

A GUIDEPOSTS OUTREACH PUBLICATION

WHAT ABOUT
TOMORROW?

BY NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

GUIDEPOSTS OUTREACH

Guideposts, founded by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale and his wife Ruth Stafford Peale in 1945, is a nonprofit interfaith ministry dedicated to helping people from all walks of life achieve their maximum personal and spiritual potential. Its inspirational products and programs spring from two major beliefs: that true stories are a powerful way to motivate people to lead better lives and that faith in God can be strengthened by applying spiritual truths to daily life.

Guideposts Outreach Ministries strives to fulfill our mission by providing inspirational publications free of charge to hospitals, nursing homes, churches, military personnel, correctional facilities and other organizations that serve the public. In addition, we invite our readers to send their prayer requests—by mail, by phone, by e-mail (the contact information is in the back of this booklet). Every working day, Guideposts' staff and volunteers pray for these requests by name and need.

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INTRODUCTION

A Word About What Follows

THIS BOOKLET WAS PREPARED FROM Norman Vincent Peale's most powerful concepts for living. Central to his life was an earnest desire to help all those he met to achieve God's plan for their lives. And, take my word for it, he believed with all his heart that God has a wonderful plan for all those who trust Him and use their gifts to the fullest.

Norman Vincent Peale would never have intended the words that follow to be a chore. Rather, he would want them to bring you joy and personal fulfillment. All he would ask is that you approach what you read here with an open mind and heart. Read this booklet at your own pace, as much or as little as you want at each sitting. If something in it makes you stop and think . . . well, then stop and think!

I'm hoping it will suggest a line of behavior that will make you feel better about yourself. How about writing down your own positive action plan? This will reinforce your resolve to carry it out. It would be a good idea to tell God about your plan, too.

In the last chapter of this booklet you'll be reading about putting God first. Confirm this priority by confiding with Him about your deepest hopes for yourself and how you're going to accomplish them. Make God your personal partner in realizing your goals and dreams—in building better tomorrows.

God bless you.

HOW TO MAKE A NEW START

*Forgetting the past and straining toward
what is ahead, I keep trying to reach the goal
and get the prize for which God called me
through Christ to the life above.*

(PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14)



FORGET, FORGIVE AND LIVE

What is the secret to living life positively and well? I know one I learned from a trusted mentor in a time of personal disappointment. "Forget. Forgive. And live," he told me, then quoted the Scripture that appears on the left. At once, I knew I had heard a wise formula.

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 1:

Forget the past.

One of the hardest exercises known to man is to forget what has gone before. The tendency is to lug into today and tomorrow all the mistakes and failures and hates of yesterday. Eventually you can't stand up under the load. So learn to forget the past.

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 2:

Forgive yourself and others.

Did someone do you an injury, or say something mean about you, or treat you

harshly yesterday? Then now may be just the time to examine any resentments you may have and practice forgiveness.

Two men who had been lifetime friends had a falling out. They went to elaborate lengths to avoid each other. After several months, one of the men fell ill and was hospitalized. A mutual acquaintance persuaded the other to visit his old friend.

“But what do I say to him?” he protested.

“Don’t worry,” he was told, “just act as if whatever had come between you was over, in the past, and forgotten.”

It worked. The minute the two men’s eyes met in the hospital, their friendship began anew, stronger than ever.

There is a healing in forgiveness. It mends broken relationships and makes everything new. But what about self-forgiveness? Did you commit a sin? I hope you are sorry.

Repent and ask the Lord's forgiveness. Then forgive yourself. Get it forgiven and forget it. Overcome your sense of guilt this way: First, by asking for and receiving God's forgiveness; second, by forgiving yourself.

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 3:

Live today.

The Lord brings down a curtain of darkness each evening to shut off the day that is past and to get you ready for tomorrow. Did you ever stop to think of the goodness of the Lord in doing that?

Sir William Osler, the great turn-of-the-century physician, said that we should live in "day-tight" compartments. Each night, he said, we should pull down a great mental curtain, shutting out the past, and another great curtain, shutting out tomorrow, then go to sleep, unburdened by the past or any anxieties about the future.

Suppose you knew that this was your last day on earth. What would you do with this day? How would you spend the remaining hours of this last day?

Answer that and you will have answered how you ought to live every day. Wouldn't you want to pack it full of the greatest experiences—of love, goodness, fellowship, wonder, joy—everything good?

