drucker*

be a **MAXIMIZER**

BY RONAN KEANE



MOST PEOPLE, IT SEEMS, FALL INTO ONE OF THREE BROAD GROUPS WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR LEVEL OF DEDICATION AND INITIATIVE, THEIR WORK ETHIC, AND HOW MUCH THEY’RE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH.

These three groups are the minimizers, the maintainers, and the maximizers. Minimizers do as little as they can get away with, and maintainers do only what is needed to maintain the status quo, but maximizers are ready and willing to go the distance; they are focused on moving closer to their goal, even though they know it will cost them in time and energy.

Maximizers are the cream of the crop. They take initiative, are proactive, are the first to respond to a need or adapt to changing circumstances, and give their best at whatever they do. It comes as no surprise, then, that maximizers are generally more successful than their less committed counterparts.

There is no simple formula for becoming a maximizer, but there are some basic principles that apply almost universally.

Put in the hours

Maximizers don't watch the clock. To be maximizers, we must be willing to work long and hard, within reasonable limits, and sometimes do so in less-than-ideal conditions. Ancient Israel's King Solomon, who was himself a maximizer when it came to things as varied as his building projects, pursuing wisdom, and (perhaps less wisely) acquiring wives and

concubines, put it this way: "Lazy people want much but get little, while the diligent are prospering,"¹ and, "The lazy man will not plow because of winter; [therefore] he will beg during harvest and have nothing."²

Finding a balance is essential. The goal is not to become a work-aholic, but if we want the maximum results from any venture, it stands to reason that we need to put in more than a minimum of work.

Have a good work ethic and self-discipline

Cultivating a good work ethic, good work habits, and self-discipline are all crucial to becoming a maximizer. We should look for opportunities to renew our commitment to excellence through constantly challenging ourselves to stretch and grow. Good work habits include such things as planning ahead, prioritizing, wisely delegating, learning from mistakes, and remaining flexible.

Maximizers have a purpose. They are driven to accomplish something beyond the norm, and they realize that to be successful at it they need to make sacrifices.

Share the load

Maximizers work hard, but they are wise enough to know that their own efforts alone will never achieve the maximum results possible, and they are humble enough to solicit the help of others. They see the potential in others, delegate what they can, and inspire their coworkers to strive to be maximizers too.

And if they are really smart, they also share the load with God by involving Him at every step in the endeavor, knowing that the inspiration, insight, and strength He can add will get them much farther than they could ever get on their own. They believe in the power of prayer

1. Proverbs 13:4 TLB

2. Proverbs 20:4

and understand that God can help them reach their objective, even—and especially—when circumstances are beyond their control. They ask for His blessing at every turn, follow His lead, and depend on Him to do what they can't do.

Abandon the comfort zones

Being a maximizer involves some discomfort. If we continue to do only the things we've always done, the way we've always done them, we can't expect greater results. To accomplish more, we need to reach farther or in new directions; we need to pursue new ideas and

develop new strengths and abilities. It's easy to settle into a routine or to rest on one's accomplishments, but the maximizer is always on the lookout for a new challenge, a new opportunity, and new ways to break out of the mold. When he finds one, he goes for it.

Be a team player

The maximizer looks for ways to serve the common good, to not only accomplish his own work, but also to help others on his team accomplish theirs. He knows that by giving in this way he is building team spirit, which will maximize his own efforts in the long run and cause others to be

more willing to help him when he needs it.

Stay strong

Good health and being free from stress make you more productive, so taking time to take care of yourself is a good investment. Eat well, sleep well, exercise, and take time to relax and reflect.

Thank God for the good

Even if you do your best to follow the maximizer's creed of giving your best, you can't necessarily expect huge results right from the start—but you can expect to make progress. Focus on and be thankful for the gains, rather than dwelling on what there is left to do. ✚

A determined soul will do more with a rusty monkey wrench than a loafer will accomplish with all the tools in a machine shop. —*Rupert Hughes*

Coming together is a beginning.

