

## YOUR POWER TO CREATE

Week #1 of the 3-Week Series, "The Success Principles"

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So this building moved across town to a larger, nicer building, because it was growing and expanding in great ways. And so, on the day of the grand openings, one of the owner's friends wanted to send him some flowers to celebrate this wonderful occasion. The flowers arrived at the new business site with a big card that said, "Rest in Peace." [Congregation laughs]

The owner was shocked and he was angry, and he called the florist. And he complained to the florist about what a horrible mistake this was -- how upsetting, and how angry he was. And the florist apologized profusely.

He said, "Sir, I'm so, so sorry for this horrible mistake; I really, really am. But instead of staying angry too long, could you just have some compassion. And just imagine this: somewhere there is a funeral that is taking place today, and they have flowers with a note saying, 'Congratulations on your new location.'" [Drummer does "rim shot" drum roll; congregation laughs] So ... Alright. [Congregation whoops and applauds]

Mercy applause ... I'll take it; I'll take it! [Congregation laughs]

So today we are talking about the power and the importance of peace of mind. So how much peace of mind are you experiencing right now? How much peace of mind do you tend to experience on a daily basis? And how important is peace of mind to you as a value and a priority in your life?

I was listening to the long-time motivational speaker Brian Tracy, and he said something I absolutely loved. He said this. He said, "*The best measure to determine how successful you really are is the amount of peace of mind that you enjoy at any given moment.*"

And I think he's absolutely right. Peace of mind is the absolute key to happiness and fulfillment. It is the key to having an open and positive mindset. It is the key to bonding and relationships, because if you aren't at peace yourself, it's hard to be as fully engaged in relationship. Peace of mind opens the path to handling challenges and difficulties. It opens the mind for creativity and being more effective. I really believe that developing a peaceful mind is an absolute prerequisite to greater success, and improving our lives, and greater levels of happiness.

You know, if we don't have peace of mind ... Think about this! If we don't have peace of mind, there is not enough money in the world; there are not enough ... There is not enough education; there is not enough power or status or success or achievements that can fill that space of feeling inner peace and happiness. You know, a lack of peace of mind absolutely limits our ability to enjoy and to experience the fullness and the richness and the beauty of life.

How many people have ever had so many things on your mind, your mind was racing and you couldn't stop it? You couldn't stop your mind? Anybody have a time like that? Or how many people have ever overthought and just kept thinking and thinking of something to the point that he distracted you from concentrating on your work? Or being in a conversation with a loved one? Anybody have that?

How many people would say that you worry a lot? You're a worrier? Okay. You know, most of us don't want to admit that we worry, but we all worry. Men worry; women worry. Young people worry; old people worry. Rich people worry; poor people worry. Republicans worry; Democrats worry. [Congregation laughs] Catholics worry; Protestants worry. Atheists worry; agnostics worry. Carnivores worry; vegetarians worry; vegans worry. [Congregation laughs] We all worry!

Not only we do all worry, but we worry about everything! We worry about what we have, and we worry about what we don't have. We worry about what we say and what we didn't say; what we do and didn't do. How we earn money; we worry about how we spend our money. We worry about keeping as much

of our money away from the IRS as possible! [Congregation laughs] We worry when we're unemployed; we worry when we are employed. We worry because we're not married; we worry 'cause we're still worried. [Congregation laughs]

We're worried that we left the stove on. We worry if the deal might fall through. You know, we worry that: will we get things done in time? We worry, *"Will my spouse be upset?"* And we worry about our parents; we worry about our kids; we worry about the weather; the economy. We worry about Covid; we worry about violence. We worry about everything! Big things and little things. Real things and imaginary things.

You know, worry's become a way of life for us to the point that we don't even realize we're doing it. We think, *"Oh, we're just thinking."* And the truth is: we cause ourselves more harm than we realize. And, in fact, we are so attached to worry that, if we are told not to worry, it gets us upset. [Congregation laughs] [Rev. Maraj gasps] *"Stop worrying about my family? Stop worrying about my kids? Stop worrying about my finances?"* We think somehow that worry helps and worry protects us; worry keeps us safe. You know, certain times.

