

SESSION 6. SEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT

Audio Transcript

It is our intention that each of these audio messages be built upon a major principle, one of the great ideas that automatically produces the results we seek. In this message, let's talk about a principle that never fails. Adherence to this particular principle gives quality and richness to life. It also produces a peace of mind that never wavers. The principle is integrity.

Like other great principles, integrity gets a lot of lip service, but it's seldom a true way of life. How people love and value a person of integrity – integrity in everything he does – in all his relationships with others, in what he says, in his work.

When they hear the word *integrity*, people often conjure up a person of stern and sober visage who walks the straight and narrow. That's not the kind of integrity I'm talking about. I'm talking about integrity with a sense of humor, integrity with understanding, integrity with kindness and gentleness – but integrity all the same. Never expediency, never saying, “Well, everybody is doing it. I guess it won't hurt if I do it, too.” But it does hurt. If it's wrong and we know it's wrong, it does hurt.

The “Seed for Achievement” is integrity. Integrity means honesty and the truth. Perhaps it was best put by Shakespeare. In a famous line in *Hamlet*, Polonius says: “And this above all, to thine own self be true. And it must follow as the night the day – thou canst not then be false to any man.”

If we are true to ourselves, we cannot be false to anyone else. If our word to live by is *integrity*, we have what we need in a pinch, our sleep is untroubled, and we're respected wherever we go.

During the Korean War, the Chinese communists overran an American position and captured an American general. He was subjected to weeks of the worst kind of treatment, brainwashing and questioning. He never gave in. Finally, he was told that unless he answered their questions, he would be executed the following morning. That night, he wrote a letter to his wife. At the end of the letter, he said, “Tell Johnny the word is *integrity*.” As it turned out, he was not executed, and he was later repatriated to American forces. But thinking he was going to die, he told his son that the word is *integrity*.

Integrity means to try, as best we can, to know ourselves, to examine ourselves as Socrates advised, and to make a true assessment of ourselves – an inventory of our abilities, our talents, our goals.

Not long ago, I received a letter from Scott D. Palmer, in which he said: “I came across some advice about happiness from my mentor, Dr. Brand Blanshard, that I published in my newsletter some time back. Blanshard is one of the greatest men of our century, even though few people have heard of him. He celebrated his 93rd birthday last year with the publication of his latest book, *Four Reasonable Men*, a biographical book on Marcus Aurelius, Joseph Ernest Renan, John Stuart Mill, and Henry Sidgwick. Appropriately, for Blanshard, the key virtue that leads to all the others is reasonableness.”

Brand Blanshard is Sterling professor emeritus of philosophy at Yale University. On the subject of happiness, he wrote:

“1. It is important to happiness not to think too much about it. The person who continually asks himself if he is happy is apt to miss his end. For happiness is, as Aristotle thought, a by-product of healthful and successful activity. Bertrand Russell, who wrote *The Conquest of Happiness*, remarked that scientists are generally happier than artists, since they are commonly lost in objective tasks and not examining their own navels. What is important is to find what one can do best (generally, also the line most useful to others) and then to do it with all one’s might. Happiness will come unsought. If one seeks it directly, one will be like the discontented, rich old ladies who haunt Miami hotels.

2. The main principle of my ethics is: to act as to make the world as much better as possible. I have not lived up to it; no one has. [There I disagree with Dr. Blanshard; he has made the world better, and so have many others.] But trying to live up to it involves constantly looking forward to the consequences of one’s actions, choosing those that are likely to be fruitful, and inhibiting action from impulse. Many people think, of course, that acting on impulse is a requirement of happiness; and I agree that impulse must be there, the stronger the better, *provided it is under control*. But seeking happiness directly, by blindly following one’s impulses, is too likely to end in hippiedom, drugs, and the gutter.”

And the distinguished Yale professor wrote: “The *most* important thing I have learned is the necessity of reasonableness. The person who has the least to regret, who does most for his community, whose judgment carries the most weight and is the most trusted, is the person who is steadfastly and on principle reasonable. I don’t mean the ‘intellectual’ who is often an impractical bore. I mean the person who, in matters of belief and matters of action, takes as his principle: Adjust your belief or decision to the evidence.”

