

“7 Secret Keys to Happiness and Success!”

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“7 Secret Keys to Happiness and Success!”

If there is one skill God wants me to learn, it is **the skill of being able to find joy** out of life's varied situations. It is true that life often presents to us things that frustrate us, irritate us and trouble us. But life also presents to us **things to be happy about** and to be really **grateful** for. **We need only to find these things**, separate them from the dross, and focus our hearts upon the treasures we can find. If you are to stand in front of a crowd who starts throwing both stones and jewels at you, will you not try to evade the stones and then try **catching as many jewels as you can**? Will you weep because of the stones, or will you rejoice for the jewels that you find? Surely, I believe the time shall come, **when joy stands so firm in our hearts** that we can even turn the stones coming our way into sapphires and emeralds, into diamonds and pearls, into treasures beyond any measure or price!

Written in this book are **7 secret keys to happiness and success**. They are not truly hidden. They are secret only because people do not know where to look. They are always there and all we need to do is to pick them up and use them to open the doors of joy and fulfillment for us.

Let us begin.

1. ACCEPTANCE

*To accept
what has been
what IS
and what will be,
To be able to stand
immovable
and unshakable
as a mighty rock
that does not complain
nor wince out loud,
To be able to accept everything
and still stand,
is to truly possess
great power.
It is when things
have already been counted as lost
that all things rise yet again
to be gained.*

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A strong rock can withstand any blow, any wave crashing against it. After the wave settles, the rock still stands whole. Its happiness can't ever be lost or swept away because its happiness does not exist outside of itself.

What are you afraid of? What is it that you cannot accept? **The shortest path to peace is still acceptance.** Without acceptance, we cannot even begin from where we are.

It is important to begin where you are so you can start your journey to where you really want to be - to **HAPPINESS and SUCCESS**. If you DENY your current problems, you're only fooling yourself. You cannot plan accurately. You cannot plot the course you need to take because you are living under the ILLUSION that you are already **"OKEY"** where you are not.

Accept your problems. Accept your tears. Accept your defeat. Accept your weakness. Accept your exhaustion. **Even God cannot help you if you cannot accept what it is you need to pray for.**

To accept means **to acknowledge, to admit, to see**. Whenever we accept something, we recognize two things: 1) we recognize an **existing problem** that needs to be solved, and 2) we recognize **we are still there**, hanging on and big enough to accept the difficulties that come our way.

In a way, acceptance denotes a certain kind of **CONFIDENCE**. Without acceptance, we say that whatever it is we cannot accept is so big it will certainly crush us to pieces. Acceptance says that though we be crushed into pieces, it's still alright. We don't just vanish all of a sudden after that. We still exist in those little pieces, pieces we can still pick up and make into a better stronger whole.

So much of the things we cannot accept cannot be changed anyways. No matter what we do, we cannot run away from it. Bitter memories haunt us like ghosts. We let them haunt us rather than confine them to the past where they belong.

We can't change anymore the bad things that have happened in the past. We can only accept that they have happened. Only when we accept the past can we begin to declare that they have no power anymore today.

To RESIST is to WASTE precious energy fighting an impossible battle. Surrender that battle so you can win the next battles, the more important battles that will define your life.

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Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Accept your grief today, and then accept God's love and healing for you. ACCEPT the path to your happiness and success.

LIFE STATEMENT

I will go through this life only once,
and I shall have but one chance to live;
Not all people will like me,
others may even despise me,
as I may not be easily understood;
Yet I will take this chance to live,
and I will reach out in ways I know;
I will love those whom I can,
and I will strive to understand them more;
Not all days will bring me sunshine,
so I will rejoice also for the rain;
Not every endeavor will be a success,
but I will savor the victories I achieve;
Not all dreams I dream will be mine,
but in time new dreams will fill my heart,
and as from a star those hopes will propel me forward
doing everything the best way I know I can;
No fear shall trample me whatsoever,
though some tasks seem to outweigh my strength;
I will only do what I have to do,
and God will take care of the rest!

DETACHMENT

Detachment. Strong word. Pretty scary word. Given the choice, we'd avoid it, we'd put it so far below our list we'd wish we'll never need to consider it anymore. For whether we admit it or not, detachment brings to our minds our most dreaded fears - separation, letting go, goodbyes. It's as though the very word reminds us of brokenness, depravity, hurts we couldn't even describe.

Yet is this the true essence of the virtue? Is detachment a cold harsh tool that rips us off our humanity and replaces our hearts of sorrow with hearts of hardest stones?

It is just the opposite, my friend. For the true essence of detachment brings us not to the barrenness of the desert we fear so much, but to the **calm undisturbed waters in the deep** that neither moans nor retreats from the fast changing currents at the surface.

Detachment is **a steady tree in the middle of a roaring storm**, it is an anchor that keeps us safe and secure from the might of the crashing waves. It guides us as we journey forth to our destinations, like the sun whose brightness never fails to shine upon us wherever we may be. It allows us to weep, yet gives us also the freedom to rejoice, trusting everything will be just fine.

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Detachment is after all, not a detachment from the people and things we value the most, but a **detachment from our own fears**, from the fear of losing the ones we truly love.

