

CHAPTER 14

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR FULL POTENTIAL

God has given mankind a supreme goal which will result in perfection: "Become ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is PERFECT" (Matt 5:48).

But to achieve this ultimate spiritual goal — and any other lesser physical goal in life — all Christians must focus their mind firmly on God and Jesus Christ. All areas of life must be viewed from this perspective: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33)!

There are only two dimensions our goals in life can seek: the physical or the spiritual. We must emphasize the one or the other. If we emphasize the physical over and above the spiritual, we will eventually lose everything — even the fleeting physical goals we seek.

But, if we emphasize the spiritual, we can gain EVERYTHING — both spiritual and physical!

The following principles are given as a help and aid to the Christian man, as he seeks to develop his full potential and attain the goals which life sets before him.

1. Make Walking With God Your Highest Ambition and Supreme Desire

From the beginning, God has shown mankind that all of his desires, goals, potential and yearnings, are to be fulfilled through Him:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him" (Deut. 13:3-4).

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do ALL to the glory of God." (I Cor 10:31)

Unless this spiritual relationship is right — and acts as your FOUNDATION in life — everything else is wrong.

2. Keep Your Eye On The Day of Judgment

Always remember that you are headed in one of two directions:

- (a) Eternal Life — the Kingdom of God
- (b) Eternal Death — the Lake of Fire

The decisions and actions you make day by day will show which course you are on. Emphasize loving and respecting God as you live your life — and you will have REWARD in His Kingdom.

However, the choice is yours. The final day of reckoning is the bottom line that will show how you've chosen to live life.

Remember the words of Solomon:

"Let US hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14).

3. Learn To Be Humble As God is Humble

All-powerful though He is, God is humble. The psalmist David wrote: "Who is like unto the Lord our God, Who dwelleth on high, WHO HUMBLETH HIMSELF to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth." (Psa. 113:5-6) And when Jesus Christ came as a man, he was humble (Phil. 2:8).

Frankly, we have nothing to boast of as human beings. Compressed into solid matter (16 elements) individually we would be reduced to a small pile of dirt "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19).

Whatever you accomplish, you alone cannot take full credit. Others have helped you along

the way. And, in the final analysis, GOD is responsible and should be glorified. Be grateful and give credit where it is due.

Remember that the middle letter of the word "pride" is "I."

4. Be Acutely Aware of What Enters Your Mind and How Character Is Formed

God has created the mind of man as a wonderful and marvelous instrument. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them Understanding" (Job 32:8).

Psychologists have said that only about 5% of your brain is the thinking part (the tiny tip of the iceberg), and that the other 95% is your subconscious mind where facts, knowledge, data, experience, habits, etc., are stored.

Before knowledge can be stored for use (instant or future) it has to be approved and allowed to filter through into the sub-conscious mind.

It is from this vast storehouse of knowledge and experience that you think and make decisions. Could it also be possible that this is where CHARACTER is built?

At any rate, it is vital that we monitor our thoughts and allow only that knowledge which is true and good to enter our minds.

5. Create A Mental Image of the Person You Wish to Become

The Bible says that as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). And, that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new!" (II Cor. 5:17).

You CAN become the person God wants you to be, patterned in the image of Christ: Jesus said to "learn of me" (Matt. 11:29). Study the Word of God, learn what Christ was like, meditate on it, focus on it, create a mental image of what He was like — and it can transform you.

Think long range; set your goals of growth toward the perfection of Christ. And, you will grow into it!

6. Determine Your Overall Goal — What It Is You Want Most Out of Life

The Kingdom of God and spiritual growth, of course, are the primary goal of all of us. But, we are physical creatures — and have physical responsibilities to carry.

We will have life-time goals of careers, marriage, etc., that must be prepared for. God says: "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit it for thyself in the field; and afterward build thine house" (Prov. 24:27).

Think about your vocational goals. Do you want to be a machinist, an accountant, a truck driver, a carpenter? Decide — and PREPARE for it — keeping God at the center of your life. Remember, opportunity favors the prepared man. Invest time in preparing and qualifying and many advanced doors of opportunity will be opened to you.

7. Make a List of All the Lesser Goals You Hope to Achieve in Life

Some people want to do so many things that they have difficulty deciding where to begin or what to do first. An effective way to overcome this problem is simply by making a list of things you hope to accomplish.

Then, just decide with what to begin. Don't procrastinate. Start with something. Whether your list has: self-improvement, learn more vocabulary, study economics, begin a hobby, or just take a vacation...get started! Eventually priorities and other areas will sort themselves out. The road to achievement is to JUST START!

8. Whatever YOU Do, Strive for Excellence — Don't Settle for Mediocrity

God inspired this principle in Ecclesiastes 9:10 "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"

This approach generates confidence, self-respect, and a determination to drive ahead. Don't allow boredom, laziness, neglect, or discouragement to cause you to give up and quit.

Infuse quality into everything you do. Remember the old cliché, "Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well." Instill discipline into your life until it becomes an automatic response. The Bible says that everything God did — "It was good!"

