



## What Should I Be Doing Differently?

**1 Corinthians 9:25: (NASB) *Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.***



How is it that life seems to go by so fast? How is it we more often than not look back on our life, the things we did and what we became with a measure of regret, knowing we could have been more or contributed more? Have you ever stopped to think of what makes life happen? It is actually a pretty simple equation: **TIME + EXPERIENCES = LIFE**. Now, we know that is an oversimplification, but stay with us. If we can accept that life is the combination of time and experiences, then wouldn't solving the issue of making one's life fuller and more meaningful be easier to understand? Time is measurable and predictable and we all have the same amount each and every day. Experiences whether they are physical, observational or thoughts, are essentially the sum of what we do with the time given to us each day. What can we do to make our time and experiences produce a rich, fruitful and contented life?

How do we do this with the variety of distractions bombarding us? Much of the thinking for tonight's podcast came from the book, "The Power of Consistency" by Weldon Long. Though it is a book written primarily for those who want to succeed in business, the principles he discusses ring true for our personal lives as well.

To know what to do differently, we need to know what we are doing that is the same!

*Building Blocks of Understanding for a Better Life:*



## First Building Block

*To better invest my time and maximize my experiences I need to understand - what drives my homeostasis, my comfort zone.*





Homeostasis or equilibrium (state of balance) would logically be a good thing, since it means that we are on an even keel.

**The problem with this is that an even keel for the sinful mind is not the same as for a spiritual mind:**

1 Timothy 4:1-2: (KJV) *<sup>1</sup>Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; <sup>2</sup>speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

*Having their conscience seared with a hot iron - A seared conscience seeks a seared equilibrium! A seared conscience is insensitive or numb to sin - sin no longer bothers us. If our conscience has no sensation for right or wrong we are not on an even keel. This can not only hurt us but also the people around us. We need to start with a *spiritually-based* standard.*

 **Where am I, Effecting Positive Change - Personal Growth and Development, Randy Ross**

- *One of the few constants in life is change, and how we deal with change makes a huge difference in our emotional health and wellbeing. You see, when we effect change we call it “growth.” When we endure change and change is forced upon us, then we often call it “hardship.” Think about it for a minute. So, what we want to do is we want to effect positive change. I want to talk about the growth process. So, what does effective, positive growth look like? Well, first of all, I want you to understand that for most of us we don’t take enough time to stop and really assess and meditate on where we are and where we want to be. What we need to do is to stop and imagine where we are - assess life. The first step in effecting positive growth is to assess candidly. Where are you? Like that little map in the mall, you know, where it says, “You’re here.” Where are you?*



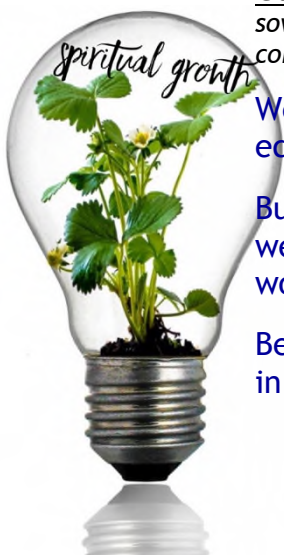
Evenness and comfort can be deceiving. We need to focus on what is good for us, not what is convenient for us.

Galatians 6:7-8: (NASB) *<sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. <sup>8</sup>For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

We sow to the end result that we seek. The end result we seek is personal equilibrium.

But wait...we are Christians who believe in Jesus. If we are “saved,” why do we have to go through all of this hard work? Can’t we just be ourselves and not worry about it?

Because being a “Christian” is more than just believing in Jesus; it is following in the footsteps of Jesus.





**Galatians 6:9-12:** (NASB) <sup>9</sup>*Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.*

**Seek a higher equilibrium and do not lose heart as you are trying to attain it!**

<sup>10</sup>*So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith...* <sup>12</sup>*Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.*

Sometimes in seeking a higher equilibrium we try and drag fleshly equilibrium with us.

**Wait! Are we saying all earthly thinking is based on a seared conscience?**

For Christians, it is important to understand what we will call "aged-based thinking," meaning the ages of time. For instance, the Old and New Testaments had different objectives in the honoring of God. For Israel, their blessings from God for serving Him were primarily land and abundance-based. *For the Christian, our blessings are primarily based in spiritual growth and maturity.* The Israelites in the Old Testament offered animal sacrifices, but the New Testament Christians (including us!) offered themselves in a figurative sacrifice.