Keeping together is progress.

Working together is success.

—*Henry Ford*



WHEN CLASHES ARE GOOD

BY CARYN PHILLIPS

SYNERGY—THE WORKING TOGETHER OF TWO OR MORE PEOPLE OR THINGS

in which the result is greater than the sum of their individual effects or capabilities—has become a workplace buzzword.

We've all heard lots about the benefits of teamwork. Pool your talents and work together, and you get more ideas, greater effort, and better results. Two and two don't always equal four; in teamwork they can equal six or eight.

But recently I saw another side to synergy: that some conflict is necessary for a team to be successful. Working together well doesn't mean sailing gently on a placid sea, as one might expect if the team were made up of people with similar temperaments, talents, and mindsets. The team that really gets somewhere has varied or even opposing

ideas and approaches to problems. The resulting turmoil can propel the team forward.

Of course, there needs to be a balance, and when each member of the team genuinely respects the others, there will be. When there is mutual appreciation for what each person brings to the team, when everyone keeps an open mind and every idea can be considered, and when it really doesn't matter who had the winning idea, conditions are ripe for innovation and progress.

On one team I worked with, there were opposing ideas and needs, which created conflict and uneasiness at first. But because we were more concerned about working together than we were about each having his or her own way, we didn't let our differences stop us, and eventually we overcame

them. The result was positive, even though it wasn't easy getting there.

I'm the kind of person who gets discouraged by conflict because I feel something must be terribly wrong, but I also have a mind of my own and don't like to be told what to think or do. Those opposing feelings have complicated many situations that were already difficult enough. Learning to view conflict as a necessary part of the process has been a breakthrough for me. That perspective takes the fear out of presenting my ideas when others think differently, and it also makes it easier for me to be open to opposing ideas.

Synergy takes work and some sparks may fly, but if we can get through that, the rewards are well worth it. As Kenneth Blanchard said, "None of us is as smart as all of us." ✨

the resting place

BY ANITA HEALEY

I USUALLY ENJOYED THE RIDE INTO TOWN ON MY MOTOR SCOOTER, BUT THAT DAY MY MIND WASN'T ON THE BEAUTIFUL SCENERY OR THE PERFECT WEATHER. It had been a busy previous two months. One coworker and I had tried to keep up with every aspect of our volunteer work while the rest of our team was away, and now that they were back, instead of the rest I had hoped for, the workload had increased.

I really deserve a break, I thought, but there's not much chance of that! Enveloped in a fog of self-pity, I never saw the speeding motorcycle until it crashed into me.

In shock, I picked myself up from the street and began pushing the scooter

to a repair shop down the street. The shop owner had heard the crash, rushed to help me, and quickly checked me for injuries. "You should go to the hospital," he said, "and have that hand looked at."

I looked down and realized I was clutching my left wrist. Several minutes later, serious pain set in.

I clenched my teeth on the ride to the hospital. I'd never felt such strong pain. I thought my wrist might be broken.

As I waited at the hospital to be examined, I closed my eyes and attempted to block out everything for a moment. *Jesus, why did this happen?* I prayed.

As soon as I formed the question, the answer came. *You have been trying to do My work without My power. Come to Me, you who labor and are heavy laden, and you will find rest for your soul.*¹ I had gotten so wrapped up in work that I had

been neglecting my time with Him. I had thought I needed time to myself, but what I really needed was more time with Him, getting rested and refreshed in spirit.