If we can just begin to understand, if we can just believe that God stands with us, that God provides everything we need, that God is not selfish nor covetuous of our desires and happiness, maybe we can trust that our joy will not be taken away from us without a deeper purpose nor will it be taken away from us forever. If we can just believe that God is everywhere, and that God is in all things, maybe we can be assured that all things we hold dearly lay safely upon His hands. Maybe we'd be comforted for we know that God is only a prayer a way, and hence, so are all things in whom He dwells.

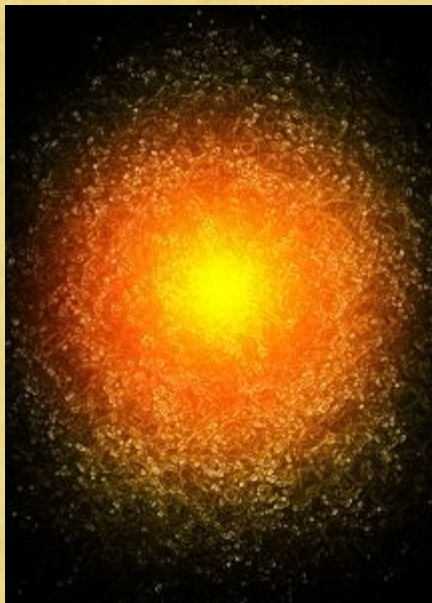
Detachment therefore is not about being deprived of the good, but of being free from our burdens. Detachment is not about letting go but of **holding on so fervently and confidently**, believing that no wind or storm can ever take away that which you have loved. Detachment is not about our brokenness, but of our wholeness, of being able to protect and keep our joy whatever the external circumstances may be.

Joy In Surrender

I have worn myself out scheming for my desired end, yet only in surrender did I find an end far more than what I could have ever hoped for!

2. FAITH

“The road to salvation
is the road to faith;
Seek now the answers to your questions,
ask for guidance and whatever it is that can fill your doubts.
God cannot save you.
Only your **faith** in God ever can.”



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What do you believe in? Is your faith strong enough?

Some people believe in God, some people don't. Some people believe in the law of attraction, others don't.

But not all people who say they believe in God truly put their FAITH in God at all times. Not all people who believe in God believe Him to be a good and perfect God of unconditional love. That is why when moments of trials come, these people can easily blame their own God. Why blame God when you believe God is good? Why feel helpless when you believe that the All-Powerful God loves you? Why be afraid? Why be unhappy?

Without faith, man is like a **lost leaf being tossed** about by the wind. With FAITH however, man can do the impossible!

With faith, mountains can be moved, miracles can take place. And even when all else seems dark and hopeless, the man who has a strong faith is happy. He is happy because he believes that things will turn out in his favor.

"I have faith in my abilities," a man says. And so he remains **confident** no matter how many people try to persuade him against his dreams.

"I have faith in my beloved," a woman says. And so she remains **happy** and at peace even if someone says bad things against her husband.

Faith heals. Faith **makes a way** where there seems to be no way.

For a man who believes that God gave us all the power and the freedom to reach for the deepest desires of our hearts, there is nothing that cannot be achieved. Success and happiness will be with him always. He will not sabotage his own victories. He will not feel unworthy of all the blessings being showered upon him. His faith has opened up for him the gates of prosperity and joy and no one can steal his happiness away from him.

A man who believes in the abundance of the Universe will never be poor. **THE LORD PROVIDES**, he proclaims. Even when robbers steal his money away, he will not remain penniless. His treasures will come back to him and he will be even richer than before.

Such a man's faith is not anchored in the material things that he possess. His faith is in heavenly riches that no thief can ever take way from him.

Where is your FAITH? Would you like to believe in the goodness of life? Would you like to believe you can be happy and victorious? Choose your faith, forge it, and then be blessed!

'According to your faith, be it done unto you', Jesus said.

HOW DO WE OVERCOME OUR UNBELIEF?

A child is having a seizure, he foams at the mouth and gnashes his teeth, he is thrown to the ground and lays as rigid as a rock. Meanwhile, the disciples of Jesus gather around him, praying, laying their hands and shouting words of affirmation, trying to cast away the evil spirit that has possessed the child. Still, the child rolled around, foaming at the mouth. The disciples couldn't drive away the malady. After all the miracles they've seen through Jesus, after all the miracles they have performed themselves, they stand defeated and confused.

Just then, Jesus arrives and is quickly approached by the boy's father, asking for the healing of his son. Jesus asks the man if he believes. The man answers, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" Jesus commanded the spirit to depart, and at once, the boy was healed!

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After the crowd had left, the disciples asked Jesus why they couldn't drive out the evil spirit. Jesus replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

But wasn't it prayer that the disciples uttered when they tried to heal the boy? Why didn't it work? Did they not have enough faith? And **why was their faith lacking**? What prayer finally drove out the spirit away? It isn't just the prayer of Jesus, but the prayer of the father's child when he proclaimed that he believed.

But what's the difference between his prayer and the prayer of the disciples? Shouldn't the disciples know more of faith than the suffering father did?

The disciples may have had more experience in their work, but when they came across a difficult case, they themselves started to doubt. And when their hearts were gripped by fear and worry, there was nothing within them that urged them to persevere in their work. **They lost their faith, and then they lost their hope, and they had nothing more.**

But the father of the child, though he admittedly lacked also in faith had something more. Something that urged him to persevere. Something that urged him to come to Jesus and to try once again. He couldn't just give up. He couldn't bear the sight of his very own son suffering that way. No, he will do everything he can so he can save the boy he loves so much.