We want to sacrifice what we would normally want to do even if what God wants us to do is more difficult, setting aside our personal preferences. But should all earthly things be replaced with something spiritual? No. We still have to take care of our families, work at our jobs to support ourselves, and other things the Scriptures say we should embrace as well.

Is earthly abundance bad? More on this soon...

**One more look at another equilibrium example:**

**Luke 12:16-21:** (NRSV) <sup>16</sup>*Then he told them a parable: The land of a rich man produced abundantly.* <sup>17</sup>*And he thought to himself, what should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?*

<sup>18</sup>*Then he said, I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.* <sup>19</sup>*And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.* <sup>20</sup>*But God said to him, you fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?* <sup>21</sup>*So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.*



At first glance, we might interpret this as saying, "If you prepare for the future, God sees you as a fool." Does that mean you should not have a retirement plan? No.

**So, why did Jesus speak this parable?**

**Luke 12:13-15:** (NASB) <sup>13</sup>*Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.* <sup>14</sup>*But he said to him, man, who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you?* <sup>15</sup>*Then he said to them, Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.*







It appears the man asking the question was not the firstborn son, who would have received the main inheritance. He was hoping Jesus would mediate to get him more funds, but Jesus would not involve himself with this man's personal affairs. Jesus was concerned with the man's *spiritual* affairs. Jesus' point was that abundance is not wrong, but abundance is an empty poverty if it is without a balancing fullness towards God. Seek equilibrium where all things are well balanced!

It is not wrong to have things, but if those things override godliness in our lives, they become damaging. If we can manage those things in the context of godliness they can become tools, such as to help others.



#### Observations about our first building block:

- We all seek and need homeostasis - equilibrium.
- Sometimes we find what we think is balance in places that are very unbalanced.
- Just because we “feel” comfortable or we “feel” balanced does not necessarily mean we are. The real world around us is different than our feelings.
- We need to check the tuning of our conscience to see what our feeling of balance is based on. We need to be ethical. Do the right thing even when no one is looking.

*All things are created twice.* — **Stephen R. Covey** (once in your mind and once in reality)



#### **Small wins, Self-Discipline Techniques, Elliot Hulse**

- *Because it's very difficult to just get up and change your life, just change the way you do things. People say that all the time, “Just stop doing this,” or “Start doing that.” They like to give advice, but the underlying factor is that our friend or the individual or whoever is asking the question is not disciplined enough to actually put that thing in action, to get that thing done. The thing that I have always told my students and my clients is to start with a small win. Begin with something small. For example, if you want to lose weight, I often tell people just start walking every single morning. Don't worry about counting calories, don't worry about complex workout ideas, don't worry about anything that anyone is selling you, just get up and walk every morning. It's not the walking that's actually going to make that person successful. Now, it will add to your success, because getting up and walking, fresh air and exercise is going to support you in losing weight, but we all know there's far more factors to consider. But what it will do is create the virtue of discipline. Commitment.*

We cannot get anywhere without discipline.





## Second Building block

To better invest my time and maximize my experiences I need to understand –  
My life is a perfect reflection of what is in my box.

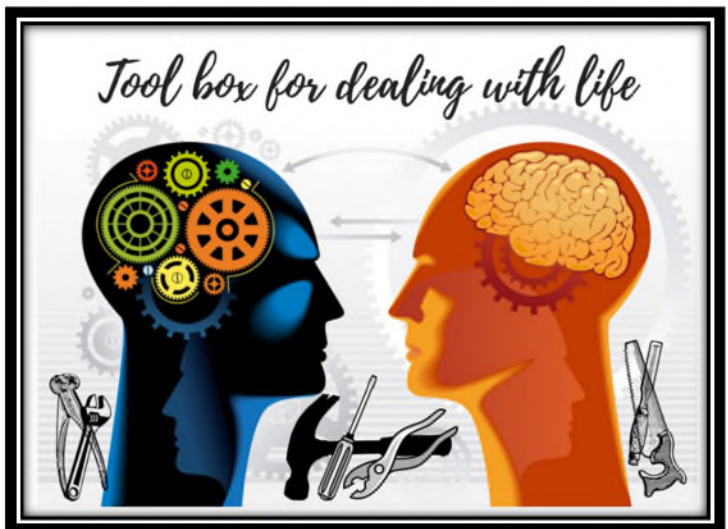


In his book "The Power of Consistency," Weldon Long explains our mind as being a tool box for dealing with life. The tools you have determine how you work on the problems you face in life.