We think that worry's a sign of care, and it is to a certain extent. But we think that worry's the right and the best thing to do. You know ... Ever know somebody who worried so much that if he didn't have something to worry about, they started worrying about not having something to worry about? [Congregation laughs] I mean, it's kind of funny, but we all do it!

But if you look at the Bible: countless examples of it saying, *"Do not worry."* *"Why do you worry?"* *"Who can, by worrying, add a single hour to their life?"* Other things it says: *"Do not be anxious."* *"Do not be afraid."* *"Do not fear."* All these things wrapped up -- I'll call them all worry, but they're all different versions of negative states of mind. And an inappropriate use of the incredible power and creative abilities of our mental thought. Worrying is a poor use of the power of our minds.

Worrying not only distracts the mind -- and focuses on negativity and tries to pretend to cover up our fears -- but the worst is, by the Law of Attraction, the more we worry and focus on the negative, the more negative things that we attract.

But you know what's the most significant sign about worry? It's that we don't really know how to use the power of our own minds. Worry is showing that we are not programming our minds in the most positive, effective ways to give us the kind of life that we want. Worry -- yes! -- robs us of peace of mind. But it robs us of, not only enjoying our lives, but it limits our ability to use our creative power.

In the Book of Proverbs, Chapter 14, Verse 30, it says, *"A heart at peace gives life to the body."* And I would say that a heart that is fearful and worried drains life from the body.

And when Jesus said he came that we may have life and have it more abundantly ... To live an abundant life, you've got to have inner peace. He said that his joy may be in us, and our joy may be complete. Well, to have complete joy requires that we have inner peace.

How many people would say that you would benefit and like to have more inner peace in your life? You'd like to have a more peaceful mind? Five ... Six. Good. [Congregation laughs] I usually write this for about five people, so I'm really doing ... kind of nailing it right on the head. [Laughs with congregation]

So today we start a series, and it's called "The Principles of Success." And it might not see like it, but I would say that the foundational and most important -- if you're serious about success and transforming your life and being happier -- the foundational principle for that is to develop a peaceful mind.

Sometimes we think, *"Oh, let me get it all done. Be all successful; then I'll be peaceful."* No! It's: you have to start there. Developing a peaceful mind. Here's how we do it.

The first thing is: you've got to **LOOK WITHIN**. Remember that old song called "Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places"? Well, we look for peace and happiness in all the wrong places! We tend to look outside of ourselves: that, *"I'll just achieve this or have that or do this, that everything will be good. If I*

*just find the right man, the right woman. If I just win ... or have a lot of money in my life that, you know ... If I just get all those things ... If I get the promotion, have a big house ... If I achieve all these outer things, then inner happiness and peace will come to me."* And that is not true!

Searching outside of ourselves for our accomplishments ... and nothing's wrong with them; I want you to hear that! Nothing wrong with money or success; nothing! But when we think it's the thing that's going to create happiness within us, that's when the challenge begins.

And focusing on the outside of success to bring inner peace without looking within ourselves, it really doesn't work. And it inspires me to ask the Dr. Phil question: *"How's that working for you?"* [Congregation laughs] Because we, as a culture, are conditioned to succeed and achieve in that way, and then happiness will come.

Well, do you know what studies show? As modern as these times are with these conveniences, and as powerful a country as this is -- the most powerful country in the world -- more and more people are becoming less and less happy. More incidents of depression, of addiction to pills, use of tranquilizers. And suicide is on the rise. Because, at some level, we are not at peace with ourselves. At some level, we are not at peace with each other. At some level, peace of mind and a peaceful mind has not become a priority and a high value in our lives.

Nothing wrong with success and all those different things. But we're missing the foundational thing that prevents us from actually enjoying it and experiencing it. We are doing ourselves a disservice.

The Apostle Paul said, *"Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* What he's saying is: don't get stuck in this thing of always chasing the outer, thinking that's where happiness is going to come. He said: transform yourself by renewing your mind. By renewing your mind to the true Source of peace; to the true Source of happiness. Renew your mind to that truth; don't conform to the things we buy into with the appearances and things.

Go to that place ... that's where it says, *"Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."* It doesn't say that all those things are bad; it just says put the inner peace -- put that spirit of peace that's God's peace within us -- as a priority, and then the things will follow.