And alas, through the hands of Jesus, his son had been saved. Through the hands of Jesus, his prayer had been answered. His was the only prayer that prevailed, the only one who was able to **overcome his unbelief**. And what prompted him? It was his unquestionable love for his son. **It was love.**

If I speak in tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophesy and can fathom all mysteries and knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing... Love never fails. (1 Cor. 13:1-2,8)

3. HOPE

While faith
Is that steady hand
Your spirit holds on to,
HOPE is that **burning fire**
Kept alive in your own **heart**.



IS THERE NOTHING BEAUTIFUL IN THIS WORLD ANYMORE?

Is there nothing beautiful in this world anymore? Is there nothing at all that can delight us and give us hope? How many times have we felt we've seen it all, and there is nothing more that can inspire us the way things have inspired us before? How many times have we felt there is nothing more that can move us, that there is nothing more that can touch our hearts and bring our eyes to tears?

Were the people of old merely more sentimental, and we more practical in our thoughts and ways? Were the folks that have lived before us merely too unfortunate to have fewer things with which to content themselves, or have we found too many things that overwhelm us, and we have lost sight of those things that can truly make us happy?

What has changed? What has passed? Whatever faded that the more we grew and learned, the more we saw the shadows, the more our eyes longed for the beauty that faded through the passing of the years?

Was it really something that left us, never ever to return? The crispness of the morning air smothered by the urban smog? The pristine waters of brooks and streams, now ever rare as dark shadows crept even the mightiest of seas? The freshness of flowers in gardens now finding but lesser and lesser space in the city's towering skyscrapers? Or was it something in our eyes that blurred our vision, such that we look and stare but we can no longer see?

What are we after anyway? What do we yearn to see? Is it beauty still? Is it goodness still? Or have we shifted our gaze from things eternal and pure to thrills that excite our senses but never satisfies us in the end?

Worse, we may not be looking anymore, we may not believe anymore that there is something beautiful in the world, in us, in one another. We are afraid to look. And everything we do seems only to escape the emptiness within that all the wealth and glitter of the world we have created cannot really fill.

Look within. There is wisdom and unspeakable peace that await you. Look again. There is still wonder in the single drop of dew that clings upon the faded petal of a rose. Look with a new pair of eyes and with a new heart. A heart filled with courage. A heart filled with faith, believing that there is still some beauty in the human soul, and in the breath of God blowing upon its creatures, making all things new, revealing all things beautiful.

This people will listen and listen, but not understand; they will look and look, but not see, because their minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears and have closed their eyes. Otherwise, their eyes would see, their ears would hear, their minds would understand, and they would turn to me, says God, and I would heal them. - Matthew 13:14-15 (TEV)

WHAT IF...

What do we look forward to?

When we were kids,
we looked forward to growing up
when we were teenagers,
we looked forward to finishing our studies
when we were young adults,
we looked forward to getting a job
when we were finally stable,
we looked forward to getting married,
when we got married,
we looked forward to having kids
when we had kids,
we looked forward to seeing them grow up
and so the cycle goes....

but what if we stopped
somewhere
when we were adults
thinking what life really means
what a life that matters really is
and what we'd really like to do
will the cycle stop?
shall we move on to another circle?

after our soul searching
the cycle may go on
we marry
we have kids
we look forward to them growing up

but then all the while
that this happens
a change within tells us
things are finally different
not because we've headed in a different direction
but because we took the road
with a new heart
and a fresh new pair of eyes.

Hope is not the property of depressed people. **People are depressed because they have lost their hope.**

No matter how other people try to convince them to think more positively, to motivate themselves and to envision a better future, they cannot be convinced because they cannot find the "feelings" that will match the good things and visions they hear.

HOPE, if it should be true hope, should be alive. It is not a mere promise. It is not a distant dream. It is something that is present and living, something that connects one's present life to that distant dream.

He who has HOPE in his heart is happy. To such a person, the feeling of a wonderful future has already come. He has in a way, **TRANSCENDED** Time.

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He who has hope will be successful. His current actions are propelled by inspirations of a wonderful life he sees ahead. He who is without hope does not strive for anything. He cannot see the star that will light his path.

Whenever you feel that little spark of hope within, listen to it and nourish it. Never quench it with pessimism or useless talks.

Hope is a living being that should always be a part of who you are. Like the very breath in your body, keep it ever near.

**Hope is not mere optimism,
It is a certainty
That joy
Shall happen
Shall come
Shall prevail!**

I WILL SMILE AGAIN

I will smile again
Though tears flow from these eyes
I will smile again
And trust tomorrow the sun shall rise
Though darkness may enfold me
Though heavy rain can't help but pour
Though shattered, lost and broken
Though heart could barely bear it all
Though tired and weary and confused
Though badly hurt and bruised
I know that I will smile again
And I will smile again!

4. PERSEVERANCE

"I hope that you will **persevere**
Until the very end,
Because it is only then
That you will find out
That **the end is but the beginning**
Of the realization
Of your **dreams.**"



Persevere in prayer. Persevere in your hope. Persevere in your faith. He who cannot persevere has not truly BELIEVED from the very beginning.