(Source: "The Power of Consistency, Page 154)

When I was running amok and acting as a complete menace to society (and ending up in prison as a result), I used to think that it was because I had really bad luck. I always thought, "If I could just catch a lucky break things would be fine." It never occurred to me that I was creating my own luck with the decisions I was making in my life. I can remember being at the mall around Christmastime after I had been to prison (and let out) for the first time. I saw a guy walking around with his pretty wife and his cute little kids. They were all smiles and giggles, and I just knew they had a nice little house with a white picket fence and puppies. I remember thinking, that guy wouldn't be so happy if he had my problems and my luck. If he had to walk a mile in MY shoes, he would know what it was like to suffer. It was all I could do not to walk over and wipe that damn smile off his face. That's how bitter, jealous, pathetic and miserable I was at that point in my life.

However, I learned later in life that the guy in the mall had problems too. Odds are that at some point in his life, he struggled with money, relationships or his health. The difference between the two of us was not in the nature of our problems; it was in the way we chose to handle our problems. I'd be willing to bet that when that fellow had money problems, he decided to get a second job, work overtime or reduce his expenses. When I had money problems, I decided to grab a gun and a ski mask. That was the only difference between us. My life was a pathetic mess because of what I decided to do about my money problems. It was not the problem itself. Our decisions - whether good or bad - are 100 percent our responsibility.





## What kinds of tools are in the toolbox of YOUR mind?

*You can't talk your way out of a situation that you acted your way into. — Weldon Long*

Let us start with some TMDs - Tools of Mass Destruction - that might be in our toolbox. In contrast with the uplifting Beatitudes taught by Jesus, we will talk about "Baditudes" or bad attitudes.



*The Tool of Self-centered Thinking:  
It fixes my desire to focus only on ME!*

Hebrews 12:14-17: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup>See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; <sup>16</sup>that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. <sup>17</sup>For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

Because Esau's mind was so thoroughly bent on his physical person, he gave away the most sacred and privileged status of his life. After that consequence became apparent, his reaction was to want it back, to beg and cry. This desire for the birthright only surfaced *after the fact*. We may conclude that he was reacting not out of repentance or sorrow but more out of self-centeredness. Esau allowed bitterness to get in the way of the goodness in his life.



A caller from Connecticut suggests: One of my favorite Scriptures is Jeremiah 29:13: (KJV) *And ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart.* How do I know if I'm doing the right thing? Put the Beatitudes before us and compare our actions to that beautiful model from Jesus.

Self-centeredness means we are not really contributing. If we are not contributing to the world around us, we are just taking up space. This is a waste. Do something with your life - let it shine out!

*The Tool of Stubborn Denial:  
It fixes my sight to only see what I WANT to see!*

Luke 13:34-35: (NASB) <sup>34</sup>O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! <sup>35</sup>Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Jesus lamented over Jerusalem because he knew he was being rejected. They were too stubborn to see he was the Messiah. The Pharisees' tool of stubborn







denial got Jesus executed, and Israel was cast off from God as a nation for generations.

How could we be as stubborn? Consider our relationships with people who are not a good influence on us, but we like them even though they may be corrupting us. If we keep those relationships, we may be in stubborn denial. We need to walk away from such circumstances and towards what is higher, because many times we are not strong enough to pull those people out of their lifestyle. Walking away and seeking something higher often is a better example to them in the long run.

*The Tool of a Calloused Heart:  
It fixes my heart to find its comfort in the darkness of sin.*

Ephesians 4:17-19: (NASB) <sup>17</sup>So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup>being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; <sup>19</sup>and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

The Apostle Paul was telling the Ephesian church they should not be walking in a sinful path, but should be walking at a higher level. The *futility of their mind was darkened in their understanding, excluded from God* because it does not look for God. What the heart wants, the heart tries to get. If we only give our hearts the callous sensuality of the sinful human experience, how can we expect true godliness or a God-praising life?