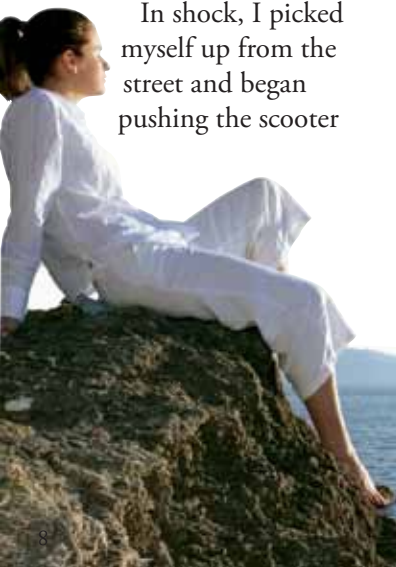
I'm so sorry, Lord, I answered. Please heal my wrist.

The x-rays showed no serious damage, and the doctor diagnosed it as a bad sprain.

For the next couple of weeks, the brace on my wrist was a constant reminder to not push on in my own strength, but to spend more time with Jesus, drawing on His strength and including Him more in my planning and work. Not surprisingly, everything became easier and went smoother. Despite my sprained wrist, I got more done, not less, and the stress lessened.

Now I try to not let a day go by without taking that time with Jesus. ✝

1. Matthew 11:28-29





WORK SMART

By D.B.B

ONE OF THE BEST THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN ORGANIZING YOUR WORK IS TO NOT GIVE YOURSELF MORE TO DO THAN YOU CAN MANAGE. Set priorities and work through your to-do list at a sustainable pace, starting with the most important or urgent items and doing what you can each day. Then you will have the satisfaction of knowing you used your time and energy wisely, and you will be that much closer to your goals when you start work the next day.

Getting the job done right is the most important thing. Accuracy is more important than speed. Typing tutors emphasize that speed will come with practice, and the same is true of most work. Over time, positive results will come more easily and quickly, and eventually they will come almost automatically. Don't rush or push; just focus on getting it right, and as you gain experience, you will naturally gain speed.

Racehorses can spurt for a few rounds around the track, but that's it. They're extremely high-strung and not good workhorses. Pack mules and donkeys, on the other hand, are plodders and load carriers. You cannot rush them, but they can carry heavier loads and negotiate trails that horses would never survive. Some people struggle at their work because they approach it like a racehorse rather than a pack mule.

Other people's troubles stem from the fact that they have no regularity, no schedule, no scientific organization. If they would keep a chart or spreadsheet or even a simple prioritized list, they would know at a moment's glance where their work was at and what to concentrate on next. Getting and staying organized may seem like extra work, but it saves a lot of work in the long run.

That is also the best way to avoid last-minute cramming and the stress that comes with that. Having everything planned and scheduled and charted is a far more

effective and pleasant course of action than constantly rushing to meet the next deadline.

Most large companies have what they call “efficiency experts” or “time management consultants” who hang over the shoulders of the workers to figure out how they could do

their jobs better, cheaper, or faster, as well as what they’re doing that they don’t need to do. You can do that for yourself too. By planning your work, keeping records, and evaluating the results, you can significantly improve your work habits and productivity. Now that is working smart! ✂



BRING OUT THE BEST

BY TINA YAMAGUCHI

ONE QUALITY THAT GOOD LEADERS SEEM TO HAVE IN COMMON IS THE ABILITY TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN OTHERS.

Whether they are bosses, managers, team captains, or role models, inevitably they have learned to not think in terms of problems, but rather in terms of people and their potential.

When those leaders see others doing something wrong or working inefficiently, rather than fuming or stepping in to do the job themselves, they challenge those people to keep trying until they get it right, and then praise them when they do.

The bosses could probably do those particular tasks better or quicker, but if

they made a habit of that, they would end up trying to do everything themselves. When there is a lot to do, the leader needs to delegate, and that involves trust, belief, training, and commendation. The leader needs to provide whatever training may be missing and trust the work to others; the people doing the work need to believe they can succeed; and then the leader needs to commend the effort, even if it’s not perfect. Over time, the people doing the work will usually learn to get it right, but not many will continue to try their best if all they hear is what they did wrong or how they could have done better.