In Isaiah it says, *"He will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee."* In the Old Testament, it says, *"Listen to the still, small voice of God."* *"Be still and know that I am God."* Every one of them, you know; they're basically saying: look within. Go within. Connect to that Source of peace -- to that all-providing Spirit of God -- and quiet your mind and relax into God. Immerse yourself and rest your mind in the peaceful presence of God.

In the Book of Philippians, Chapter 4, it has a nice little passage which I think summarizes the whole idea of how to handle worry and negative thoughts. And here's what it says: *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say rejoice. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and the God -- which surpasses all human understanding -- will be yours."*

So what it's saying is: turn your mind to God. Rest your mind in the peace of God, and you will experience a peace that surpasses all human understanding.

And how do we experience this peace that surpasses all human understanding?

**The first thing is you've got to connect to God silently.** Because this "peace of God" thing isn't a thing in our head. It's something deeply that we need to feel and experience in our hearts. And in our minds. So to quiet our minds, we need to feel and experience it. We need to go to that quiet place.

Again, Proverbs says, *"A heart at peace gives life to the body."* So when you let your heart feel God's peace, and your mind feel God's peace, that peace that surpasses all understanding will be ours. We will be one with that sense of peace and that connection.

**The second thing we need to do when we look within is: we've got to do it consistently.** You know, Jesus just didn't pray once and then was like, "*All set for the next month!*" You know, he did a really good one ... He got ... You know, that would be like saying you took a really, really good shower, and you'll be good for a month. [Congregation laughs] You had a really good meal; you won't need to eat again for a month. I mean, it doesn't work that way!

Did you notice -- and I always say this so often, because it's so true! The demonstration of Jesus praying in the morning, in the mid-day, in the afternoon, the evening. He showed consistency. It isn't one and you're done. It is an ongoing process of keeping that connection to peace, but it's about building your consciousness. It is about praying when you think you don't need to pray. It's about praying when things go well, and when things don't go well. Praying when you're feeling good, and when you're not feeling good. It is that consistency of connecting that keeps the consciousness and flow of that peace. And then that's when you get to the place where you can say, "*Nothing can disturb the calm pace of my soul.*" It is by the consistency of prayer and immersing your mind in the Mind of God.

**And the final one is: you've got to be persistent.** Because it ain't easy to quiet your mind all the time. Anybody ever meditate for five minutes, and your mind wandered for four-and-a-half? [Congregation laughs] Anybody ever have that experience?

I mean, I did this ... I think I told you; like, four years ago, I did this 10-day silent retreat in 29 Palms, California. It was absolutely fabulous! And so, if you think your mind wanders ... And we meditated 11 hours a day. Eleven hours a day! You think your mind wandered a lot in five minutes? Imagine 11 hours a day -- how much the mind wanders.

But here's the thing. Everybody's mind wanders. Humans have what they call, like, a "monkey mind." It jumps around; it gets distracted. That's why Paul said, "*Be renewed by the transforming of your mind.*" Because our minds get that way.

And so what I'm trying to say is: if your mind wanders when you meditate, that's normal. I say it's important to be patiently persistent, because it takes time to just gently bring your mind back. Just keep bringing it back. Keep bringing it back. You've got to be persistent!

How many people golf? A fair number of you. Whether you play it or not, golf is a hard time. It is hard! Yet people keep playing, to the tune of billions of dollars of equipment. And similarly, meditation and quieting your mind is hard. You keep playing! Just because it's hard, just because your mind wanders, you're par for the course. It's part of the process. Keep at it; keep at it; keep at it.

Look within, and do it silently to feel God's peace in your heart. Do it consistently to build up that consciousness. And then do it persistently, because it's tough. It takes work to keep quieting your mind. But I guarantee you will drop in to deeper levels as you go by being consistent and persistent.

The second thing about developing a peaceful mind is you've got to learn to **LET GO.**

I'm reading a book by a Buddhist monk called *How to Transform Your Life*. And here's what he says: "*When things go wrong in our life and we encounter situations, we tend to regard the situation, itself, as our problem. But, in reality, what problems we experience actually come from our own mind.*"

He said that the unhappiness and the frustration and the suffering that we feel, and the attachments that we have in our lives -- the things that hurt the most -- we actually create. We create them, and we maintain them. And that is the cause of pain. That the way to find peace is to learn how to let go; to purify our minds from what he calls "delusions," which are anger and fear and hatred, and believing that life has to be a certain way. That we need to purify our minds by letting go. Because that is how we develop a peaceful mind: by learning to let go of the things that we're attached to.