Warning: We can have these tools in the toolboxes of our minds even if we profess Christianity. Are we aware these are there and what are we doing about it?

*The Tool of Laziness:  
It fixes my actions to be minimal and purposefully ignorant of reality.*

Proverbs 26:13-15: (ASV) <sup>13</sup>The sluggard saith, There is a lion in the way; A lion is in the streets. <sup>14</sup>As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the sluggard upon his bed. <sup>15</sup>The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish; it wearieth him to bring it again to his mouth.

Laziness is the most common and inexpensive tool to acquire. Once acquired and placed into anyone's tool box, it slowly and definitively becomes one of the most costly and destructive tools to own!

Mental and physical fatigue take a toll on us at the end of the day. The older we get, the harder it becomes. Are we focused enough to recognize the tool of laziness and find a positive one to counteract it?





*Values are knowing what to do. Character is having the strength to do it. Integrity is doing it even when no one is watching. — Weldon Long*

We started with some TMDs - Tools of Mass Destruction. Now let us continue with TMCs - Tools of Massive Construction! The key is self-control and self-discipline. If you can change the tool you use, you can change the outcome of your life.



*Small wins; now add more, Self-Discipline Techniques, Elliot Hulse*

- Commitment and discipline sort of go together. The fact that that small win associated with getting up every single morning is under your belt, you're going to feel the courage, the confidence, and you will have the ability to begin adding other things to your ability to grow stronger. Now that you know, it's been 60 days, 90 days and you have that pattern down pat. You get up every morning and you walk. You don't think about it. It's become a habit. You now can use that tool of creating habits and instilling discipline with the next one, which should be a little bit more advanced. Perhaps, only drink water with your meals. Don't drink any soda; don't drink any juice, just drink water. That's the next one, and then the next one becomes more complex and the next one more complex. Now this might seem like this is tedious and slow, but I guarantee you that after 90 days of tiny wins and the revamping of your character, you will be the type of person that can get anything done at any time and the long-time perspective is going to be a successful one for you.*

The small win does not change your life, but the discipline that you develop to get and keep the small win is the building block to change your life. Small victories repeated give us something to work with.



*The Tool of God-centered Thinking:  
It fixes my desire to focus on serving and giving.*

**Philippians 3:12-14:** (NASB) <sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. <sup>13</sup>Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.



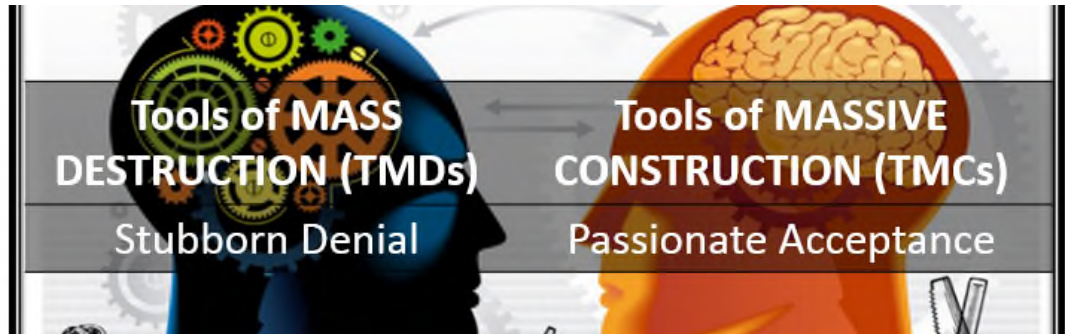




To have God-centered thinking does not mean we are perfectly God-centered and we will never again make any mistakes.

It means that we are daily working at our desire to always be pointed UP! We get God-centered thinking by reading His word.

The Tool of God-Centered Thinking cancels out the Tool of Self-Centered Thinking.



