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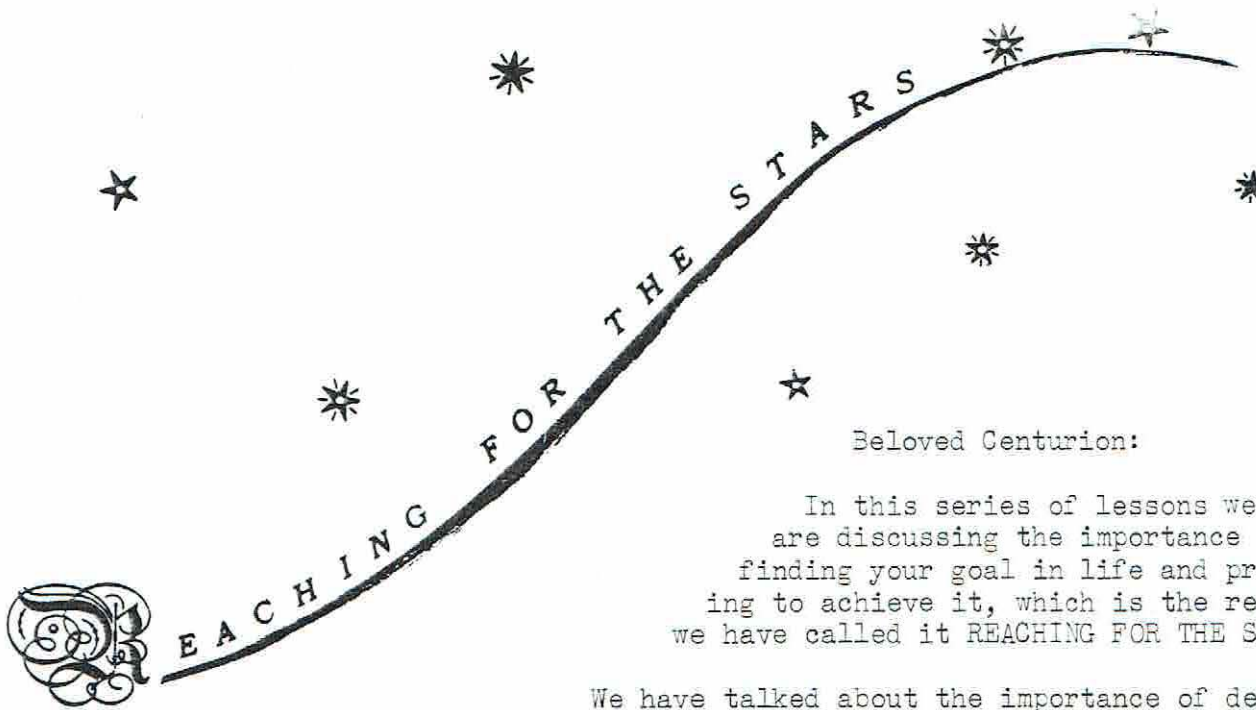
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Beloved Centurion:

In this series of lessons we are discussing the importance of finding your goal in life and proceeding to achieve it, which is the reason we have called it REACHING FOR THE STARS.

We have talked about the importance of deciding what it is you want from life and proceeding to get it; in the last lesson, we told you that nothing is impossible of achievement. I feel that now we should stress more the importance of the motivation behind your desires and the use you intend to make of your achievement, once you have attained it.

Since you became a Mayan Preceptor long ago and a Mayan Minister, it is natural for us to assume that your motive would be always a good one, and that when you realize your ambition, you will use your gains to be helpful to others; that you would never use it for other than good.

In other words, we feel that, as a Mayan Minister, you are always reaching for that which is worthwhile, such as good health, success in a fine ambition, successful endeavor to help someone who needs your help, perhaps a job which deals with good public works; - there are any number of fine ambitions. Perhaps your great desire is to be more useful in the world, a burning eagerness to be someone worthwhile, and to be recognized for what you do. All of these things have to do with MOTIVATION AND USE, which is the title of this lesson.

There must be a motive for everything man does and desires to do. The well-known writer, Henry Ward Beecher, said, "God made man to go by motives and he will not go without them any more than a boat without steam or a balloon without gas."