I mean, we as human beings have a tendency to hold on to stuff, particularly when it isn't good for us. Sometimes we hold on to the past. Sometimes we hold on to pain. We hold on to regrets. We hold on to grudges. We hold on to shame. We hold on to attachments of beliefs like, "*Life is unfair.*" Like, "*I'm not good enough.*" You know, "*You can't trust anyone.*" We hold on to all kinds of stuff!

We hold on to ideas of our "glory days." We're still holding on to the past in that way. We're holding on to clothes that don't fit us anymore. [Congregation laughs] We hold on to all kinds of things! The tendency to holding on is huge!

Letting go is one of the most liberating -- yet the most difficult -- of all spiritual practices. And including the form of letting go that is tough for us is forgiveness. All forms of letting go are tough.

Sometimes in life, you know, we are trying to change things that we don't like: to make them different than they are. And then we try to keep everything we like the same. And either way, we're just trying to control life instead of living it! Change is a part of life. You know, things evolve; things unfold; things come and things go. And we need to just live life that way, and be okay to live, learn, love and let go. We can't keep making it the same; we can't keep forcing it to change. Because then we're not actually really living.

I saw this thing with Tom Hanks. It's like a TikTok thing; I don't know what it is. But anyway, he's in this little gathering of Robert DeNiro and Brad Pitt and all these famous actors. And they're talking about things that they wish they'd learned when they were younger.

And Tom Hanks said, *"I wish I'd learned when I was younger is the concept of 'This, too, shall pass.' Make bad choices? This, too, shall pass. Get rejected? This, too, shall pass. You have a bad performance? This, too, shall pass. You hit it big and you make lots of money? This, too, shall pass."* [Congregation laughs] *"You're in high demand, and you finally feel people get ya? [In deep voice] This, too, shall pass."* [Congregation laughs] *"You're on top of the hill? This, too, shall pass."*

And I really love that! Because what it's saying is: don't keep holding on to life, and try to make it how it is. Just live it and let it go.

I think one of the most brilliant lines and profound is what the Apostle Paul said. He said, *"I die daily."* Isn't that brilliant? He dies this day so he could look at tomorrow in a fresher way.

You know, they say that 95% of the things we think today we thought yesterday. And sometimes life is like Groundhog Day for us, because we keep repeating the same thoughts and actions and behaviors.

So what Paul is saying is: die to this day and don't be anxious about tomorrow. Live this day, and then let it go so you can live and create a new day. Letting go is powerful. "I die daily" means "I let go daily."

So think of something in your life where you're not feeling that happy. You're not feeling a lot of peace about. You feel like you're suffering or struggling. Here are the questions to ask ... and we can ask these daily. What do I need to let go? What change or experience am I resisting? What delusion am I projecting on to this situation and individuals? What am I not seeing that I need to open my eyes to and see? What is the truth of this situation? What is the gift in this situation? What is the blessing in this situation? What fear do I need to let go? What attachment do I need to release?

The thing about this: if we really want to find greater levels of peace and happiness, we need to practice letting go at a deeper level consistently. It is almost a question we could ask ourselves every single day: What do I need to let go? And the more we can let go, the more peace; the more we can let go, the deeper levels of happiness that we can experience.

So to develop a peaceful mind, the first thing is **LOOK WITHIN**. The second one is **LET GO**. And the third one is to **ENCOURAGE YOURSELF**.

How many people ever messed up, and you beat yourself up? You criticized, you judged, and you put yourself down? Anybody ever been harsh on themselves when they mess up? It is stunning how brutal we can be on ourselves. Absolutely stunning! Call ourselves a loser; call ourselves a screw-up. Tell ourselves, you know, *"You just always get it wrong."* You know, *"You never get it right."* I mean, we can be so unkind and punishing and shaming of ourselves that it absolutely pulverizes our peace of mind.