Countless endeavors were called FAILURES not because they were doomed to fail, but because there was not enough perseverance to discover the SUCCESS and the HAPPINESS that await on the other side of the road.

If only one man climbed a few more feet higher. If only another man dug a few more meters deeper. If only a businessman had enough capital to last a few more days. IF ONLY.

Let us not be victims of changing our minds too soon before we reap the success we have sown. Giving up too early only shows our lack of belief in what we are doing. It shows that we have not thought about our plans well. It shows how shallow our hope really is.

Do you know what you are actually building with your perseverance? You are building a very strong momentum that increases steadily and expands larger and larger until it becomes so huge no hindrance can ever stop it along the way! Without perseverance, all you may have is a stone. Nothing much can be moved by a stone. But when that stone becomes a big rock, a boulder, an entire hill, it can move anything as it rolls down the path you chose for it to tread.

Never underestimate the power of perseverance. Much of what people call as overnight success wasn't really made overnight. The seed was sown a long time ago, although in secret. The growth seemed almost negligible at the start, but after years of preparation, the seed suddenly explodes and all that the world sees is the magnificence of that moment!

How long have you been trying? Are you losing faith already? Take heart! This may just be the moment you've long been waiting for.

HOW DO YOU TEACH AN EAGLE HOW TO FLY?

(An Excerpt from one of the chapters in my series "The Good For Nothing Boy")

"Good-for-nothing!" How many among us felt as though we were good-for-nothing and unwanted? How many among us ever felt without a purpose in life? Today, I will tell you one of the chapters of the story of a little boy who felt the same way. Together with his firefly friend, let us join him in his search for his purpose as he journeys over strange and distant lands and as he miraculously uncovers his worth, his mission, and his heart.

It was raining hard that day and the little boy found himself running desperately for shelter. With the firefly cupped in his hands, he tried to make his way farther up the mountains. There used to be lots of trees there, but now, the land is almost barren. The path was slippery, and the boy often tripped as he ran.

"Are you all right in there?" he asked the firefly cupped in his hands.

"Still alive, boy; still alive," replied the firefly.

"Just a little while more. I think I see something ahead."

"I'm glad to hear that. I could hardly breathe in here. Where have all the trees gone anyway?" the firefly asked.

"They say they were used to make houses and many other things," the boy replied.

"Well there are no houses here, that's for sure. I wish they made some, too, for fireflies like me."

"I don't think they do that, you know."

"Well if they can't do that, they might as well leave some trees here," cried the firefly.

"Yeah, I guess that's fair enough."

Suddenly, a mighty lightning struck and almost hit them had the boy not dodged just in time! Crawling, firefly still in his hands, he tried to reach what seemed like a cave in the middle of the barren land.

"Whew, that was close!" the firefly sighed with relief.

"Indeed, too close. I'm glad we found this cave. We can stay here until the storm is over."

Tired with the day's ordeal, they slept deeply through the night, not knowing where or what they have gotten themselves into.

"Little boy, wake up! The cave is moving!"

"Wh - what? You might be dreaming, get some more sleep - "

"But the cave is really moving. Wake up!" the firefly insisted as he hovered near the boy's ear.

Just then, the boy was awakened by the sudden gush of wind that chilled him to the bones.

"Whoossh! Whhooosshh!"

"What's that?!" He could not believe his eyes. For right there where he thought the cave had been, is the biggest eagle he's ever seen!

"No, please don't go," a gentle voice suddenly spoke. "I have no intention of harming you or your friend."

"How – how can we be sure?" asked the trembling firefly.

"Look here." And they saw that the eagle was tied to the ground.

"I have not gone anywhere since I was tied here. All that I ever asked of strangers was to get me some food from the nearby forest. As you can see, I can't provide for my own needs. If you would be willing, I shall be very thankful for you both."

"I am willing," said the boy.

"I – I – well I – if you say so!" said the firefly.

And so everyday, the little boy gathered food from the forest to offer to the giant eagle. Everyday, they ate together and became really good friends.

"Was it really long ago since you were tied here?" asked the boy.

"Yes, I was just a little eagle. Some hunter caught me, for some reason though, he did not return."

"And have you..."

"Oh yes, I did try to break away, but I've found my efforts futile that one day I resigned to accept my fate."

"But – but as you said, you were just a little eagle then. Now you're so big I believe you can already break away. I would really like to help you, but I'm just too little to be able to cut these chains. I know you can do it yourself."

"I don't know, little boy. I have failed so many times. And even if I could break loose, I don't even know if I could still fly. Wouldn't it be more shameful to see a free eagle who couldn't fly?"

"But wouldn't you want to see your family again? Wouldn't you want to meet new friends and see new things? I know there are lots of things on the other side of the mountain, not to mention the other side of the sea. For an eagle as big as you, I'm sure there are lots of things in store if you would only try. If only I were an eagle, I wouldn't give up no matter how many times I fail."

"You made it sound so easy that I'm tempted to do it," the eagle said.

"Don't just be tempted, giant eagle. Do it! I want to see you free and soaring high!"

"It – it may be possible..."

"Yes, it's possible!" chorused the boy and the firefly.

"Could you help me then?"

"Of course we will! I can't teach you how to fly, you must discover it yourself. But we will support you. We will."

