

PRINCIPLE 3:

The Power of Belief!

It is better to die for something than to live for nothing.

— *Dr. Bob Jones, Sr.*

You've probably heard Henry Ford's famous observation about belief: Ford said, and I quote, "If you think you CAN ... or if you think you CAN'T ... you're right!"

I love that quote because it sums up the essence of belief. If you think you can do something, well ... you're right. YOU CAN! But if you think you CAN'T DO THAT VERY SAME THING, guess what? You can't!

Amazing, isn't it that more often than not, people will succeed not on the basis of their merits, but on the basis of their belief?

I've always been fascinated by people with an unshakable belief in what they're doing. Time and again throughout history, people with a strong belief in themselves and their mission have accomplished amazing feats, despite what the masses of people — and often even the experts — said to the contrary! Here are four legendary figures who illustrate just what I mean.

Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh sold only two paintings while he was alive — and both of those were to his brother! Despite savage criticism from fellow artists who said his artistic technique was primitive, van Gogh believed in his talent and his vision. Ironically, today the hundreds of colorful, vibrant paintings he couldn't even give away in his lifetime are worth nearly a billion dollars!

Fred Astaire

At Fred Astaire's first screen test, the testing director at MGM Studios wrote a short memo to the studio head indicating that Astaire didn't have what it takes to succeed in motion pictures. Here's what the memo said:

"Can't act. Can't sing. Can dance a little."

Astaire went on to star in scores of classic song-and-dance movies, and American audiences are forever indebted to Fred Astaire for believing in himself and pursuing his dream.

Margaret Mitchell

Margaret Mitchell published only one book in her lifetime ... but oh, what a book it was! *Gone with the Wind* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1939 and became perhaps the most-watched movie in history.

What most people don't know is that *Gone with the Wind* was turned down by 32 publishers! Although a very shy, private person, Mrs. Mitchell believed so strongly in her book that she kept knocking on doors until a publisher finally saw what the other 32 publishers missed!

Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein was such a late bloomer that his teachers thought he was mentally retarded! Einstein didn't speak until he was four years old, and couldn't read until he was seven. One teacher described him as "mentally slow, unsociable, and adrift forever in his foolish dreams." He was such a lackluster student that he was expelled from one college and refused admission to another!

Fortunately, Einstein believed more strongly in his own abilities than in all the negative assessments from some of his teachers. Einstein, of course, developed into one of the great thinkers of the 20th century, and his Theory of Relativity is so intellectually challenging that only a handful of people living today can fully comprehend it!

When I hear stories like these where people triumphed because they believed in themselves, I always think of Eleanor Roosevelt's observation that "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." Certainly, the people in these examples didn't cave in at the first negative comments from short-sighted critics. If they had, the world would be a much poorer place. They "kept on keeping on" because they believed in themselves!

The great thing about belief is that you don't have to have the smarts of an Einstein or the talent of Fred Astaire to enjoy the tremendous benefits! Where is it written that only legends have a lock on the power of belief? Folks, I'm here to tell you that the simple principle of belief can work wonders for YOU, INC., too! All you have to do is believe!

I-Believe-It Box

Dr. Robert Schuller, in his best-selling book *Power Thoughts*, talks about a successful executive who keeps an "I-Believe-It" Box on his office desk. Anytime the executive comes across a project that just won't move forward — like a stalled sales contract or a difficult proposal — he just tosses it into the I-Believe-It Box, closes the lid and lets it sit there for a couple of days.

Two days or two weeks after tossing the item into the box, the executive takes a new look at it. In the executive's own words, here is how the belief box works:

"Somehow, when I return to the item a few days later, I see something I didn't see before. I think of a new way to attack the problem. I jot it down, and if it still doesn't move where I want it to, back in the box it goes. Amazingly, it always works! Since I've been using the I-Believe-It Box, I haven't lost one sale, one project or one proposal!"

This is a great story because it documents the power of belief! Always remember: "What the mind can conceive ... and the heart can BELIEVE ... you can achieve." The I-Believe-It Box is just one person's way of reminding himself on a regular basis the awesome power inherent in the principle of belief.

The Bible's Definition of Belief

Everybody is familiar with the concept of belief, but if pressed to define it, we'd probably struggle a bit. The best definition of belief I know is the same as the Bible's definition of faith: The Book of Hebrews defines faith — or belief — in these words: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for ... the evidence of things not seen."

In other words, you don't have to "see it to believe it," as the old saying goes. When you TRULY believe in something, your belief is evidence enough. You see the vision in your mind so clearly that you know it's just a matter of time before it becomes a reality. That's what belief is all about.