*The Tool of Passionate Acceptance:  
It fixes my sight to only see what God's will directs me to see!*

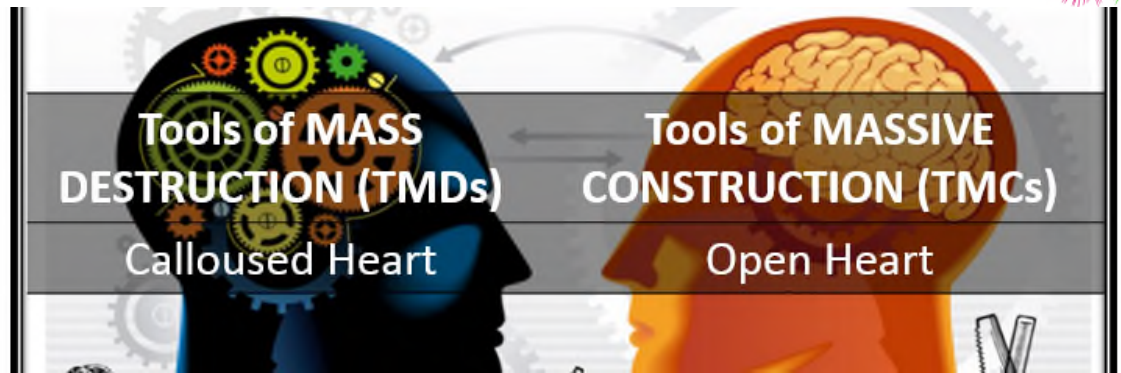
The Tool of Passionate Acceptance overrides the Tool of Stubborn Denial.

Acts 21:11-14: (NASB) <sup>11</sup>And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, This is what the Holy Spirit says: In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. <sup>12</sup>When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>Then Paul answered, What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>14</sup>And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, The will of the Lord be done!

As the Apostle Paul was ready to leave, one of the Christians there begged him not to go to Jerusalem lest he be taken prisoner. They did not want him to go to prison - the solution was simple - do not go! But Jesus gave Paul the commission to bring the message to the Gentiles, so this was God's will. Paul's answer used this Tool of Passionate Acceptance. He was ready to die if that was God's will. Paul's example is unbelievable. He was willing to do whatever he needed to in order to show, *Thy will be done*.

Passionate acceptance changes our expectations, because we can now see more clearly! We need to willingly accept God's will in our lives and act in a way that is pleasing to God.





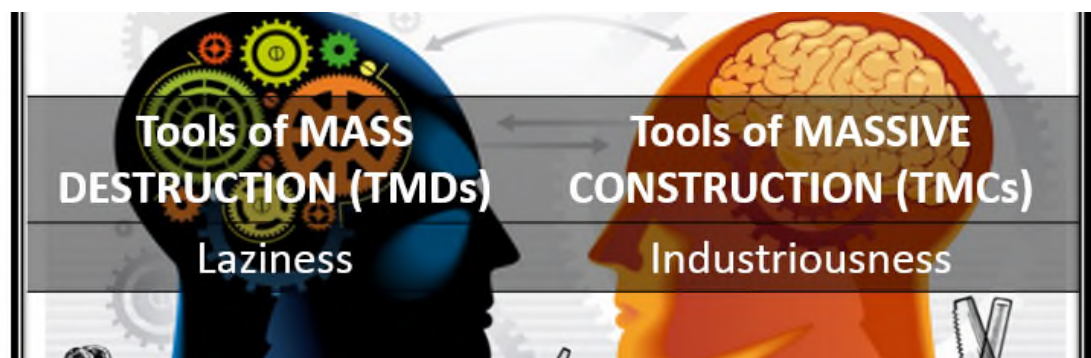
*The Tool of an Open Heart:  
It fixes my heart to find its comfort in the building up of others!*

This means it is not so much about taking care of me, but how can I contribute to YOU. When we think in this way, our lives will begin to change.

Romans 14:13-15: (NASB) <sup>13</sup>Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. <sup>14</sup>I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. <sup>15</sup>For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

This was about the debate they had in the early church about eating food that was offered to idols. We are taught to be sensitive to the conscience of our brother even if it is not as strong as yours. An open heart instinctively combats the darkness of ego since dark cannot stand the light!

We are unique and may have different ways of serving God the best we can.