"Thanks, I hope I make it this time."

"You will! I guess you should start by practicing to flap your wings everyday. And when your wings are strong enough, maybe we can begin the real test."

After weeks of preparation, the moment has come for the eagle and his friends.

"I'm quite nervous," the eagle said.

"Don't be! We're right behind you."

And so with one final breath, the eagle flapped his wings and tried to break loose. "Whooooosshh!" Everything seemed to be going so well, the eagle was rising when all of a sudden, fear struck him, he lost his balance and fell!

"I knew I couldn't do it. I knew I couldn't."

"Giant eagle, you must believe you can do it. There is no other way. Each failure brings us closer to the dreams we have. I have an idea! I will give you something to say to yourself while you're practicing. All this time, we've been practicing your wings, but we forgot to practice your mind. If we are to accomplish anything, we must first be able to visualize it like it's almost real, in our minds."

And so the boy gave the eagle the secret words to be uttered to himself; words he must believe and trust until the time comes when both wings and mind become ready to try again.

That time came. The eagle flapped his wings once more. And this time, with such strength and conviction he never thought he had. He kept on reciting the words the boy taught him as he tried to break loose and fly.

SOARING HIGH

Why should I be afraid to fly?

And why should I be afraid to try?

When I was born to meet the sky –

I was born to meet the sky and fly!

I may fall once,

I may fall twice,

I may fall so many times

But I will not fall always!

I will try again and again and fly!

Spread your wings now

Get ready!

Let go of your fears

As you leave the ground –

Be prepared now, steady

You're getting better,
You're flying stronger
You're soaring higher up the sky!

Suddenly, the eagle was able to break loose and soar high up in the sky; so high that the boy knew the eagle can now fend for himself. It is now time for him to move on and seek his own sky.

5. PASSION

“Passion is not only a fire
That burns within the heart,
It is **a flame that consumes**
Both heart and mind,
Both spirit and soul
Such that **one is able to do**
What one has **never done before!**”

People who practice their passion are **happy**. They do not have to wait before the whole world acknowledges their art. They only want the world to know of it so that the world may also **share the happiness they already have**.

Do you know your passion? For people who do, the answer is **instantaneous --**

“Running is my passion.”

“Cooking is my passion!”

“Teaching my students is my passion.”

“Composing great music is my life passion!”

You know it's your passion when you can't wait another day doing it. Even when someone tells you to have a vacation, you're reluctant to leave your passion behind. There is no retirement from it. **There is no giving up.** Even when you don't earn money from it, you still do it. You do it for the pure joy of doing it!

Passionate people excel in what they do. It's like they have some kind of magical powers that allow them to do things ordinary people cannot do. The truth is that the **PASSION itself is their magic**. They don't need to pursue anything else other than their great love for what they do. They hardly notice the time spent with their passion because their whole being is engrossed in the moment of being one with their soul's desire. They also hardly notice any difficulties because everything else becomes insignificant as compared to their one great inspiration.



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For a man who has found his true passion, there is no task that is too difficult. Such a man does not flee with the slightest inconvenience or discomfort.

He endures. He overcomes. He rises triumphant and with a big smile on his face no matter how difficult his struggles had been.

People who have passion have an **infectious enthusiasm** about them. You can feel their great energy even before they say anything at all. You can see it in the gleam of their eyes, in the spring of their movement.

Everybody wants to be with them, willing to be of help without being asked. This is because people with passion give out hope and energy to others around them. They inspire others to find their own passion.

In order to find your own passion, **you must look into your own heart and not mind what others say**. You must not consider what would look great or more honorable. You must not consider which seems to earn more money. Instead, consider that which will bring you the most happiness. Let joy lead you to your passion, and your passion will be your greatest joy!

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE REALLY WANT TO DO IN LIFE?

After all the hard work studying, you've finally graduated from school. After all the hard work applying for a job, you've finally landed a job that pays you. And after all the hard work finding other jobs, you've finally landed a job that pays you well. Happy? Why not? Isn't this what you really wanted to do all along? What seems to be missing? Why do you feel as though you're starting from the very beginning? Worse, you feel you don't even know where to start. For the first time in a long time you ask yourself, "What do I really want to do in life?"

I've asked myself the same questions, and of all the questions I've ever asked myself, this is one of the hardest indeed. But there is a way. And we must believe that all those who seek earnestly find the answer that they seek.

Following are some of the things that helped me realize what it is that I really wanted to do, what it is that would make my life worthwhile and meaningful. It's certainly not an easy journey, and it's easier said than done. It may take even years for some, but take heart, and believe that it is never too late to find the answer you're looking for.

1. Remember you childhood dreams

We weren't always the grow-ups we are today. Once upon a time we were just kids learning to walk, talk and find our way in this world. Once upon a time we had the imagination to dream and to feel in our hearts what we really wanted to do. But something happened along the way. The necessities imposed upon us and the prejudices society taught us made us think differently. We lost touch of the child within us, the child who knew how to dream and to believe in that dream.