The Power of the Placebo Effect

In fact, belief is so powerful; it can actually create an outcome! The medical phenomenon of the placebo effect is the perfect example. A placebo is a harmless, unmedicated pill used in controlled tests to determine whether or not an experimental medicine works against a specific disease.

One group of patients receives doses of the drug being tested. The other group receives the placebo. Because both groups believe they are receiving medicine that will cure their illness, the condition of some of the patients who have taken the placebo starts improving.

In other words, the placebo effect occurs when a patient believes in a doctor, treatment or medicine so completely that the mind tells the body to heal itself! Most doctors will tell you that placebos work for about 35 percent of the patients. But a recent review of 15 years of medical articles indicates that up to 70 percent of patients in some studies said they had received significant relief from placebos! Amazing, isn't it, that people can literally cure themselves of illnesses just through the power of belief!

In his classic book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale had this to say about belief: "Change your mental habits into BELIEF instead of DISBELIEF. In so doing, you bring everything into the realm of possibility."

The Power of Positive Thinking

Dr. Peale knew firsthand what he was talking about, for his own life served as living proof that positive thinking can work wonders. Peale lived to the ripe old age of 95 ... and up until the age of 93, he was delivering more than 100 speeches a year to audiences around the country.

For 54 years he hosted a weekly radio program, and he authored 46 books and delivered a sermon every Sunday for more than 50 years. Ironically, as a young man Peale suffered from what he called "the worst inferiority complex of all," and he originally developed his positive thinking philosophy to help himself!

Evidently, millions of people from all over the world are eager to learn about Dr. Peale's empowering I CAN message because his book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, has sold more than 20 million copies in 41 languages since it was first published in 1952! My greatest wish is that the rest of the world's four billion-plus people could hear Dr.

Peale's inspiring message about approaching life with an I CAN attitude, instead of an I CAN'T attitude!

Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

Unfortunately, the opposite happens when people think negative thoughts ... when they take an I CAN'T approach to life. Recent scientific research proves that negative beliefs can, in fact, cause negative consequences! For instance, researchers in England reported that the risk of being involved in an automobile accident went up as much as 52 percent on Friday the 13th! The scientists proved what I've been saying all along — that beliefs can be so strong they become self-fulfilling!

I Can vs. I Can't

Have you noticed there's a lot more I CAN'T thinking (I prefer to call it "stinkin' thinkin'") going on than I CAN thinking? Certainly there are a lot more negative stories on TV and in the newspapers than positive ones. I don't pretend to know all the reasons people are attracted to negativity. Maybe it's human nature. Maybe it's the fact we hear the word NO about seven times more often than we hear the word YES.

All I know is, there are a lot more pessimistic people in this world than optimistic people. There are a lot more people who believe they CAN'T do something than people who believe they CAN. And that, my friends, is unacceptable!

So how do we go about taking Dr. Peale's advice and "Change your mental habits into belief, instead of disbelief?" The answer is, we start with ourselves ... we start by working on the belief system of YOU, INC., instead of blaming all of our woes on THEY, INC. We start by getting I CAN'T thinking out of our lives and replacing it with I CAN thinking! And there's no better time to replace I CAN'T thinking with positive thinking than today ... right now ... right this moment!

A Funeral for I Can't

My favorite story about replacing I CAN'T thinking with I CAN thinking comes from the book *Teacher Talk* by Chick Moorman. The story concerns a fourth grade teacher named Donna who devised a creative way for her students to stop thinking in terms of I CAN'T and start thinking in terms of I CAN.

One morning early in the school year, Donna asked her class of 31 students to take out a clean sheet of paper and write the words I CAN'T in big capital letters at the very top of the page. Then she asked the students to make a list of all the things they couldn't do. Here's what some of them wrote:

"I can't do 10 push-ups."

"I can't eat only one cookie."

"I can't do long division with more than three numerals."

"I can't get Debbie to like me."

While the students labored away on their lists, the teacher was busy making her own list, such as:

"I can't get Alan to use his words instead of his fists."

“I can’t get John’s mother to come in for a teacher conference.”

When the lists were completed, Donna asked the students to fold them in half and drop them in the empty shoe box on her desk. Once all the papers were collected, Donna put the lid on the box, tucked it under her arm, and instructed the students to follow her out the door. On the way down the hall, Donna stopped at the custodian’s room and grabbed a shovel, and then led her students out the door and onto the playground.

Donna marched the students to the farthest corner of the playground. Turning toward them with a solemn expression, Donna announced, “Children, we are gathered here today for a very serious occasion. We are going to bury I CAN’T.”