Your motive is important, so, as you meditate on that which you desire, and are trying to reach, be sure that your motive is of the best, and the use which you want to make of your achievement is beyond reproach.

Lay it in the hands of God, as you "reach for your star". Remember that nothing is impossible. Repeat the words of the following prayer as you prepare for the words in your lesson:

Heavenly Father, my vision has traveled far along the road
of possibilities for my life and work.
Let me never again hesitate before the question of possibility,
but only before the questions of wisdom and right.

Amen.

THE SAFEGUARD OF MOTIVE

E have tried to make it clear that the question of possibility is no real barrier, since so many things once considered impossible were not impossible at all. But there are certain considerations to which we should give attention as safeguards to our work and ourselves. They do not mean that we could not move along certain lines, but that if we go certain ways we shall not regret it and if we go certain others we shall. They are not barriers but safeguards.

One of them is the matter of motive. No matter how good a course of action may appear, it is not really good unless the motive behind it is worthy. An apparently good deed done for a base, selfish, or dishonest purpose will not turn out to be a good deed. Henry Van Dyke spoke well when he wrote:

"These four things a man must do,
If he would keep his record true:
To think without confusion clearly,
To love his fellow men sincerely,
To act from honest motives purely,
And trust in God and heaven securely."

A deed or a course of action well motivated is like a person well born. It has a good lineage, a genealogy of which it need never be ashamed, a hereditary line that will help to give it quality that will hold it steady and insure the worth of its results.

Now and then in order to accomplish a really good purpose we have to appraise our motives. Now and then to carry out a motive we have to act indirectly. We may have to begin in a way that will not be understood, but that is better than doing what will be praised now and questioned or actually condemned later.


A decision to adopt a possibly profitable program should be motivated by something more than mere self-enrichment. If your motive is to gain possession of resources with which to do good you will receive your share, but your motive may not be understood till others begin to realize your purpose.

You need not feel obligated to explain your motives to all and sundry, but be sure you understand them yourself. In the first place, they are the concern of no one who is not personally involved. In the second place, all just and intelligent people will see and understand them in time.

But within yourself the quality and nature of your motives matter very much. You should examine them minutely and completely, for they are some of your safety belts. You should subject them to every test you know. You should not be deceived about them, so you will not have to start all over again, and so you will not have a horde of regrets to plague you.

There is one great and conclusive test to apply. Is your motive love? That is the fulfilling of the law, the one thing that never fails. Though you err and wander, love will bring you back. And though you make mistakes, love will help you set them right.

THE SAFEGUARD OF USE

HE second safeguarding condition we need to apply and keep applying to any chosen course of action is use. The learning of any new skill, work, interest, advance, or the revamping of old ones, must be justified sooner or later by the use to which it is put. The proof of an act is in the doing. Even this kind of a tree is known by its fruit. Men do not gather grapes from thorns nor figs from thistles.

Anything is as good or as bad as the use to which it is put. A drug may be a poison or a cure. A vehicle may be a conveyance or a killer. A friendship may be a blessing or a curse. A genius may be used to achieve success or ruin. There is where lies the line between good and evil.

Suppose you are going into a business or a sideline to the one you now carry on. You can conduct it in such a way as to help the public and strengthen the community through employment, or you can conduct it on the level of mere exploitation. By the first choice, you benefit yourself and others, and vice versa.

Suppose you win a public office. Its possibilities range all the way from rendering the public a great service to being a corrupt politician. It will be as much of a help or hurt to others, and therefore to you, as you have the conscience and courage to make it. Unless you are determined, in spite of pressures and circumstances, to make the office a public trust, flee the thought of seeking it.

Suppose you plan to venture into the field of journalism or authorship. Remember that the pen can be used to do great harm or great good, that there may be more immediate money and public notice in using it for harm though not in the long run, and that the way you use it will react upon your own spirit. Shall it be honest authorship or a racket? Both possibilities will be before you. How will you use your skill?