*The Tool of Industriousness:  
It fixes my actions to be decisive and productive to fulfill God's will!*

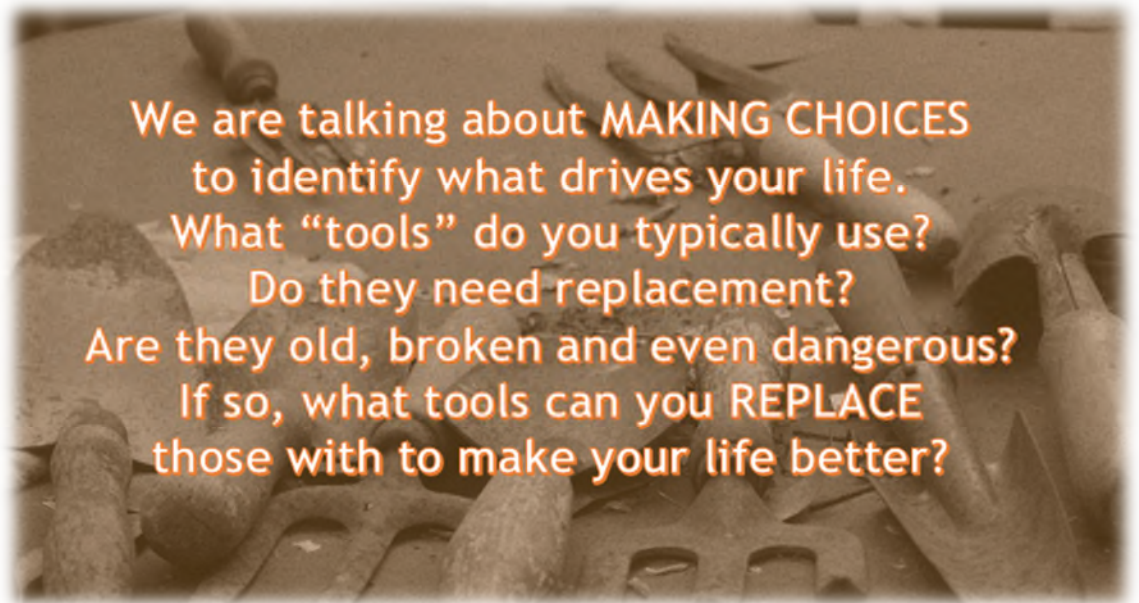




Proverbs 6:6-11: (NASB) <sup>6</sup>*Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, <sup>7</sup>Which, having no chief, officer or ruler, <sup>8</sup>Prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest. <sup>9</sup>How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? <sup>10</sup>A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest. <sup>11</sup>Your poverty will come in like a vagabond and your need like an armed man.*

To be industrious is to be active. To be active for Christ is to be an overcomer!  
It is working hard even when we do not feel like it.

Once we identify the right tools, what do we do next?



*Look at the word responsibility – “response-ability” – the ability to choose your response.  
– Dr. Stephen R Covey*

## Third Building Block

To better invest my time and maximize my experiences  
I need to understand - how to focus on my circle of  
influence and not my circle of concern.



This is a HUGE point from Weldon Long's book, "The Power of Consistency."  
He clearly explains how our *Circle of Concern* is outside of our *Circle of Influence*, and as such cannot be altered by our focus or worry, no matter how





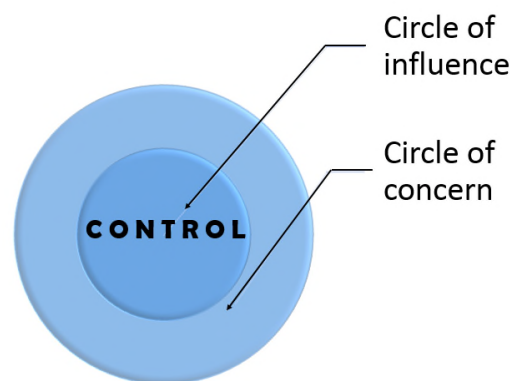


RICK'S  
EXPERIENCE

hard we try. We cannot change our Circle of Concern. But, our Circle of Influence is where we can make choices that actually affect the outcome.

**Rick:** My son is in the Coast Guard in an anti-terrorism unit. That is serious work. My Circle of Concern is for his well-being when their unit is out, because we never know where they are or what they are doing; we just know it is dangerous. My Circle of Influence is when I talk to my son, encourage him and remind him to stay focused and always go by the book to protect himself. That is all I can do. My Circle of Concern is big but I have no control. I can let that be in God's hands.

Human nature is to worry, but that is a waste of time.