She then proceeded to dig a hole in the ground. The digging took 10 minutes because all of the kids wanted to have a turn. By the time each child had dug out a shovel-full of dirt, the hole was three feet deep. Donna gently placed the box of I CAN’Ts into the bottom of the freshly dug grave.

A Eulogy for I Can’t

Then she turned to her students and asked them to form a circle around the grave, join hands and bow their heads. Here is the unforgettable eulogy Donna delivered:

“Friends, we gather today to honor the memory of I CAN’T. While he was with us on earth, he touched the lives of everyone ... some, more than others. His name, unfortunately, has been spoken in every public building — schools, city halls, state capitols and, yes, even our White House.

“Today we have provided I CAN’T with a final resting place. He is survived by his brothers and sisters — I CAN ... I WILL ... and I’M GOING TO RIGHT AWAY. They are not as well known as their famous relative ... and are not as strong and powerful yet. Perhaps someday, with your help, they will make an even bigger mark on the world.

“May I CAN’T rest in peace ... and may everyone present pick up their lives and move forward in his absence. Amen.”

Then Donna and her students filled in the fresh grave before returning to the classroom, where they celebrated the passing of I CAN’T. As part of the celebration, Donna cut out a large tombstone from butcher paper and wrote in big, black letters these words:

I CAN’T
MAY HE REST IN PEACE
MARCH 28, 1980

This paper tombstone hung in Donna’s classroom for the rest of the year. Whenever one of her students forgot and said “I CAN’T,” Donna would point to the tombstone. More often than not, the student would smile and rephrase the statement.

Now I ask you, isn’t that a delightful story? You know, I’ve never had the pleasure of meeting the teacher in this story, but I guarantee you, I’d enroll my children in her class in a heartbeat if she were teaching at the local elementary school!

Just think how much people could accomplish if they’d hold a mental funeral for all their I CAN’Ts! I’m telling you, if that happened, you’d see a dramatic increase in the stock of every YOU, INC. in the world!!

Believe in Others, Not Just Yourself

So far in this chapter we've talked about belief in yourself. And without a doubt, believing in yourself is crucial if you want to dramatically increase the value of YOU, INC. The simple fact is, if YOU don't believe in YOU, how do you expect anyone else to believe in you?

Belief in yourself is essential, that's for sure. But there's more to life than just you, no matter how independent you are. As the great English poet John Donne noted hundreds of years ago, "No man is an island." Which means you've got to believe in something ... and somebody ... outside yourself.

Without exception, great achievers believe in themselves, and they believe in other people. No matter how much Columbus believed in himself, for example, he couldn't have made a successful voyage to the New World without believing in his crew.

Truly successful people believe in their families ... they believe in their friends ... they believe in their country ... they believe in their causes ... and last but not least, truly successful people believe in something larger than all the world and all its people put together. They believe in God!

Now let's take a look at how believing in things outside yourself can enrich you and dramatically increase the value of YOU, INC. Leo Durocher, the fiery manager of the New York Giants in the 1950s, is the perfect example of how believing in others is essential for your own personal success.

Believing in a Rookie Named Willie

Early in the 1951 season Durocher promoted a 20-year-old minor leaguer named Willie Mays to the starting position in center field. Durocher knew talent when he saw it, and he had all the faith in the world that Mays would become a superstar.

But the shy young ball player from a small town in Alabama was awestruck playing before huge crowds in major league stadiums. Mays was so nervous he went hitless in his first 12 times at bat. After finally managing a hit, he went hitless for another 14 straight at bats!

The young outfielder was devastated! At the conclusion of yet another hitless game, Durocher found Mays crying in the dugout. Between sobs Mays said, "Mr. Leo, I can't hit the pitching in the majors." Durocher put his arm around the heart-broken youngster and said evenly, "Willie, as long as I'm manager of the Giants, you're my centerfielder."

Sure enough, the next day Durocher started Mays in center field, and his belief was rewarded. Mays collected two hits that afternoon. For the rest of the year Mays hit well over .300, and he went on to become a perennial all-star for the next 20 years! You see, even when Willie Mays didn't believe in himself, Leo Durocher believed in him. And that belief dramatically increased the value of both individuals.

Just imagine. The Hall-of-Famer who went on to accumulate more than 3,000 hits and 600 home runs ... started his career with only one hit in his first 26 attempts!

The Benefits of Belief

Common sense tells you there's real power in believing in others, whether they are co-workers ... family ... or friends. In fact, recent research bears this out.