And it affects our self-confidence! Instead of encouraging ourselves, we can sometimes discourage ourselves. Like, "Who are you really kidding, man? You think you could do that?" I mean, it is absolutely amazing!

You know, we hire personal coaches and trainers and mentors and go to therapists ... you know why? Because we need some encouragement! We need some support! Life isn't easy; changing and transformation and being our best self ... it is not easy! We need encouragement. And nobody more do we need encouragement from than ourselves!

And the fact is, if we can't encourage ourselves, how can we expect other people to? And so we need to learn how to be better supporters and encouragers of ourselves right where we are.

And the most important thing is to not withdraw our love from ourselves during the difficult times. To show ourselves, "*Hey, I love you right where you are!*" To love ourselves right where we are, whether we're on the mountain top or curled up in the fetal position under the bed. To withhold our own love from ourselves ... talk about a lack of inner peace! We are the enemy within our own selves!

We've all had situations where we've done something, and tried to achieve something. Some new pattern: get healthy or get whatever. And we slip back. You know, and sometimes it's hard work. Sometimes our mind tells us to do things that aren't wise. "*Go ahead; have that second piece of chocolate cake. Go ahead; it's okay!*" [Congregation laughs] People ... You know, things don't go well in our life, and our mind tells us, "*Get angry! Get upset!*"

You know, it sounds silly, but our minds sometimes control us because we've programmed it so poorly, it's starting to control and run us. Someone cuts us off on the highway, the mind says, "*Yell; honk your horn; and show them one of your fingers.*" [Congregation laughs] All kinds of insane things! "*No; stay in bed! You don't have to exercise today. Look at how warm that bed is; you stay right there!*" [Congregation laughs] Come on; for real! The mind tells us some stuff that, we need some help! Some encouragement!

So my question for you right now is: When you mess up, how are you showing up for yourself? In the past, how have you shown up for yourself when you don't perform as well as you'd like? Are you mean? Are you harsh? Are you discouraging? Or are you kind and gentle and loving?

Three things about encouraging ourselves. Number one: Be kind to yourself when you don't do as well. Say, "*That's okay; you tried your best. It's just a slip-up; it's a part of the process. You'll do better next time. We'll work on a plan; we'll get a system. Everything's going to be okay.*"

Second thing is to visualize doing it better. Remember when Tiger Woods would make a bad shot? He would stay right there and take a swing again, and visualize himself doing it the right and better way. So maybe visualize yourself handling the situation better than you did. Maybe being calmer in that conversation; being more positive. See yourself -- visualize yourself -- not eating the cookie, but graciously turning it away and continuing your discipline. Maybe the next time someone cuts you off on the highway, you can just smile and say, "*God bless you!*" And wave at them with all five fingers! [Congregation laughs] I mean ... Okay. [Laughs]

And the third thing is to celebrate your progress. Sometimes we think we have to have quantum leaps of success to acknowledge ourselves as doing well. But if you, you know, did five more push-ups, celebrate it! If you said, "*No*" and set a boundary that you had a hard time setting, celebrate that. Everything you do! I think it's important to acknowledge how far we've come, how well we're doing! We don't have to wait until everything is perfect to say, "*Hey! You did good!*" I mean, a slap on our own back -- loving up and encouraging and celebrating ourselves -- is a hugely important thing to bring a greater sense of inner peace and happiness.

The fact is: we all want to be happier. We all want a better life. We all want greater fulfillment. And if we're really serious about it, the work we need to do -- the foundation of it -- is to work on our inner peace.

So, again, look within. Look within and do it silently, so you can feel it in our heart. Do it consistently so you can build up that consciousness, and do it persistently, because our minds wander. It's part of the deal! Be patient. Be persistent with yourself.

Second, learn to let go. Keep letting go! Ask yourself every day: What is it that I need to release? What is it I need to let go of my attachment to? Because it really will free us! It will liberate us.

And then, finally, encourage yourself. You know encourage yourself by being kind when things aren't going well; by visualizing yourself doing it better; and celebrating all your successes along the way.

Greater happiness and success await us all. And the first principle and foundation -- if we are serious -- is to develop a peaceful mind.

God bless you all! [Congregation applauds]

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