 **Direction not intention, *Effecting Positive Change; Personal Growth and Development*, Randy Ross**

- *But here's the principle...it's your direction - not your intention - that will determine your destination. In order for us to make change, first of all we have to become consciously aware of the need to change. Now that can happen one of two ways: either through honest, candid assessment or that being forced upon us for us to become consciously aware through life's circumstances, because life happens and reality will ultimately show up. Or to put it another way, whatever is down in your well will ultimately come up in your bucket. So, sooner or later life throws us a reality pitch, and we have to deal with where we are and where we're headed. And in that moment, wherever that crisis occurs, that's a decisive moment. At that moment, we must make the decision whether to continue on that trajectory or chart a whole new course that will take us to a higher level.*

"It is our direction - not our intention - that determines our destination." It is great to have good intentions but if they do not do anything to alter a downward spiral of direction, then intentions are meaningless.

How do we focus on our actual direction, our Circle of Influence? For a practical lesson in determining and focusing on our Circle of Influence and not our Circle of Concern, we look at the Apostle Paul's conversion. Saul was forcibly shown the error of his ways and repented.





**Ananias, the Christian brother who would be sent to Saul, did not need force; he simply needed faith:**

**Acts 9:10-18:** (NASB) <sup>10</sup>Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here I am, Lord. <sup>11</sup>And the Lord said to him, get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, <sup>12</sup>and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.

Ananias is given a very specific task to accomplish. This task falls within his Circle of Influence, for Jesus proclaimed it to be so in the vision.

<sup>13</sup>But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to your saints at Jerusalem; <sup>14</sup>and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.

Ananias says to Jesus, "Saul has done much harm to your saints and continues to do so." He is wandering outside his Circle of Influence into his Circle of Concern and his concern and fear are truly legitimate! He could not change the concern.

We need to focus on what we *can* change so we can grow through our experiences in a more contented way.

<sup>15</sup>But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; <sup>16</sup>for I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake.

Jesus' answer allays his concern and helps Ananias to focus on that which he *could* influence. He tells Ananias that Saul will be a Christian like Ananias, and Saul will have to suffer like Ananias but will be delivered from the things he will suffer.

<sup>17</sup>So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ananias walks in faith and applies his influence to *Brother* Saul! THIS WAS A DEFINING MOMENT for both that would lead to the canceling of his Circle of Concern regarding Saul. By doing what he *could* do, the big concern went away.

For us, if we focus on what we *can* change, we might be better able to better put a trial in perspective.

<sup>18</sup>And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;

Saul did NOT procrastinate - he is healed and then he is baptized!

Our time is only well invested when we are focusing on our Circle of Influence. It is wasted, never to be retrieved, when spent focusing on our Circle of Concern. (Even though some of us like to complain and moan and groan over what we cannot change.)





Focusing on others and living with gratitude makes our own trials and difficulties much easier.

Where does focusing on our Circle of Influence bring us?

## Fourth Building Block

To better invest my time and maximize my experiences  
I need to understand - the primary change I need is to make  
better decisions and to follow through on them.



This is always the inevitable conclusion when we seek to make significant change in our lives. Just like the Stephen Covey quote, "All things are created twice," we mentally create a better life when we make a choice, and we physically create a better life when we act on that choice. We must follow through on that choice.

It is great to say, "I am going to do this," like a New Year's resolution, but we have to act on that choice and follow through.

*There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when circumstances permit. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results. — Unknown*

 **Do it before you feel like it, Self-discipline Techniques, John Maxwell**

- (Answering a question from a woman named Sonja) Self-discipline and being able to perform, and being able to keep your life on schedule, and being able to keep commitments and promises, and to meet deadlines is essential to success. None of us can afford to have a life that is controlled by someone else or a life that is basically controlled by our emotions. I learned many years ago that there are two kinds of people: there's the type of person who says, "I'm going to wait until I feel like it before I do it," and then there's the person who says, "I've got to do it so that I feel like it." One will never get anything done, because they're still waiting to feel the moment to move and the other person says, "No, I need to move, and then I will begin to feel the moment." Sonja, self-discipline is essential in your life and my life if we're going to get things done.

Many of us fall into the pit of living our lives controlled by others or by our own emotions rather than controlling our Circle of Influence, doing what we can do







to change things. While emotions are real to us, they do not necessarily reflect the reality of life around us.