No matter how otherwise talented

leaders may be, if they can't work well with people they will soon find themselves disliked and distrusted by those they are trying to lead. People trust those who they know care about them, and such trust is built by their leader taking a personal interest, showing concern, and being generous with praise and appreciation. People who consistently get those types of positive reinforcement usually do their best to live up to their boss's expectations.

The people expert Dale Carnegie gave an example of a boss who understood that principle. Gunter Schmidt was a store manager, and he had a problem:

one of his employees was careless about putting the correct prices on the display shelves. Reminders and admonitions didn't work, so after receiving one too many customer complaints Schmidt finally called the employee into his office. Rather than giving her the telling-off she expected, however, he told her that he was appointing her "supervisor of price tag posting" for the entire store. It was now her responsibility to keep all the shelves properly tagged—and she fulfilled that role satisfactorily from that day on. All she had needed was for her boss to express trust by giving her a little more responsibility. ✨

blank spaces

A spiritual exercise

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT WHEN IT COMES TO HELPING THOSE WE CARE ABOUT, PRAYER IS NOT THE LEAST WE CAN DO, BUT THE MOST. THE BIBLE PROMISES, "THIS IS THE CONFIDENCE THAT WE HAVE IN [GOD], THAT IF WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, HE HEARS US. AND IF WE KNOW THAT HE HEARS US, WHATEVER WE ASK, WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE THE PETITIONS THAT WE HAVE ASKED OF HIM."¹ THAT'S A LOT OF POWER!

There are many times during the day when our thoughts wander aimlessly, and those thoughts usually involve others—friends,

family, colleagues, or those we've crossed paths with or heard about in the news. Perhaps you are stuck in traffic, or you have your

hands in dishwasher, or are taking a walk, or are waiting to fall asleep at night. When you find yourself in one of these blank spots and

someone springs to mind, instead of only *thinking* about that person, turn your thoughts into a prayer. Instead of wondering how your nephew is doing in school, pray for him to excel and be happy. Instead of wondering if your mother is recovering from the flu, pray for her healing. Instead

of worrying about your friend who just lost his job, pray for him to not be discouraged and to find a new one.

By making a conscious effort to direct your thoughts to God and ask for His help, you will not only be giving a great gift to those you care about, but

you're likely to find greater peace of mind yourself. The more situations you ask God to take care of, the less you will have to worry about. "Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you."² ✨

1. 1 John 5:14–15

2. 1 Peter 5:7 RSV

Work and self-worth are the two factors that interact and tend to increase the strong sense of pride found in superior work teams. When people do something of obvious worth, they feel a strong sense of personal worth.—*Dennis Kinlaw*

FEEDING READING SUCCESS WITH PEOPLE

☞ *Look for the good in others.*

Philippians 4:8

Titus 3:2

☞ *Treat others the way you want to be treated.*

Matthew 7:2–5

Matthew 7:12

Luke 6:31–33

☞ *Show understanding to those who are weaker.*

Romans 15:1–2

Galatians 6:1

☞ *Be winsome; dwell on points of agreement.*

Romans 14:19

1 Corinthians 9:19–22

☞ *Be patient and forgiving, as God is with us.*

Psalms 103:8–10

Matthew 18:21–22

Ephesians 4:32



THE RULE OF

5

BY LILY NEVE

IT'S NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME HOW MUCH JESUS WANTS TO BE A PART OF OUR LIVES BY GIVING US PRACTICAL, TANGIBLE HELP. When I was discouraged about my inability to get organized, I took the problem to Jesus during my quiet time with Him. "There is no way that I will be able to meet my life goals with this serious state of disorganization," I told Him. "I try to change, but I need Your help, because without it I keep slipping into my old pattern of doing nothing because I cannot do everything. How can I overcome this problem?"

Faithful as always, He

spoke to my heart with words of encouragement about how much He loves me, even though I'm not perfect and don't accomplish as much as I think I should. Any forward progress is better than nothing, He reminded me. He didn't design us to succeed every time, only to be able to move forward, to learn and progress, and through that process to eventually become all we can be.

