

THE POWER TO CHOOSE

by Richard Rice

- I. Did you realize that you possess an incredible power that can revolutionize your life and transform you into a more productive and successful person?
- A. That it can make you more self-assured and confident!
 - B. That it can enable you to raise your grade point average and gain a great deal more knowledge from your college classes.
 - C. That it can open up your personality and help you to be more radiant, outgoing and effervescent.
 - D. That it can help you achieve just about any goal you desire as long as it is realistic and within the realm of God's law!
 - E. Please allow me to explain: I am not advocating that you pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.
 - F. Nor am I remotely inferring you can achieve true lasting success without God's help.
 - G. To the contrary. I'm referring to an actual power God has given you to use for his honor and glory--a power that He stimulates through His Holy Spirit.
- II. Stop and think for a moment about the people you secretly admire!
- A. Did you ever wonder what makes them tick and why they seem so "lucky" and get all the breaks?
 - B. Why they are so well-adjusted and have many friends?
 - C. Why they seem to have such untiring drive and energy to get things done?
- III. It's simply because they've learned how to tap this inner resource with which every human being is born.
- A. They've discovered the simple, little secret that all achievers have found.
 - B. An inner power so real and dynamic that if earnestly applied can turn your life around!

IV. What is this power?

- A. It's a gift that God has given and it's a power you've had from birth.
- B. It's a power you use every day--but probably were unaware of it.
- C. As a matter of fact, you've already used this power a number of times since you awoke this morning.
- D. God gave you this power in order to be useful, productive and a fulfilled human being.
- E. It is not God's Spirit, but a tool which God's Spirit uses to help you grow, overcome and build righteous character.
- F. You can never make God's Kingdom without His Holy Spirit--but in order to receive and act on God's Spirit, you must use this power.

V. What, then, is it?

- A. Put in its simplest form--it's the power to choose.
- B. That's right--it's the power to make decisions affecting the way you live your life.
- C. It's the power to decide whether you'll walk with God and be a true overcomer or follow Satan and go the way of this world.
- D. In essence, it's the power to decide whether you'll succeed or fail.

VI. Before explaining how to use this power, it's very important to understand God's teaching on the subject.

- A. Not only has God given you the power to choose, He's also commanded you to use it.
- B. Note these scriptures:
 - 1. Deut. 30:19 -- "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."
 - 2. Josh. 24:14-15 -- "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put

away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. (15) And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

3. Prov. 1:29, 31 -- "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: (31) Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."
4. Prov. 3:31 -- "Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways."
5. Rev. 3:20 -- "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."
6. Rev. 22:17 -- "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

VII. How can we, then, with God's help, harness this power and apply it to everyday experience?

- A. Before giving the answer, let me first tell you about a unique law that most people have little knowledge of.
- B. Yet, it has a profound effect on the way you think, live and act.
- C. Yes, on the way you choose.
- D. It's called the "pleasure-pain principle."

VIII. Just what is this strange-sounding law and how does it work?

- A. We human beings are always seeking things that will bring us pleasure.
 1. We might say that life is a constant "want."
 2. We are constantly wanting things that will give us comfort, satisfy our needs and please our senses.
 3. This might include such matters as:

- a. Eating when we're hungry.
 - b. Drinking when we're thirsty.
 - c. Sleeping when we're tired.
 - d. Buying things we want.
 - e. Listening to music.
 - f. Watching TV.
- B. At the same time we're seeking ways to bring pleasure, we're also avoiding circumstances that produce pain.
1. We attempt to shield ourselves from situations that hurt us or cause discomfort.
 2. This might involve such examples as:
 - a. Coming in out of the rain.
 - b. Avoiding embarrassing situations.
 - c. Putting off chores and assignments that require mental effort or hard work.
 - d. Getting up early.
- C. Whichever of these two drives--pleasure or pain--dominates is the one you're most likely to choose.
- IX. This now brings us to a most surprising truth.
- A. True success cannot be attained simply by seeking pleasure.
 - B. To attain success, you must also experience pain.
 - C. It takes both pleasure and pain to achieve the goals you want in life.
 - D. But the amazing truth is that to attain success you must reverse the process--you must put pain before pleasure!
 - E. This is a great law of life the average person does not realize--that to enjoy the true pleasure of success he must first work, toil and experience pain.

X. Let's notice how this important truth is revealed in God's Word.

A. Scriptures:

1. Acts 14:22 -- ". . . we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."
2. II Tim. 2:12 -- "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."
3. Gal. 6:7-9 -- "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (8) For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (9) And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."
4. James 5:7 -- "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."
5. Acts 20:35 -- "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."
6. Luke 6:38 -- "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

B. The significant ~~principle to focus on~~ is that according to God's Word, ~~work precedes reward, seed planting precedes harvest, practice precedes perfection--or pain before pleasure.~~

1. This has always been the law of life.
2. And it always will be.

XI. But what will also come as a surprise is that even though you experience pain in the pursuit of success, it will eventually become a source of pleasure.

A. You'll know your efforts will pay off.

- B. You'll receive a reward down range.
- C. You'll eventually reach your goal if you're patient and endure.