One of the great personal arenas of my life to control emotions was as a parent of three children, two of whom were especially difficult to raise. I had to learn not to immediately react. Regardless of how I felt, what did they need to hear and how did they need to hear it? That changed my relationship with my children and helped me to communicate with them.

We want to make better decisions and follow through on them.

Philippians 4:4-9: (NASB) *Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice!*

To rejoice always is a decision - and sometimes it is a hard one! Decide and act! Sometimes our circumstances do not lend themselves to rejoicing. We recently spoke to a listener who is in extraordinary pain 24 hours a day. We cannot just read this Scripture to them and say, "Rejoice!" Rejoicing does not mean you are giddy and happy; it is looking at God knowing He knows and cares.

<sup>5</sup>*Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.*

To wear our Christlikeness on the outside is a decision and sometimes a hard one. If everyone is miserable and complaining, they want to see the same in you. When Christlikeness rises above that, it creates friction. Decide and act! This might look like kindness, gratitude, generosity or even a smile. There is so much we can do to show a gentle spirit.

<sup>6</sup>*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

To release anxiety and embrace prayer is a choice and sometimes a hard one. Decide and act!

<sup>7</sup>*And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

The peace of God in your life is a RESULT. It is God's action as a result of our making godly decisions in rejoicing, having a gentle spirit and not being anxious! In other words, as a result of us making godly decisions, God gives us peace.

<sup>8</sup>*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*





**CREATE THINGS TWICE-  
FIRST DECIDE  
TO THINK ON  
AND DWELL ON  
GODLY THINGS.**

*<sup>9</sup>The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

The Apostle Paul wanted us to see his testimony in his service to God in how he lived his life. God gave him peace through all kinds of trials and tribulations and can do the same for us. This was the same Paul who killed Christians. He then chose and acted differently. He listened to God through Jesus.

**CREATE THINGS TWICE-  
PRACTICE THAT  
WHICH YOU HAVE  
DECIDED TO  
THINK AND DWELL ON!**

### *Building Blocks of Understanding for a Better Life:*



To better invest my time and maximize my experiences I need to understand – what drives my homeostasis, my comfort zone.



To better invest my time and maximize my experiences I need to understand – my life is a perfect reflection of what is in my box.



To better invest my time and maximize my experiences I need to understand – how to focus my circle of influence and NOT my circle of concern.



To better invest my time and maximize my experiences I need to understand – the primary change I need is to make better decisions and to follow through on them.





*So, what should I be doing differently?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...  
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*



**Another quite disturbing example of the destructive contents of our "toolbox:"**

**Romans 1:28-32:** (NASB) <sup>28</sup>And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, <sup>29</sup>being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup>without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; <sup>32</sup>and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

**A few more "baditudes" that seem to be in many people's tool boxes:**

**Pride:** **Proverbs 16:17-19:** (NASB) <sup>17</sup>The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; He who watches his way preserves his life. <sup>18</sup>Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling. <sup>19</sup>It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.







**Anger and Jealousy:** Proverbs 27:4: (NASB) *Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, but who can stand before jealousy?*

These attitudes cause us to only see what they are focused on and not God's real power in our lives!

**Greed:** Luke 12:15: (NRSV) *And he said to them, Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.*

**Ego:** Luke 16:14-15: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>*Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at him. <sup>15</sup>And he said to them, You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.*

These attitudes cause us to only see that which we want in our selfishness and cause us to ignore God's attention and response in our lives.

Back to the account of Ananias and Saul and the building block of focusing on your Circle of Influence rather than your Circle of Concern:

**Ananias' continued actions within his Circle of Influence expanded Saul's life to be able to proclaim Christ:**

Acts 9:19-22: (NASB) <sup>19</sup>*and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, <sup>20</sup>and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, he is the Son of God.*

**The other disciples struggled (rightfully so) with this unexpected conversion. They chose to allow Ananias and his influence to overrule their angst over their Circle of Concern.**

<sup>21</sup>*All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?*

**Saul now truly began developing his Circle of Influence in a Christian way.**

<sup>22</sup>*But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.*

All the changes up to this point had been primarily internal, but this change in Saul's behavior showed the world his authenticity, for he was now fully engaged in Christianity.