Just as people brood over yesterday, they worry about tomorrow. But if you take care of today, tomorrow will take care of itself. So, forgetting those things that are behind, reach forward to those things that are ahead, remembering that your job is to be worthy so God will take care of you. Live well today and come to tomorrow in the strength of right thinking and right living.

POSITIVE AFFIRMATION:

I will leave past failures and hurts behind.

I will expect the best from tomorrow.

MAKE TOUGH TIMES INTO GOOD TIMES

*Then you will know the truth,
and the truth will make you free.*

(JOHN 8:32)



POSITIVE ACTION STEP 1 :

Learn from your mistakes.

Every mistake has positive qualities and can even help you to grow. It is partly through trial and error that we develop judgment and become mature. A mistake is not something to be ashamed of. It is a great teacher.

A West Coast minister told me about a 19-year-old boy who came to see him in great desperation. The boy blurted out, "Pastor, please help me. I've smoked pot for months and now I'm on crack. I'm all messed up. I know I've made a terrible mistake. But if I can only get myself straightened out, I'll never do drugs again."

The pastor referred the boy to doctors who could help him overcome his chemical dependency. He told this boy, "Through faith in God, you can create a chemistry within you that will give you a 'high' unlike

any drug known to man. Then you will truly 'come alive.' ”

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 2:

Replace error with truth.

If your mental or spiritual condition is not right, you often become error-prone. The correction for this is, of course, truth, the truth that comes from God. The person who fills his mind with truth will cast out error and open himself up to a good life. Don't try to make error into truth by making excuses for yourself. Error is error and truth is truth. The question is: What will dominate you, truth or error?

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 3:

Eliminate the cause.

Error causes mistakes, sometimes serious mistakes. And each of us, in varying degrees, destroys himself or herself to the extent that error dominates him. Take a sheet of paper and write down the really

serious mistakes that you've made in your lifetime. Most likely each of them was caused by an error that is within you. Work on eliminating the error.

A man I met at convention told me, "I was what you would call a good man. I didn't lie, get drunk, or do immoral things, but I did stupid things, and made dumb mistakes so many times that I felt hopeless. Then I read in your books that anybody can change just about anything in his life, if he'll turn his life over to God.

"So," he continued, "I prayed, saying to the Lord, 'please drive out the error and confusion in me, and fill me with your truth and understanding.' And the Lord answered my prayer. Now I have a grasp on problems I never had before. I have a new sense of control over my life."

POSITIVE AFFIRMATION:

I will deal honestly with myself.

The truth will set me free.

TAKE WORRY APART!

*I leave you peace; my peace I give you.
I do not give it to you as the world does.
So don't let your hearts be troubled or afraid.*

(JOHN 14:27)



POSITIVE ACTION STEP 1:

Replace worry.

Banish worry to let joy and happiness in. People can't quit worrying because they can't let go of ingrained ways of thinking. The way to break this pattern is to take hold of a good idea to enable yourself to let go of a bad one.

I talked with a woman who had suffered a heart attack two years before, but whose doctors had since given a clean bill of health. Even so she fretted, "Maybe it will come back." She dwelled upon this fear until she enjoyed no part of her life. I insisted that God had spared her because He had a plan for her. This finally broke the negative cycle that had gripped her life.

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 2:

Take worry apart.

Since worry is an irrational thought, you must take worry apart, lay it out, dissect it,

cut it up, and look at it piece by piece. Do this with cool, collected, rational thought. Worry is a deceiver, but once you face up to it squarely, you will be able to handle it.

Some years back, full of fret and worry over a problem, I talked to Dr. David Keppel, a wise and logical man. "Norman," he said, "let us sit down and take this worry apart." And remarkably, when he got through with it, there wasn't much left. He said that 90 percent of his own worries were never realized. "And I was able to handle the ten percent that was left." Dr. Keppel wrote a poem about this process.

*Better never trouble trouble
until trouble troubles you,
For you're sure to make your trouble
Double trouble when you do.*

*And your trouble, like a bubble,
That you're troubling about,
May be nothing but a cipher
With the rim rubbed out.*

When you turn a hard eye onto a problem, worry will lose its power. There isn't any situation so bad that it won't become a lot better when you think rationally—and spiritually—about it. When you do, God will fill you with peace.