Jesus then gave me a few pointers to help me to make progress in this area, including what I have come to call "the rule of five." The crux of my problem was that I had accumulated

way too many things—clutter that led to a feeling of chaos. Some things I needed, some I had kept because I thought I might need them someday, and some were just plain junk.

Jesus didn't suggest that I embark on a huge reorganizing project that would have been very taxing and nearly impossible to follow through on, but rather that I start by trying to get rid of five unnecessary things each day. It could be as simple as putting a brochure that I'm through with into the recycle bin. I am also trying to pass on nice things that I will probably never use again, like that item of clothing

that would fit if I were to lose some weight, but which would look great on a friend right now. You get the idea. I've been able to give lots of small gifts to friends, donate some other things to needy

causes, and throw away the junk—and it has brought me back to the joys of simple, uncluttered living.

Of course some days I forget or don't have time, and I still have a lot of

stuff to work through, but the rule of five has given me a plan that works and I no longer constantly feel like an organizational failure. 🚫



ENEMIES OF SUCCESS

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

TODAY'S ARMIES OF LIFE COACHES AND BUSINESS GURUS OFTEN SEEM TO BUILD THEIR STRATEGIES ON A FUNDAMENTAL BIT OF ADVICE FROM THE 6TH-CENTURY BC CHINESE GENERAL SUN TZU IN HIS TREATISE, *THE ART OF WAR*—"KNOW YOUR ENEMY." Not until we identify and understand the attitudes and conditions that threaten our success can we take the steps necessary to overcome them.

Lack of a clear goal: "What often leads to failure," says entrepreneur and consultant Joseph Ansanelli, "is [the absence of] a well understood, small set of very important goals."

"If you don't know where you're going, you'll wind up somewhere else."—*Yogi Berra*

Lack of a plan: It's okay to dream of building castles in the air, but they won't become realities without a realistic step-by-step plan for putting them there. Today we have space

stations, but they didn't just happen.

“He who fails to plan, plans to fail.”—*Author unknown*

Lack of focus: Various things can contribute to lack of focus, including low motivation, a poor work environment, or being distracted by matters of lesser priority. Identify interferences and determine how to best deal with each.

“One reason so few of us achieve what we truly want is that we never direct our focus; we never concentrate our power. Most people dabble their way through life.”—*Anthony Robbins*

Laziness: You can have a great idea and even a great plan for achieving it, but if you lack the necessary dedication or aren't willing to put in the work, the idea and plan are doomed.

“Some people dream of success, while others wake up and work hard at

it.”—*Author unknown*

Rigidity: Few things undermine initiative and progress worse than holding on to the way things have been done in the past.

“A closed mind is not only closed to outside thoughts, it is often closed to itself as well. It is closed to new thoughts and anything that threatens the status quo.

But if you can open the doors, maybe just a crack at first, the ideas that have been patiently waiting at your gates will flood in.”—*David Straker and Graham Rawlinson, How to Invent (Almost) Anything*

Lack of enthusiasm: If an idea is like a spark, enthusiasm is the wind that whips it into a bonfire strong enough to withstand the rain of adversity.

“Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.”—*Winston Churchill*

Accepting defeat. Very often, the battle is lost in the mind before the real action even begins. Expect defeat, and you are already defeated; hope to win, and you give yourself a chance; expect to win, and you increase your chances exponentially. Even the most seemingly impossible situation can be overcome if approached positively, as a challenge.

“Success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go.”—*William Feather*

Complacency. The greatest danger often comes when things are running smoothly and the pressure is off, because the natural tendency then is to not try as hard. It may be possible to coast for a while, but valuable momentum will be lost; if left unchecked, things will grind to a halt.