Suppose you are going to do some teaching or more extensive P.T.A. work. You know that the education of the young, how it is carried on, and what comes out of it, are crucial in the life of our nation. Consider no starting point save genuine interest in the good of the young, of the integrity of our country, and the future security in body and soul of the human race.

Suppose you are going to undertake some new religious activity. Even this

can be wrongly done and used. Do not do it for any superficial or temporary purpose, but only for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Suppose you are just going to undertake a plan of personal upgrading at home or where you work, something that perhaps only you will know about. Keep it humble and sincere. Consecrate the benefits to worthy aims. Whatever you do, this will always help you to feel that your choice was a wise one, as the farmer feels about the season's work when he goes out on an autumn day and looks at peaceful acres, contented stock, full bins, and a happy home.

THE SUPREME EXAMPLE

 LET us now take a look at the world's supreme life for the greatest and best demonstration of all this - the example of the life of the Master. He said that all power had been given to him. Let us notice briefly how he used it.

The story of his temptation is the story of all temptations, a search for the weak spots in human character, a process to show what he would and would not do with the resources and possibilities at his command. He refused to turn stones into bread to feed only himself. He refused to seek cheap publicity by doing a foolish, though spectacular, thing. He refused to transfer his allegiance from good to evil even for a moment, with all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them for his pay. He needed all the things that were offered, but he proposed to get them rightly or not at all.

That last night in the garden he allowed himself to be taken and started on the road to the cross when he could have called legions of angels to his defense. To have defended himself would have been to defeat his larger purpose. He had to show that his ideals and purposes were worth dying for, and that he believed in them enough to do it. To have sidestepped Calvary would have been easier for the moment, but the world would have had to keep looking for someone by the pattern of whose life to try to live. It could not have found one in a weakling and a coward.

All this and other instances that might be mentioned show that Jesus, though he appreciated the material blessings and joys of life, rightly gained and rightly used, and though he often made them available to those in need, had an ultimate purpose in living from which he would not allow the casual or superficial to deflect him. He refused to allow the powers of destruction to get him off the track by turning him into a fairy tale character.

He was working for a kingdom in which people would not have to obtain their bread by magic. He was building an order that would stand by its own integrity and prevail by its own rightness, and not be started by the winds of human favor nor stopped by the lack of them. He was looking to a world in which the material things and values would have their places, but not be the "be all" and the "end all" of life. He was working on the principle that the things we so fondly desire, seek, and work for, the treasures and baubles alike for which we spend our lives in the soul's marketplace, are never any better than the motives with which they are sought and the uses to which they are put.

Keeping this in mind as we build our lives would take a great deal of the poor material and workmanship out of the lives of both ourselves and society. It would make us all truly richer because it would make our possessions and privileges more real, dependable, and lasting.

Jesus undertook a great and heroic adventure, and carried it out on the basis of truth and genuineness. That was why his reach for the stars was not in vain and why it gave him such titles as The Morning Star and The Sun of Righteousness that rises with healing in his wings.

DEDICATION

Talent is a reservoir of power we carry through life with us. Any concentrated power can be directed to the constructive, deflected to the destructive, carelessly handled and allowed to explode, or just thrown away. Each of us must recognize the fact that an ability is an asset or a liability, possibly even a potential danger, and use the utmost care concerning it.

There is a way to keep an ability safe and make sure that its use will be constructive and satisfying. That is to dedicate it, give it to God, offer it on the altar for holy (wholesome) use.

We dedicate monuments, and temples, and homes. Why not dedicate talents? To do so, and keep the pledge faithfully, would safeguard the gift. It would also encourage its constant development and a growing happiness in its use.

This very thing is done in the case of a minister of the gospel when he is ordained. He is honestly believed to be answering a call from God to be a herald of The Name, and his time, strength, talents, training, and loyalty, are being publicly dedicated to that purpose. The memory of that solemn moment of consecration remains with him throughout his life and helps him to hold steady when he is tempted to waver, surrender, or compromise.

Why should not something like that be done for anyone's life and for any new start he may be moved to make at any time to make that life more effective, useful, and satisfying? It need not be a public rite in every case, but there should somewhere along the way be solemn moments of inward personal dedication of what one is, has, and can do, to filling his God-appointed place.