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 3:

Rise above worry.

Next time you find yourself bogged down in anxiety and worry, say to yourself, "I will think this thing through. I will take it apart. I will not be disturbed by it." If you practice this, worry will melt away.

POSITIVE AFFIRMATION:

I will find peace by facing up to my worries coolly and logically.

REPLACE FEAR WITH ACTION

*I asked the Lord for help, and he answered me.
He saved me from all that I feared.*

(PSALM 34:4)



FEAR NO MORE

Normal fear is necessary for our protection. But abnormal fear is altogether different. Sad indeed are people who walk in the terror of abnormal fear. It causes depression and anxiety—even physical illness.

The only fear we should have is the fear of God and the fear of doing wrong. That is not fear in the sense of being scared; rather, it is a respect of God and of what is right. We should walk unafraid.

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 1:

Believe in yourself.

You may say: I am tired of being afraid of illness and of other people and of possible catastrophes. I want to be free of fear always. If so, the first thing you must realize about fear is that most of what you are afraid of probably will never happen.

One absolute way to let go of fear is to practice prayer by affirmation: not the prayer of asking, but the prayer of affirming. Believe that God loves you and that He watches over you. Believe He is taking care of you right now and that you need not be afraid. Do not say, "O Lord, please deliver me from fear. I am so tired of being upset." Rather, affirm that He is already doing it, and you will drop fear.

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 2:

Stand up to fear.

Fear can't be evaded or avoided. It has to be met head on. If you don't go to the heart of your fear, that fear will haunt you.

Action is the only answer.

Fear of trying something new is normal. When a child enters a new school, or when someone starts a new job, there is fear. But if he or she acts with confidence and faith, fears vanish. And a glowing sense of

accomplishment comes with trying something new and succeeding.

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 3:

Let fear motivate you.

There's an old story about a man who worked until midnight every night, then walked home afterward. One beautiful moonlit night, he thought he would walk through the cemetery, rather than around it, because the way was shorter. This he did for several nights, until the moon began to wane. By then he knew the path through the cemetery and, even though it was dark, he felt he could walk through safely.

One night, his feet suddenly went out from under him, and the man found himself sliding into a newly dug grave. He tried to get out, but the grave was too deep. Being practical, he reasoned that the gravediggers would come back the next morning. So he pulled his coat around him and huddled into a corner of the grave.

An hour later, another wandering citizen came along. All of a sudden, this other man slid into the grave at the other end and started making futile efforts to climb out. Finally, as the second man stood contemplating his situation, our first friend, speaking in the darkness, said, "Listen, you'll never get out that way." But the second man did—like a shot!

You see, this second man (and for that matter, the first one, too) had the potential for getting out of that hole, but the potential needed motivation. This story proves, if rather crudely, that you, and indeed every person, has the potential for overcoming defeat. Faith in God is a mighty force that you can call on to make your life count. Faith in God and in yourself can rid you of fear forever.

POSITIVE AFFIRMATION:

*Since I know God loves me and cares for me,
I will walk unafraid.*

BELIEVE IN YOUR POTENTIAL

*The Lord God is my strength.
He makes me like a deer that does not stumble
so I can walk on the steep mountains.*

(HABAKKUK 3:19)



UN-LIMIT YOURSELF

What are you doing with the marvelous abilities and the extraordinary potential Almighty God built into you?

Experts on human nature generally agree that the average person uses but a fraction of his potential mental capacity. Apparently most of us are using no more than one-fifth of the potential mental capacity that is ours. Why do you suppose this is true?

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 1:

Believe in your potential.

One reason is that we haven't adequately developed the potential that is ours. But a second reason is this: We do a terrible thing to ourselves; we actually let our self-imposed limitations restrict our God-given capabilities. A person tells himself, "Beyond this point, I cannot go." And then, a greater tragedy occurs: We settle for

being less than we can be. “This is what I am,” one says. “Might as well accept it and be content.” Some people even go so far as to say “It’s God’s will”—which is wrong, for God never willed that anyone should be less than he can be. Many people settle for—and actually practice—their limitations! They practice so continuously that the limitations become habits; they are locked into their limitations like a polar ship frozen into Arctic ice.

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 2:

Nothing is impossible.

For example, a boy came to me recently and said, “These things you write about, they may work for you, but they don’t work for me. You aren’t the product of a broken family, but I am,” he explained, “I didn’t have a good upbringing.”