XII. What this all boils down to is that the power of choice finds its motivation in the pleasure-pain principle.

- A. You are consciously or subconsciously making choices each day based on this law.
- B. Virtually every action in your life originates here.
- C. Either you're caught up in the pursuit of pleasure or deterred by the fear of pain.

XIII. I'd now like to discuss with you some of the major choices you face as an A.C. student.

- A. Most of these decisions will seem painful at first.
- B. But the pleasurable result will be well worth it.
- C. You can choose to:

1. COMMIT YOURSELF WHOLEHEARTEDLY TO GOD.

OR

Put personal interests and desires above God and relegate Him to second place.

2. SERVE GOD WITH AS MUCH FERVOR AND ZEAL AS YOU FORMERLY SERVED SATAN.

OR

Lazily flow with the current of apathy.

3. STRIKE A DEATH BLOW TO SELF-CENTEREDNESS.

OR

Pamper and satiate your carnal desires.

4. TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE AND YOUR TIME.

OR

Be pushed around and ruled by day-to-day circumstances.

5. IMMERSE YOURSELF WHOLLY IN THE AMBASSADOR EXPERIENCE.

or

Hide in the background and stay on the fringes.

6. DILIGENTLY APPLY YOURSELF TO EVERY TASK AT HAND.

or

Cut corners and get by with just the minimum.

7. TREAT EACH CLASS AND ASSIGNMENT AS A VITAL GROWTH EXPERIENCE.

or

Fail to see the intrinsic value each opportunity affords.

8. RESPOND TO CORRECTION AND MAKE AN ALL-OUT EFFORT TO CHANGE.

or

Resent correction, justify your mistakes and go merrily down the road to mediocrity and failure.

9. ADD A TOUCH OF QUALITY AND EXCELLENCE TO EVERY UNDERTAKING.

or

Rush through your duties and produce a substandard product.

10. COME TO GRIPS WITH YOUR FEARS, HANGUPS AND FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY.

or

Remain paralyzed with shyness, timidity and negative self-doubt.

11. BE ENTHUSIASTIC TOWARD YOUR JOB AND BUILD A REPUTATION AS A TOP-FLIGHT EMPLOYEE.

or

Look on your job as a necessary burden just to pay the bills.

12. PLAN AHEAD AND STEADFASTLY PURSUE YOUR GOALS.
or
Be buffeted about like a ship at sea with no port in sight.
13. BOUNCE BACK FROM DEFEAT AND KEEP MARCHING FORWARD.
or
Throw in the towel when the going gets tough.
14. GET TO KNOW YOUR FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS.
or
Hide in your cocoon for fear of self-disclosure.
15. SAVE MONEY AS A MATTER OF HABIT AND WISELY USE YOUR RESOURCES.
or
Spend every cent you earn.
16. ESTABLISH A WIDE BASE OF FRIENDS.
or
Associate mainly with your own comfortable group.
17. PRACTICE GOD'S FORM OF DATING.
or
Get romantically carried away with a premature relationship.
18. GENUINELY LOVE OTHERS AS YOUR SECOND HIGHEST SPIRITUAL PRIORITY.
or
Be so wrapped up in your own world and forget that others also inhabit this globe.
19. BE FAITHFUL, GENUINE AND TRUE.
or
Live a life of hypocrisy and deceit and practice a double standard.

20. PREPARE AND QUALIFY TO BE USED IN GOD'S WORK.

or

Think that the extra effort isn't worth it and that your chances of future employment are nil.

XIV. Now for some choices you should make each day!

- A. Again, they will require thought and painful self-discipline.
- B. But, remember, here is a key area where character is built.
- C. It is in making right decisions and using God's power to follow through.
- D. List of points:
 - 1. Bounce out of bed when the alarm goes off.
 - 2. Get in prayer before you start the day.
 - 3. Keep your room and study area neat, clean and well-organized.
 - 4. Faithfully perform your dorm duties without having to be reminded.
 - 5. Greet each person with a friendly smile instead of a scowl or grumpy face.
 - 6. Force yourself to be cheerful, outgoing and pleasant to be around.
 - 7. Try to encourage others who are having a rough time and brighten their day.
 - 8. Consciously strive to please God and earnestly seek His will.
 - 9. Open your mind to His Holy Spirit and allow it to guide and teach you.
 - 10. Be calm and gracious when others rub you the wrong way.
 - 11. Be a good Samaritan and recognize the opportunities to serve others all around you.
 - 12. Learn and practice proper etiquette and social graces.

13. Guard your health, watch your weight, and limit junk foods.
14. Obey dorm rules and be considerate of the right of others.
15. Build your vocabulary and integrate new words into your conversation.
16. Get to bed at a decent hour and restrict the long bull sessions or late-night TV.
17. Monitor your words and learn to be diplomatic.
18. Resist the temptation to gossip and tear others down.
19. Learn to say "no" to the things you shouldn't do and "yes" to the things you should.
20. Help protect and maintain the high standards of God's College.

XV. In summary, God has given you a marvelous gift: the power to choose.

- A. Will you use it to work hard and make something of your life?
- B. Or will you choose the easy, painless route and amount to nothing?
- C. It isn't enough to make decisions--you must also follow through!
- D. Remember, what you'll be tomorrow is determined by your choices today!

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