“There is a very fine line between confidence and complacency. If you win the

first game against a team, the worst thing you can do is fool yourself into thinking that the second game will be easier.”—*Dave McGinnis*

Overconfidence. The hare and the tortoise, the giant Goliath and the boy David, the Titanic—you get the picture.

“Before you attempt to beat the odds, be sure you could survive the odds you’re beating.”—*Larry Kersten*

Procrastination. The most capable people in the world, with the best ideas in the world and all the financial backing in the world, will get nowhere until they take action.

“There are a million ways to lose a work day, but not even a single way to get one back.”—*Tom DeMarco and Timothy Lister*

Disunity: Joint efforts rarely come to full fruition

without reasonable levels of consensus and compatibility, so work at building those. Then when opposing ideas and interests emerge, rather than becoming stumbling blocks, they can be used as stepping stones.

“Honest differences of views and honest debate are not disunity. They are the vital process of policy making.”—*Herbert Hoover*

Moral compromise. The credo of some seems to be “All is fair in love, war, business, and life,” but what works is not always what’s right. Victories won immorally are shallow, usually short-lived, and often have consequences that cancel any success. “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”¹

“Success is more permanent when you achieve it without destroying your

principles.”—*Walter Cronkite*

Failure to learn from mistakes. Victory is very often decided according to who has learned the most from past mistakes. ❀

“The real test is not whether you avoid failure, because you won’t. It’s whether you let it harden or shame you into inaction, or whether you learn from it; whether you choose to persevere.”
—*Barack Obama*

APPRECIATE THE GOOD

BY MARIA FONTAINE

AFTER I COMMENTED ON MY BLOG ABOUT A CHRISTIAN SONG THAT I HAD FOUND PARTICULARLY INSPIRING, SOMEONE WROTE AND ASKED IF I WAS AWARE OF CERTAIN PERSONAL DETAILS ABOUT THE SINGER/SONGWRITER. I WASN'T, AND LEARNING THESE THINGS ABOUT HIM CAME AS A BIT OF A SURPRISE.

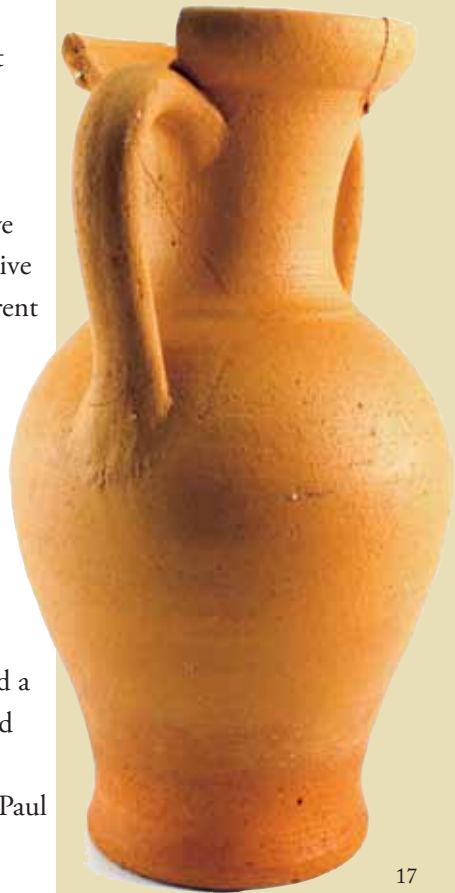
I still appreciate the song, though, and I don't feel that this man's lifestyle choices change the fact that the song contains a beautiful truth. I'm thankful for the way that song moved me, and for how it is reaching people with God's love.

We don't have to embrace everything about a person in order to appreciate the good that he or she does. If we can take on this attitude, it will help us to be less exclusive and to find common ground with people who are different from us.