Have we any right to assume that there is a divine call to the gospel ministry and not to any other good work? Are not we all especially suited to some particular task that needs doing, and to special programs we might undertake from time to time to make ourselves more valuable to the ages? If we feel inclined to undertake something good and worthwhile is there any reason for not supposing this feeling to be The Voice speaking on the slopes of a new Mount Horeb from a wayside bush that burns, yet is not consumed?

Many years ago a young man was walking on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington. He was there attending a religious conference in which President Woodrow Wilson had sat the previous evening, and he had just left the White House where

the President had just received the group. The conference had inspired him and had laid something on his heart. He had had some journalistic and writing experience. In the silence of his thoughts he was offering it to God in dedication. It has been followed by many years of happy, dedicated effort to serve the kingdom in that way.

You may have felt some such challenge in the field of your own abilities. Dedicate it, and it will multiply the power and meaning of your life. It is one way - your way - of reaching for the stars. Reaching will extend your power, and dedication will extend it yet more.

R E A C H - B U T B E W O R T H Y

E are well aware that the above sub-title means what may appear to be too much. We ought to be worthy to dedicate ourselves to any task of importance, but of course the word worthy is a large order. It is surely not too large, however, when we remember that we are talking about reaching for stars. That is a large order, too. That is what makes it challenging.

We can at least do our best to make our work worthy if we do it with faithful and loving care. But how shall we go about making ourselves worthy to do it, knowing that this is what it takes to keep us true to our trust?

Fortunately worthiness is not the impossible thing it may seem. It is not a fixed term, but a relative one, and the world is therefore often mistaken about what it requires. In the sermon on the mount Jesus referred to two men, an honored pharisee and a despised publican, who went to the temple to pray. The pharisee made a bold prayer of self-praise, while the publican only bowed his head and murmured, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." The Master said it was he who went back to his house justified because his was a prayer of humble love and true faith. The worthy man was the one who made the least pretention.

There is also the story of the widow who came with those offering generous sums to the temple treasury. She cast in only one of the lowliest of coins, yet hers was the most worthy gift made that day, partly because it was all she had and partly because it was given from her heart.

Sometimes a family pet will come in holding in its mouth some utterly worthless thing and, thinking it has made a rich find, lay it proudly at the feet of a favorite member of the household. How grateful any understanding heart would be, knowing that love makes any gift and its giver worthy.

A father had a married daughter who loved to offer him gifts. She and her husband had a temporary financial struggle, and her inability to give nice tokens of her affection troubled her mind, though constantly assured that it was not necessary. One day when he was at her home she shyly laid in his hand a trinket, the cost of which had been very slight. She had before and has since given him many valuable things, often more expensive than he would have her give; but it is that little inexpensive trinket that he keeps in his treasure box and looks at now and then with a flooding heart. It is the slightest thing she ever gave, yet it is the dearest gift of all because it was the offering of a persistent love.


The worthiness had nothing to do with the price mark.

You can see the point. We are not made worthy by any excellence we have, or seek, or pretend; but by the love and sincerity that motivate us. Our gifts and our service are not made worthy by price or appearance, but by the devotion of the heart that brings them.

That will make your step on either an old road or a new one safe. Take the step, but be worthy; and you will be worthy if your motive is honest love. A quatrain on a flyleaf of Henry Van Dyke's Story of the Other Wise Man is worth a thought here,

"Who seeks for heaven alone to save his soul
May keep the path, but will not reach the goal;
While he who walks in love may wander far,
Yet God will bring him where the blessed are."

S U P P O S E

 HIS is going to be a rather regrettable section of our lesson, but it is a very important one. Its theme is, suppose all the advancements we have made in culture, science, and invention, had been and were now wholly devoted to helpfulness and good, what a wonderful world we would be living in even now!

Many of them have, of course. Great advances in healing are saving countless lives and saving countless hearts from sorrow every year. Improvements in the convenience of living and the expediting of labor are blessing our homes and our working conditions, improving our production and our products, and making living and working safer, easier, and more pleasant, all the time. But there are some points in our progress where the blessing is not an unmixed one.