9. Follow Through and Finish What You Start

Jesus Christ instructs us as Christians that once we have set a goal, we should press on and attain it "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

Stick to your goals even though it hurts. You won't build character or grow unless you do. You may sometimes have to put something aside momentarily — but come back to it and complete the job. As Jesus did (John 17:4): "I have finished the Work." The key is to be sure your goals are intelligent and attainable. To try for the U.S. presidency is obviously unrealistic!

10. Become an Expert in Some Field — Really Good at Something

God wants excellence to be developed in His children — and we can express this in at least one area of our lives. Really apply yourself, learn at least one skill that you can be truly GOOD at. Whether it be a vocational skill or just a hobby such as painting, music, writing, sculpturing, camping, metalwork, carpentry...make it a specialty! Give it your own unique brand or mark. Become an authority in your own specialty — for the good of the Church and God's Work.

11. Don't Let Routine and Boredom Shriveled You Up — Keep Broadening Your Life By Adding New Challenges

Women, who are confined to housework, often need to get out for a change of pace. But, the same is also true for men. If you find yourself bogging down in a rut get out of it. Try out new things, something you haven't done before. Perhaps a new sport or hobby, trying out a new route to the Feast, etc., visiting places you haven't been before. Give yourself a change periodically. It will sharpen you for the regular routine you face day by day.

12. Sharpen Your Powers of Observation, Imagination & Creativity

God has placed you in a world of wonderment and endless variety. Become sensitive to sounds, things, people — to the whole of your environment. Wake up and start living!

This exercise will improve your skills as a conversationalist, and make you a more stimulating person all-around. YOU can learn from others also. Listen to how people talk — to the colorful expressions they use. OBSERVE, THINK and LEARN.

13. Experience Every Grand and Rare Opportunity Afforded You

Some people never really drink in of all the joys of life because they are afraid to venture out and try new things. Remember that God is not pleased with the "fearful" (Rev. 21:8).

If special opportunities come your way, accept them and enjoy them "with gusto."

Examples might be a trip to Europe, sailboating, a helicopter ride. These rare moments may pass you by and never happen again. As long as they are safe and sound and within the bounds of common sense and God's will — experience all the good joys that life has to offer.

14. Spend Some Time Each Day in the Realm of Nature and the Wonders of Creation

The Bible shows that we become what we channel into our minds. And, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to regularly fill our minds with the beautiful and positive: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honest ... just ... pure ... lovely ... of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK ON THESE THINGS!" (Phil. 4:8)

Meditate and drink in of God's creation. Look about you and learn of the Creator. Just simple little things like observing a beautiful sunset, floating clouds, roses and flowers, the passing of squawking geese overhead — all these manifest the glory of God and His handiwork and can draw you closer to Him. Slow down and imbibe of life!

15. Continue to Increase Your Social Skills and Your Ability to Interface With People

Learning how to get along — how to be tactful and courteous — is a must for the Christian. The Bible says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11).

Learn how to reflect the qualities of God out to others in your social life. Make loving and serving mankind one of your great goals in life. You can never be a success nor reach your full potential until you master the art of human interchange. It's a skill you will use throughout eternity!

16. Cultivate the Friendship of People Who Are Older

The Bible shows that much can be learned from the wisdom of those who are older than we: "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Prov. 16:31). Older people can often share invaluable lessons from their storehouse of experience. Their wisdom can often give you strength in a time of crisis.

17. Practice at Least One Act of Love or Kindness Every Day You Live:

Kindness often repeated transforms itself into habit-molding character within you — and also results in blessings being poured back upon your own head: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom" (Luke 6:38).

Opportunities abound to help and serve your fellowman. Use them — for the glory of God!

18. Learn to Think For Yourself — Try, Test and Prove All Incoming Knowledge

The Bible says to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thes. 5:21). Judge what is presented to you. Don't jump to conclusions. Look for logic, soundness, and truth. Always ask, "Does this magazine article, newscast, book, etc., harmonize with God's Word?" The Bible is the basis of all truth — test everything you read, hear, see against its pages.

This is the main reason Mr. Armstrong has stayed on track — he's always viewed knowledge from the backdrop of God's Word!

19. Keep a Notebook of ideas

Always keep your mind open for new ideas, concepts and inspiration. Capture in writing concepts, lessons learned, a new point of view or insight — while the iron is hot! Unless you do this, you may lose a thought or idea forever.

Keep 3 x 5 cards, or a pocket notebook always with you. Jot down thoughts, transfer them later to a permanent record (your "meditation manual") and review it frequently — until you incorporate this material onto the permanent tablets of your mind (II Cor. 3:3).

20. Maintain an On-going Positive Mental Attitude

Life is filled with blessings from God, but there will also be trials. No matter what happens, keep your eyes on the Kingdom of God. There may be times when it seems everything is being swept away from you, but sustain your faith in God, press on, and remember the words of Christ and His Apostle:

"And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19:29).

"All things work together for GOOD to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose..." (Rom. 8:28).

Keep these thoughts and concepts continually before you and you will have the mind of Christ — a mind that is full of optimism and hope — and the character of God will be fashioned in you steadily day by day! You will then reach your FULL POTENTIAL!

P.S. Since a few of the above ideas were sparked by an article in the "System Bible Study," page 744 entitled "If I Were Twenty-One," please consult it for further reading. Author unknown.

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