Get in touch with that child again. Hear his voice. Pretend you're not afraid of the many difficulties that lie ahead. Pretend you haven't heard of what the many other grownups around you say a responsible person should be doing. Think everything is possible, as when the time you believed in magic and fairytales. Think God can grant you your heart's desires. What do you want? What would you ask for? What have you asked for when you were once a child? Did you want to be a doctor then and heal people? Did you want to be a teacher and feed the mind of young ones with knowledge and wisdom? Did you want to be an artist and paint the world with colors? Set yourself free. Oftentimes, what we really wanted to do, we already knew since when we were but children when our hearts were yet pure and our minds unbridled by the many rules the world has taught us

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later when we grew up.

2. Explore

Now that you already have the means to support yourself, you can finally do things you've only dreamed of before! On my part, I was able to go to places I've never been to; I was able to attend seminars like 3D animation, scriptwriting, and playing the guitar; I was able to buy a digital camera and experiment on taking pictures; I was able to buy an oven and the ingredients needed to bake and cook; I was able to play computer games as much as I wanted and design my blog for hours using the computer I bought myself; I was able to buy the books I've always wanted to read.

I have the means now to finally explore the things that delight me and interest me. I can finally nourish the dreams the child in me used to dream only with her heart and with her head.

Explore. Don't think you need only to do the things where you can get outright monetary returns. Just set yourself free, now as an adult who knows how to enjoy yourself. Do what you want. It will lead you to those things you would want to be doing all your life.

3. Make a survey

The people around us usually have clues about our strengths, talents and skills, and the things that we enjoy doing. Ask these people. They may even tell you things you haven't realized yet, like a good singing voice you've always kept to yourself before! Or you may discover that you're a good leader, and that you inspire the people you work with. You may discover how many people count on your wisdom and insights and thus, seek your counsel for important decisions in their life. Make a survey, and let it guide you in your discovery.

4. Fear not your own beauty and strength

In your journey of discovery, you may sometimes get a vision of yourself, your best self, the one you've been searching for all along. But oftentimes too, we immediately disregard this vision, for we cannot believe it to be true. It overwhelms us to think we can be that beautiful and talented and strong. We regard it as an illusion we can never reach, and we settle for the next best thing that comes to our mind. Don't do that. For God did not intend us to settle for something lesser than His greatest plan for us. God made us to be the best and most beautiful we can be so that other people may best be blessed as well through us. Don't belittle yourself. And do not be afraid to see yourself for who you really are, and for who you were truly destined to become. Shine forth your light and fear not your own beauty.

5. Accept your gift

Once you have faced the vision of your destiny, learn to accept it with all your heart and spirit and mind and soul. Deny not your gifts, and deny not the accountabilities those gifts carry with them. If you have the gift of entrepreneurship, accept it. Accept that you have the power to lead many people. Accept that these people will count on you. And fear not that you may fail them in the end. Instead, fear that you may not even begin and give them the chance therefore to have a leader as good and strong as you are.

6. Do something you won't ever get tired of doing

Once you have explored your many interests, learn to discern which of these things will delight you

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only for a time, and which of these things will give you joy forever. As for me, I once enjoyed my guitar lessons. But then I soon got tired of practicing and playing the same music again and again so I can master it. I didn't want to hear the song that way. It made me lose interest in the song. But I found out I could compose songs, and that I do not tire of composing them.

Realize that when you choose something, your passion in doing it must be that great so as not to tire of doing it all your life. Can you imagine painting everyday of your life? Can you imagine practicing golf for hours for all the days of your life? What is it that you won't ever get tired of doing? What is it that even if others attempt to stop you, you would still be doing just for the sake of doing it? Something you could never stop yourself from doing, because stopping yourself would mean stopping the very flow of life in you?

7. Do what enriches you and blesses others at the same time

I've realized that when I write from the heart and from the very depths of my soul, the words I have written do not only help other people, but those very words inspire me first of all. Such is when I know that I have practiced my passion, when I feel enriched instead of feeling exhausted, when I feel that I have received and I have been blessed instead of feeling deprived and spent. I noticed too that when I write from the heart, other people are blessed, they are moved, and in one blessed moment, our souls touch, and our souls are both blessed by the God that gives us all good things.

It is thus that you know you have truly found your gift: when the thing you do both enriches you and blesses many others along the way.

8. Set aside what others deem as right, beneficial and noble

Although I've suggested to you previously to make a survey of what others think of you and your gifts, you should also be careful that you don't listen to everything people tell you. Try to sense if they are sincere, and if they're truly speaking from the wisdom of their hearts. Other people merely repeat what others say without reflecting on it. Other people would dictate upon you what worked for them, and what may not work for you.

Most of all, when you have already discovered what you really wanted to be doing, set aside the prejudices of the world and trust the God who entrusted to you this mission and these gifts. Do not let the opinion of others belittle you or tell you that there are other tasks far nobler or greater than the one you'd like to be doing.

9. Do what really makes you happy and complete

God has implanted upon your own heart the desires that would truly make you happy. These are the things that will guide you in your journey. These are the things that will shed its light in your path where there were only shadows and uncertainties before. Discover the deepest desires of your heart. For it is such desires that if fulfilled can really make you happy and complete.

10. Pray

Above all these things my friend, pray. Seek for the counsel of God's Spirit and God will guide you all the way. Pray for enlightenment. Pray for perseverance. And then pray for the courage to use your gifts. It is such that you will know God has a great plan for you, and it is God Himself who will help you to make your dreams come true.