The motor car is a very great asset in modern life when fast and easy transportation is really needed, but it is a heavy liability too. It makes the transportation of liquor and dope as easy as that of medicine and food. It enables criminals to evade the law by crossing boundary lines, or to evade capture by speedy getaways. Suppose the automobile were used only for the good of our people. How quickly could the richness of living be doubled!

The airplane is the fulfillment of an age-long dream of man. It is a wonderful thing that anyone bent on an errand without reproach can board a plane on one coast after dinner in the evening and have breakfast on the other side of the continent next morning. It is a wonderful thing that mail and relief can be moved quickly where it is needed. But the airplane intensifies all the wrong uses to which the motor car can be put, including the increase of the facility of destroying life in both peace and war. It is not a good sign that death in a flaming crash has come to be considered as commonplace. Our souls are suffering damage, and our civilization is threatened. Suppose all this were used only for the good of mankind!

Now come all the results of our having found out how much of the energy of an atom can be released and how matter can be turned into energy capable of rendering the race countless great services, but also capable of destroying it. We have had both of these possibilities demonstrated, but the maximum demonstration is yet to come. Suppose that demonstration would be one of blessing and helpfulness when it does come, and suppose all the myriad possibilities of nuclear fission and atomic chain reaction were dedicated wholly to making life sweeter and better!

In these and other "supposes" and the spirit and motives that should actuate them may lie the wonderful thing we call the kingdom or the new world. Suppose these and other blessings had been dedicated to the good of God's children from the beginning, or that it were done now and faithfully carried out. It would soon carry us a long way toward the wonderful time when tears would be dried and sorrow and sighing flee away while the sun shines on a new and happier world.

C O N C L U S I O N



In the letter to the church at Philadelphia in the third chapter of the Book of Revelation the risen Christ dictates through St. John this ringing admonition, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

In these lessons we have been trying to set forth the higher and wider possibilities of life for anyone, including you, who will reach for the stars, or in other words, who will aspire higher than his demonstrated ability and seeming possibility, and thus enlarge his abilities by the effort.

It is possible for us to do this because God has made us largely masters of our own growth. We choose for ourselves what heights we will attempt and whether and when we will succeed or fail.

This recalls the fact that in the first chapter of the same book already named, we are reminded that we are of God's royal line. He has made us kings. A crown of power and decision has been given each of us. You have had your coronation day. Guard your crown, and let no man take it.

You hold your own scepter over your personal life and its past and future. Did you rule your past well? If so, be grateful and try to rule tomorrow better yet. If not, now is the time to dedicate yourself to be a wise and beneficent sovereign.

If you do less than your best, or if you turn to the wrong use anything that has been given you for good, or if you fail to use whatever influence you have to induce the human race to make hallowed use of God's blessings and not use them to lower their quality of living, or mar this lovely world, or harm each other, you will be letting your enemies take your crown.

Hold fast the distance you have gained, the good you have received, the objectives you have attained, the improvement you have made, and the power for right you have built up. It is from these you must go forward. Know how permanent is the loss of those who let their foes overturn their thrones and shatter

their kingdoms.

The children of a king must take their royalty seriously. True regality does not disgrace its power and squander its inheritance. It uses them to up-build its standing and extend its beneficence.

Be deaf to those who tell you not to take yourself seriously. In the sense of self-respect, regard for one's good name, and the wish to be known as a contributor to the good of mankind, one cannot take himself too seriously, but he can easily fail to take himself seriously enough.

Many years ago a high school youth who had few advantages made some kind of a special effort. It was new and strange, and he did not feel satisfied with it; but some older friend thought it showed some possibility, that it was at least a beginning, and said, "Hitch your wagon to a star."

That older friend has long since passed on, but his words live in memory. The youth, now old himself, is still trying to get his wagon hitched to that star. The star is elusive, but as he keeps following it up, he at least gains distance.

... and so will you, if you will keep trying, and let no man take your crown. We have too many instances of that not to be sure.

M E D I T A T I O N

Above the sounds of the clash and drive about me I hear the call of a voice like music telling me to be and do my best. To that I keep reaching on as to a star.

YOUR CLASS INSTRUCTOR.