He completed his small essay on happiness by writing: “There is no one ‘meaning of life.’ No two lives have the same value. The richness of a life depends not on the amount of happiness it achieves, but on finding out who one is – i.e., about one’s unique combination of powers – and then discovering through experiment and reflection what course of life will fulfill those powers most completely.”

You will never get better advice. I agree with Scott Palmer that Brand Blanshard, Sterling professor emeritus of philosophy at Yale University, in his 93 years – most of them devoted to study and teaching and observing the human species – knows what he is talking about. And, to me, *reasonableness* is another word for *integrity* – integrity to truth, to the evidence, no matter where it leads. And I especially liked his comment, “The richness of a life depends not on the amount of happiness it achieves, but on finding out who one is – i.e., about one’s unique combination of powers – and then discovering through experiment and reflection what course of life will fulfill those powers most completely.”

What are your powers? There is something – probably several things – that you can do especially well, that you most enjoy doing, and that will, automatically, provide the greatest service to others. Are you ready to discover “through experiment and reflection what course of life will fulfill those powers most completely”? That’s being true to yourself; that’s integrity; that’s reasonable-

ness.

As a radio listener wrote to me one day, there is little we cannot accomplish as persons, if we manage the conquest of inner space.

Being truthful with ourselves means taking the responsibility of making the best use of what we have. And what do we have? We have our underutilized minds, our abilities, our talents, and time. These are our possessions. This is really an immense amount of wealth that belongs to each of us. And it's the investment of our wealth that will determine our rate of return.

Our mind, our abilities, our talents, and time. No one can take those away from us. We take them with us wherever we go, and they represent our true wealth. That's what makes the human being autonomous, although most people don't know it. They remind me of the horse or elephant that meekly does what it is told or directed to do. It is completely unaware of its own strength; it doesn't know how easily it could do what it wants to do. And millions of miraculous human creatures live in tiny prisons of their own fashioning, completely unaware of their powers to be free, to do what they would most love to do and, in so doing, to reap a harvest beyond their wildest imaginings. They are slaves to their ignorance and follow each other around and around like so many processionary caterpillars. How have they invested their wealth – their minds, their abilities, their talents, and their time? They're not even aware of it.

As with the ownership of wealth of any kind, it's left to us to decide what use we'll make of it. We can squander it until it's gone – spend it in a helter-skelter, hit-or-miss fashion without much purpose or meaning. Or we can invest it with intelligence and purpose and receive an abundant return – a return that will more than provide for our families all the years of our lives.

The choice is ours, and here is where integrity comes into the picture. We are the only ones from whom we can steal time, talent, ability, and the use of our minds. Integrity entails making the best use of what we have, what we *are*, in the time that has been granted us. Sound simple? The truth is always simple and uncomplicated.

As soon as we properly invest our true wealth, we place ourselves above competition. We're no longer competing; we're creating. We're understanding something that the great majority of people have never known. Here is the foundation upon which every great career has been built – in every field.

So invest in that yellow legal pad and a few ballpoint pens, and, in your own best quiet time, start jotting notes on how to make the best use of what you have.

Here are some givens in the success department: Success has nothing at all to do with the size of the brain. The largest brain on record was the brain of an idiot; the smallest, the brain of Anatole France, who won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1921. Some of the world's greatest people in every field are, or were, short, bald, and fat; some, tall and skinny. Some were brilliantly educated; some had little or no schooling.

The person destined for greatness is the person who decides for himself to play his strongest suit. But truly successful people all have one thing in common: They all follow, consciously or unconsciously, the law of cause and effect. They are true to themselves.

Although most people will give lip service to the principle of integrity, they're really not at all sure about it. With the great majority, it's often a matter of expediency. If it's expedient to be honest, fine; they're honest. If it's more expedient to realize a quick profit in some way by not disclosing the whole truth, or by shading it a bit, well, they shade it a bit.

They tend to live for short-term or even instant gratification. They don't see succeeding as a long-range program. They don't know about what I like to call the "unfailing boomerang."