Doctors at Dartmouth Medical School charted the progress of 232 elderly patients who had undergone open heart surgery. The researchers discovered that the patients who did NOT participate regularly in social groups — whether it was a church supper group, a seniors club or a fraternal group — were three times more likely to die within six months of their surgery. In the words of one of the senior researchers, “Having a strong faith and being embedded in a web of relationships like churchgoing have definite health benefits.”

Instead of prescribing Valium and anti-depressants like candy, perhaps doctors should start writing a prescription that says, “GO TO CHURCH EVERY WEEK.”

The long and short of it is this: People who believe in God and in a cause larger than themselves are healthier ... happier ... and more successful than people who don't. End of subject.

The Person with the Strongest Belief Wins!

I sincerely believe that the person with the strongest belief wins. Think about it. Christianity won out over paganism during the days of the Roman Empire. Democracy won out over fascism in World War II. Capitalism won out over communism in the cold war. Why? Because our belief in God ... and our belief in the causes of freedom and free enterprise were stronger than theirs! It's like the story of David and Goliath.

When David volunteered to fight the giant, everyone around David told him he was crazy. They told David that Goliath was so huge there was just NO WAY he could win. To which David replied, “Goliath's so huge, there's no way I can miss!”

You see, David was a believer of the first order. He believed in himself ... he believed in God ... and he believed in his cause. Now, this is NOT to say David was without fear. Of course he was afraid. According to the Bible, Goliath was more than nine feet tall ... was covered from head to toe in armor ... and was a seasoned survivor of numerous hand-to-hand combats. But David's unshakable belief empowered him to overcome his fears and triumph over Goliath and the non-believers.

The philosopher John Stuart Mill summed up the awesome power of belief with these words: “One person with belief is worth 99 who only have an interest.” The Biblical account of David's victory is certainly proof of that statement.

Believe in Yourself and Your Cause

I've noticed over the years that successful people and unsuccessful ones receive about the same amount of negative feedback. It's just that the successful people — the Henry Ford's of the world — don't buy into what the dream stealers say, whereas unsuccessful people do.

It's like the old expression, “If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.” If people don't passionately believe in themselves ... their families ... their country ... and their cause ... they can be easily swayed by the first new thing that comes through the door.

I'd hate to think where I would be today if I had listened to everyone outside myself instead of listening to my own inner voice telling me to hold true to my beliefs. When I told friends and acquaintances I was writing a book, for example, most of them laughed at me. You see, I was a C student at best in English throughout high school and college. I've always been a lousy speller and my grammar is average, at best.

People would say, "What do you know about writing books — you've never written a book before." My answer to that comment was, "If the first guy who ever wrote a book thought like that, there wouldn't be any books." I figured if my critics didn't think they could write a book that was their business. But that didn't mean I had to buy in to their story!

You see, I believed in myself and my cause. I truly believed I had something to say that other people needed to hear. I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I could deliver a message that people would find valuable ... interesting ... and useful.

My critics were focusing on the minor things — the grammar and the spelling and my grades in school. On the other hand, I was more concerned about the major things, like delivering the message and organizing it in a way that made it easy for people to understand. I figured I could always find an English teacher or an editor to clean up the small stuff. That's why I've adopted the expression, "Don't major in the minor things," as my personal motto!

Well, I'm proud to report that more than one million copies of my first book, *Who Stole the American Dream?* were sold in less than three years. How many copies would I have sold if I had believed in my critics instead of my cause and my abilities? I'll tell you how many — ZERO!

The Making of a Living Legend

I'm sure you've heard the name Arnold Palmer. Since 1955 Palmer has won scores of professional golf tournaments, including four Masters Tournaments. He's a living legend, and one of the most famous people in the world.

So, what was the secret to Palmer's success? I've got to believe that, more than any other single factor, it was his unyielding belief in his ability to get the job done. Anyone who's ever seen Arnold Palmer swing a golf club would say he is not the most graceful golfer to ever play on the tour.

But when he settled over a ball on the first tee ... or crouched over a birdie putt ... he believed he was going to hit the ball right where he wanted. In the game of golf, where confidence and belief are everything, Palmer ruled!

Although he's won hundreds of tournaments and awards, his office is simple and virtually empty of trophies, except for one battered little cup that he received for his first professional win at the Canadian Open in 1955.

The only other adornment in his office is a small, framed plaque with an inscription that serves as a fitting closing to this section on the Power of Belief. Here's what the plaque says:

If you think you are beaten, you are.
If you think you dare not, you don't.
If you'd like to win but think you can't,

It's almost certain that you won't.
Life's battles don't always go to the stronger woman or man.
But sooner or later, those who win
Are those who think they can.

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