6. FRIENDS

Who are my friends?
Are they the ones
Who never hurt me
And never let me down?
Are they the ones
Who are always there
And will never leave me alone?
Let me not seek my God
In my friends
For I shall only be disappointed
Only this I know:
That friends are **precious gifts**
And despite all their weaknesses,
They have claimed me
As their own."



He who has found true friends has found a real treasure. By finding people he could draw close to his heart, he has already divided his sorrows and multiplied his joys.

His friends open up to him another world, a new world to discover, to cherish and to explore. He learns new things from them. He discovers new things that can make him happy.

When he opens up his own world to them, his happiness is also multiplied because he sees the joy in the eyes of his friends. He is able to share to them something new. He is able to impart a significant part of his life.

Friendships are therefore like bridges. We go back and forth to draw out happiness and to share our own happiness in return.

Friends help one another grow. By constantly trying to understand the other, friends extend themselves and become better persons.

Why be alone when you can be with another? Why grow alone when you can grow together?

Even in business undertakings, having a core group of people you can trust and depend upon creates a big impact to your success. You don't have to think of everything on your own. You don't have to do everything yourself. In times when you are too weak to perform your task, you know that there will be another hand to help you out.

Friends also reveal to you who you are. They are like clear mirrors reflecting the person you have become, the person you have grown into. Do you like what you see? Ask the people who truly know you. They may see things you often fail to see.

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Your friends see your strength behind your tears. Your friends see the greatness of your dream behind your seeming defeat. Your friends believe in you even in times when you cannot believe yourself.

Some people ask what is the difference between a family and a friend. All I can say is that you can never have a true friend without considering her as a real part of your family.

Together, your family and friends give you a home to come home to, a warm place where you can just be yourself and be loved for who you are.

Happy are they who know where their home is. They will never be lost. **They will always know how to find their way back to joy.**

MAKE FRIENDS

When you have found true ones, you will find how blessed you really are! I'm glad I was able to reach out to you. And I'm glad you were able to reach out to me. I'm glad I was able to break free from the walls that surrounded me. For indeed, the world is more colorful, and life is more beautiful when shared. Knowing another person is like knowing another world. It is learning new things, engaging in new adventures and finding new places within your heart!

IF I CAN ASK GOD ONE PRAYER

If you can face your God at this very moment, what prayer would you ask of Him? A solution for a grave personal problem perhaps. Riches that would help you serve other people better. An end to the world's problems on peace. Forgiveness for the many sins you have committed. What would it be?

I used to think of it as a very difficult decision, on what prayer indeed I would lift up to my God. Until one night when one thought struck me, a prayer I would desire not only for myself, but for every man trying to make it in this life.

It's a very simple prayer, nothing as grand as peace and prosperity for all, nothing as glorious as mansions I'd like prepared for me when I get to heaven.

If I can ask God one prayer, this is what I'd pray for: I'd pray that for each and every man that journeys in this road called life, there be at least one person who'd stay beside him, at least one person who'd make him feel he is not alone.

And by such a person I don't necessarily mean a lover or a soulmate as everyone seems to be looking for, just one person, one friend who'd sincerely care, one person who'd love another as though that other is a part of his very own life: a child who'd write you a birthday card saying how much she really loves you, a mother who'd stay through the night and take care of you when you are sick, an aunt who'd listen to your heartaches when you've got no one to tell it to, a sister who'd treat you to an ice cream parlor when you didn't make it to the auditions you went to, a friend who'd take a leave from work just so she can keep you company whenever you feel so far from home.

This is what I would pray for. This is what I believe would help each of us face whatever difficulties we are going through.

It is true that we meet a lot of people everyday, and it may be true that we even call many of them

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our friends. But who is your friend really? When things go wrong and the going gets tough, who would stay with you and stick around? Who would sacrifice their comfort just so they can comfort you?

Perhaps if there is one such person we know who truly cares for us and takes accountability for our lives, we'd all feel a little better, and we wouldn't feel so afraid. Because in truth, what many of us fear the most is the fear of being alone, the fear of having no one who would care for us, and of having no one who would expect the same kind of concern from us.

We will never be content in being loved as part of the crowd, as a mere part of the group, not even in the collective sense of being all children of God. For though we are part of one body, each of us is a unique person who needs to be recognized, appreciated and loved.

We have to know that God knows our name, and that He has written our name in the palm of His hand. We have to know that He would leave the 99 sheep behind so He can look for us and make sure that we are found. We have to know that we matter as a person, that we are seen, and that somebody's going to miss us when we die.

Won't you be God's warm hands today and hold just one trembling hand, keeping it from turning numb and stone-cold? Won't you be God's ears today, attentively and patiently listening to someone who would like to believe nobody cares anymore? Won't you be God's voice today, speaking words that empower and uplift, making another person feel how important he is to you? Won't you be God's heart today, inviting somebody in with whom you will be responsible for, devoting and even sacrificing your life so that you may bring him healing and love and joy?

Won't you let another person know that somebody enjoys her company, somebody delights in the way she laughs, and somebody looks forward to seeing her again? For these indeed are the things we need, simple things most of us often find so easy to ignore and to forget.

Much as we desire to be noble and to claim an undying love for all mankind, maybe what the world needs now is just one person, fully devoting oneself to another, making real the manifestation of God's immeasurable love for each and every person He called His own. We cannot measure that in numbers, but in how well we were able to reflect unto another soul God's deep, sincere, intimately personal and all encompassing love.