His mind held onto this idea and wouldn’t let it go. My persistence that he surrender to the Lord and live by His message finally

broke through his mental barrier, and he took hold of the idea that nothing is impossible when you have faith.

Oh, occasionally you do run into a person whom you recognize as an egotist. This egotism is not pleasant, but neither is the self-depreciation you hear from so many people. How they explain and re-explain how little ability they have! How they insist that they have no talent and declare that they haven't any brains! What would this world be like if everyone facing difficulty were to sit back and accept his or her circumstances? Everything would come to a standstill. Everyone has a deficiency that could limit him. But it doesn't have to.

Bob Wieland, who lost his legs to a landmine in Vietnam, could have accepted his limitations. But instead, he returned to the United States to become a champion weight lifter, marathoner, triathlete, motivational speaker, television actor and outspoken advocate for those who have no

voice: the homeless, the hungry and the spiritually confused. Bob traveled across America—propelling himself with padded knuckles—to raise money for the hungry. His handicap was not a hindrance—it was an incentive.

POSITIVE ACTION STEP 3:

Break the limitation barrier.

We cannot conquer the big limitations in our lives by our own unaided strength. Yet faith in God can enable us to rise above them. Your faith will help you conquer self-doubt, fear, weakness and temptation. What are you captive of? Name it, and then turn it over to God, surrender yourself to Him and He will rid you of every limitation. Surely, He will.

POSITIVE AFFIRMATION:

God has given me the strength to overcome any difficulty. He wants me to succeed.

PUT GOD FIRST IN YOUR LIFE

*But the people who trust the Lord
will become strong again.
They will rise up as an eagle in the sky.
(ISAIAH 40:31)*



What I have tried to do in these pages is open you up to a “spiritual awakening.” It may happen quickly and dramatically. On the other hand, it may be a developing experience unfolding as the rose, beginning with the bud and ending with the full flowering. In either case, you will have that feeling described in the words: “Were not our hearts strangely warmed within us.”

This is the greatest experience possible to a human being. Tolstoy described it in an immortal phrase, “To know God is to live.” The result is a transformed, changed life—the ultimate in personality improvement. Now what final steps can you take to have this, the most important of all human experiences? Here they are.

POSITIVE ACTION STEPS:

1. Realize that you have already begun the process of spiritual experience if you have followed the lessons in this handbook. You

are already practicing self-improvement and spiritual change.

2. Now give up everything in your life that you know in your heart is wrong. You cannot rationalize if you want full spiritual power. I must remind you that, in your self-improvement plan, you have now arrived at the moment when change must be made.

3. Eliminate from your heart forever all hatred, resentment, jealousy and grudges. You must sincerely forgive everyone against whom you hold resentment.

4. Make amends for any wrong you have done to other persons. If no amends are possible, pray that God in His own way will make it right for you. Then ask to be forgiven. Believe that the matter is cancelled out and forget it.

5. Realize that you are changed not by any act you perform, but through faith in God,

who alone can make you a new person. You can improve yourself by diligent practice, but the final act of personality improvement is a gift conferred upon you through humble faith in God.

6. Start to live the new life. This may not be easy at first. But if you simply start living the new life assuming that you will be successful and keep living it, you will be successful. Start living the glorious new life today and believe that with God's help you are going forward to better things. Believe that every day will see you stronger and happier. For a life of inner peace and power, start now and you have such a life—now. Believe that God has heard your prayer and granted your request. Accept the fact that you are now a “new creature,” a transformed person.

What Is The Power To Change Your Life?

This amazing power is the life of God in you. It is a force that, when focused,

produces spectacular changes in the personality. "The kingdom of God is within you" (LUKE 17:21). The person who feels weak, ineffective, defeated and sinful has within himself a stored-up force that can effect enormous change. But he cannot do it on his own. He must have the releasing action that comes through the simple act of giving his life to God.

When this self-giving is done with real sincerity, spiritual power will take over your life. The spirit of God will flow into you and fill your life with joy and contentment.

POSITIVE AFFIRMATION:

*By surrendering myself to You, Lord God,
I will release the power You have given me.*

Please Share Your Story

We'd like to hear about how this booklet has made a positive impact in your life. Please e-mail us at outreach@guideposts.org or write us at:

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