If we judged everyone according to things they have done that we don't agree with, or by the sins they may have committed, we would miss out on a lot of very good things. We would have to reject the book of Psalms, because the author of most of those psalms, King David, plotted an innocent man's death.¹ And we couldn't appreciate Moses' leadership or the five books of the Bible that were authored by him because he killed a man in a moment of anger.² We wouldn't appreciate and benefit from a good deal of the New Testament, either, because the apostle Peter denied Jesus,³ and the apostle Paul

persecuted some of the first Christians before he found Jesus.⁴ We would have little inspired music if we started to dissect the lives of those who wrote or produced each song. For that matter, we'd have very little in life that we could appreciate or benefit from, because no one is perfect. Where would we draw the line?

The point is, when we see a beautiful piece of art



or hear some beautiful music, we can appreciate it and the inspiration behind it. Even if the artist or composer didn't know where that inspiration was coming from, we do. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights."⁵

Think about Jesus' interactions with mankind when He lived as one of us. He welcomed people who had made choices that He certainly didn't agree with. Those things weren't what mattered to Him. What mattered was that they wanted His love, and He gave it freely. If Jesus, perfect

and without sin, was that accepting and welcoming of everyone, how can we do less? ✨

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1. 2 Samuel chapter 11
 2. Exodus 2:11-12
 3. Matthew 26:69-75
 4. Acts 22:4; 26:9-11
 5. James 1:17



WHAT COUNTS

BY MARIA FONTAINE

A quote hanging in Albert Einstein's office read: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." In other words, a lot of the things you do in a day or week can't be "counted"—they're not things that you can tick off of your to-do list—and yet they are vital, defining moments.

We must be sure to always keep in the forefront of our minds that love is the most important thing. If we don't have love, all of our ticked-off to-dos, all of our great accomplishments, will be of no benefit.¹

The number one priority is and always should be love! If you can go to bed at night knowing that you have shown love, then you can rest well, knowing that you've accomplished something truly great. ✨

1. 1 Corinthians 13:3



BUILDING HABITS

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

Believe it or not, they used to build bridges by first flying a kite from one side of the river or gorge to the other. Someone on the opposite side caught the kite and tied a little thicker, stronger string to the end of the kite string, and the men who had sent the kite over pulled the new, thicker string back across. The teams on each side kept repeating the process, next with an even stronger string, then a cord, then a thin rope, then a thicker rope, and so on. Eventually they could pull a small steel cable across, then a heavier one, until finally they had a cable across the expanse that was strong enough to support them and their tools and materials.—And it all started with one tiny kite string!

That's how habits are formed, both good and bad. Add a thread every day, and before long you can't break it. Start developing a good habit by taking the first step, however small, in the right direction. Then keep at it until you've built up a routine that can't easily be broken.



If you haven't yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can right this minute by asking Him to come into your heart with His love, life, liberty, truth, peace, plenty, and happiness here, now, and forever. Simply pray:

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for the wrong things I've done, come into my heart, give me Your free gift of eternal life, and teach me more about Your love. Amen.

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Make your day

There are three things you can do to make the most of your day.

Number one, talk to Me first thing or even the night before about what you need or want to do. It doesn't have to take long—just long enough to get your bearings on the day and to let Me remind you of anything you may have forgotten.

Number two, each time you are about to start a new task, ask Me if you're on the right track. It may seem like the logical thing to do, or you may have done it a thousand times before, but perhaps I see factors you don't see or want to show you a better way to do it. When you make a conscious effort to check your plans with Me, it's much easier for Me to help you get it right. Nothing is too small to ask Me about.

Number three, when new factors arise, ask Me what to do. I see the big picture, and I can help you see things more clearly too. The quickest and surest route isn't always a straight line. Sometimes you need to sidestep or even backtrack. I know the way, but I can only lead you step by step if you ask Me step by step.

If you will remember to do these three things, your days will go better and you will have the peace of mind that comes from knowing that you made the most of your day. As you get in the habit of involving Me in your plans and work, you will also come to know Me in a deeper, more personal way. Each day will take on a new dimension—the dimension of My loving, guiding presence.