Every time a person does something dishonest, whether it's small or large – whether it's stealing a pair of pliers from the plant or embezzling \$10,000 – he's throwing the boomerang. It's the same with small dishonesties, with manipulating the truth. How far the boomerang will travel, no one can tell; or how great or small a circle it will traverse, only time will tell. But it will eventually – inevitably – come around full circle and deliver its never-failing and painful blow.

Honesty, unfailing integrity, is good business. In fact, Mirabeau wrote that if honesty did not exist, we would have to invent it as the best means of getting rich.

It's absolutely true. And all we have to do under every circumstance is ask ourselves, "Is this true? Is this honest? Is this the best I can do?" And if it is, we can go ahead with the happy realization that we've put in motion the right cause, and know that the effect will take care of itself.

Our only hope of real success, of winning the hearts and minds of the people we serve, is in helping them in some way and, thus, improving their standard of living. But if we're content to give less than our best, we're actually working against ourselves.

The average working person in our society is paid for about 40 hours a week. This leaves 128 hours a week to do as he pleases. Never before in the history of humankind have we had so much free time. That's 128 hours a week – more than three times as much time as we spend on the job. How much is all that time worth? We need our sleep, and we want our leisure time, of course – time to relax, take it easy and recharge our batteries. But do we need 128 hours for that?

Our greatest enemy has never changed. Its name is ignorance. And the greatest ignorance of all is the mistaken belief that we can ever receive more than we truly earn. Sooner or later, there will be an accounting. Every day, for good or bad, we're throwing the boomerang. And just as the punishment always seems to be greater than the offense, the rewards are also out of all proportion to our honest efforts.

So let's summarize. What do we mean by integrity?

It means giving everything we do our very best.

It means being true to ourselves and to every person with whom we come in contact. This gives meaning and comfort to our leisure time – our rest has been earned.

We know we'll move ahead toward our goals simply because we become remarkable people. We

cannot go unnoticed. The person of integrity is always needed, in every undertaking.

It means the willingness to keep an open mind, to look for truth wherever it leads all the years of our lives, to check things out for ourselves, to weigh what others tell us and to make our own judgments.

It's knowing that there is always a better way to do everything – and then a better way still to do that. It's looking for that better way in everything we do.

It's realizing that the person who does not read is no better off than the person who cannot read, and that a person who does not continue to learn and grow as a person is no better off than one who cannot.

We must walk with integrity every day of our lives, if we are to reap the abundant harvest all the years of our lives.

It's realizing that the greatest joy a human being can experience is the joy of accomplishment.

Remember to think of your life as a plot of rich soil waiting to be seeded. It can return to you only that which you sow. And what do you have to sow? You have great wealth: You have a mind; you can think. You have many abilities. You have talents that you still may not have explored. And you have time, which cannot be saved, stopped, or held back for a second. Make full use of these riches. It's never too late.

Use truth as your guide, have integrity as your banner, and your plot of ground will return to you and yours an abundance that will amaze and delight you.

And if you have days in which you find yourself depressed or confused, remember this comment by Dean Briggs: “Do your work. Not just your work and no more, but a little more for the lavish-ing's sake – that little more which is worth all the rest. And if you suffer, as you must, and if you doubt, as you must, do your work. Put your heart into it, and the sky will clear. Then, out of your very doubt and suffering, will be born the supreme joy of life.”

Exercises — Write your answers in the space provided below.

1. Reflect on your typical day. Can you spot an area where you are throwing an “unfailing boomerang” — where, for example, you are cutting corners you should not cut, or doing something you should not do? (Integrity, the “Seed for Achievement,” is a deeply personal subject. Although space is provided for notes under this question, you may not want to write down a response. You may want to simply think it out, and make a mental commitment to take any corrective action that may be called for.)

2. Do you always look for the truth, wherever it leads? Do you check things out for yourself, weigh what others tell you, and make your own judgements?

3. Write down a task that you consider difficult and/or unpleasant. Resolve to do it to the best of your ability, just for the joy of accomplishment.