FRIEND

I may not always be by your side,
but my prayers will be with you.
I may not always help you,
but deep inside you know I want to.
I may not always do what you like,
but I will do the best I can.
I may not always understand,
but we can still walk hand in hand.
I may not be the perfect friend,
I may not be the best out there,
but in spite and despite all these,
you can be sure somebody cares!

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7. TRUTHFULNESS

I bare my nakedness
To the world,
That the world may see who I am;
Not the mask that hides my flaws,
Not the mask that hides my beauty.
I bask in the light
And I take off the mask!

You can never find true happiness until you become **true to who you really are**. Many people **wear masks** to hide even from themselves. They do not like who they are. They fool themselves into thinking they are the masks they wore. And so they try to **satisfy the mask instead of satisfying their true selves**.



Throw away that mask!

No matter how beautiful it is, it can never be you. It cannot give you happiness. Even if somebody learns to love your mask, you'd know that it is only the mask he loves, not the real person behind the mask.

People who are most truthful about themselves are the most happy. They accept themselves. They allow themselves to be loved for who they are.

It's true that not everybody will love them. Others may even criticize them and reject them. But there are people who will like them. They will be able to see their true beauty. They will admire their courage for standing up for truth.

Before any acceptance or healing can take place, one must face the truth. No matter how painful, the truth must be exposed. Otherwise, people will always remain in the shadows of their masks and never get to see the Light.

This Light is freedom, not only to be yourself, but to be the BEST of who you are!

There is only one YOU. The world deserves that person. So live an **AUTHENTIC LIFE!**

UNIQUE

We learn to love each other when we begin to realize how truly unique and wonderful each one of us is. Like seashells along the shore, no one is entirely alike, each is crafted with an imprint of God's hand, each has something to share, and each has something to admire and long for in another.

People often see me as I quiet person, one who rarely cracks a joke, one that can comfortably sit in a corner and have a good time reading a book or listening to good music. But that doesn't mean I couldn't engage in good conversation. That doesn't mean I couldn't comfort a grieving soul. That doesn't mean I couldn't share the kind of happiness that comes from things the world hardly notices in its race towards unreachable dreams. I am the kind of person God has masterfully and lovingly made me to be. I am happy. I am beautiful. I am unique!

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THE SMALL SEED

Let a seed
be buried deep down into the ground
deep down where there is nothing
but darkness
and the smallness of the seed,
let it wait
let it face its greatest fears
for only in being buried
can it sprout forth with new life
only in the truth of its smallness
can it realize its power
to grow
to bear fruit
and to reach the highest heavens

PICK UP THE KEYS AND USE THEM

Have you found the keys to happiness and success already? They weren't really hidden, but they looked so familiar we weren't able to recognize them for their true worth. The keys to happiness and success are simple, so simple that even a child can find them and use them. The reason we couldn't find them was because we were looking for something else, something more complex, something more difficult. We couldn't accept the fact that God has made his blessings available to all, available everywhere, and all within our reach. Use the keys. You are a beloved child of God, and you deserve nothing less than true happiness and success!

Of Truth and Beauty

In our search for truth, we oftentimes dissect it as a flower is dissected into its many parts. We peel the petals one by one, we examine the stamen and the pollen grains, the pistil and the ovary. But in so doing, we see not the flower anymore, and we have destroyed with our own hands and curiosity the very thing that delighted our eyes and gave inexplicable joy to our hearts. In the end, we are able to know everything but the flower itself. We are able to know all things but that which is priceless, that which is pure and true and beautiful.

WHAT I LEARNED:

1. I learned that growth is a continuous process, and that the process usually means undergoing some sort of struggle, pain or difficulty.
2. I learned that though the process of growing is usually difficult and involves some kind of sorrow or pruning, the result is always towards greater happiness and empowerment.
3. I learned that one of man's greatest need is to be loved, and one of the greatest hindrance to being loved is our inability or lack of willingness to understand one another.
4. I learned that many times, it really doesn't take much to make people happy. A single rose could

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make someone's day just as much as a million dollars can.

5. I learned that the greatest enemy we should conquer is our very selves. If we can face our shadows and our fears, we can face everything else.

6. I learned that however happy we are in the life we're living, we should always have a dream.

7. I learned that there are times when our love for another person is that which inspires us to love ourselves more.

8. I learned that no matter how hard I try, I cannot cause the night to end any sooner. On the other hand, even if I do nothing, the morning will surely come to give me a brand new day.

9. I learned that no matter how my friends and I try to think my problems through, there are problems that won't immediately go away, and all we can do is to wait and weather the storm through.

10. I learned that if there is one thing we should strive to build, it is a home right within our hearts; a home that we can always take with us wherever we may go, a home that nobody can ever take away.

A TIME FOR JOY

This may not be a time for dances,
but this is a time for prayer.
This may not be a time for clapping,
but this is a time for songs.
This may not be a time for merriment,
but this is a time for awakening.
This may not be a time for running,
but this is a time for rest.
This may not be a time for kisses,
but this is a time for hugs.
This may not be a time for laughter,
but this is a time for smiles.
This may not be a time for parties,
this may not be a time for noise,
But this is a time for healing,
and this is a time for joy!

