

Success Mini-Course

Lesson Four

“Practice”

By Terry Drew Karanen

Practice is an ongoing process. This lesson can be a reference guide to assist you in creating the vital daily methods necessary to realize your unique expression of life. The exercises at the end are thought-provoking, challenging, and infinitely rewarding. Take your time in completing them. Begin with the exercise you are most drawn to and incorporate it in your daily practice. When you are ready to add another, or go onto another, do so. This is not a test, just like life is not a test. Challenging our beliefs is part of the process by which we grow. These exercises are an example of what revolves around the *practice* of living a life of happiness and fulfillment.

**Life is a journey,
not a destination.**

My father taught me to read music and to play the trumpet before I entered kindergarten. My Grandma Esther taught me to play the piano beginning in the first grade. While I struggled, they always made playing their instruments of choice look so easy. It looked easy for them because they practiced those instruments for years before I was born. Think of a person you know or admire, someone whom you believe lives a fulfilling life or existence. They make it look easy, don't they?

It is their consistent, positive attitude, and ease with life that draws us to them. If you ask anyone like this, or anyone successful, you will find their situations may have been different not very long ago. They achieved their bliss and level of success by practicing diligently in the areas in which they knew they must improve or educate themselves. They didn't stop there. Each day they continue to hone their skills and abilities, learn new ways of accomplishing their desired results, and constantly educate themselves in new arenas.

Most children today are still being taught that the end result is more important than the effort and experience that brings about the result. It is in the doing of any endeavor that we can find the most satisfaction. By rushing through the process, whatever the situation, we bypass the joy of the undertaking, the work or even the difficulty. We can easily arrive at the completion with no real enthusiasm with regard to celebrating our victory. It is common for many people to nearly

ignore their own accomplishments as they hurriedly climb the next mountain, pursuing the next goal.

We get stuck in the process because we do not complete endings. We need to celebrate and mourn the completion of our goals before we attempt something new. The mourning is just as important as the celebration. Acknowledging and appreciating our accomplishments is apparent. We have hoped for the desired outcome, dreamed about it, visualized it as being a reality, set goals to bring us closer to the end result and followed through on those plans to such an extent that we are now reaping the benefits of our labor.

The mourning of which I am speaking is usually not so apparent. The most common example is finishing our schooling. After seven years of ministerial school I was certified and deemed qualified to go out into the field and take on the responsibilities of a pastor for a church. This was an exciting time in my life, one I had looked forward to for some time. It would not appear that I had much to mourn about. The act of mourning is precipitated by a loss.

In my case, and in the case of anyone studying for any period of time, the loss is of no longer being in school. For seven years I talked about what I was going to do – now I was faced with doing it. Talking about doing anything and actually doing it are two very different things. How many times have you heard a co-worker complain again and again about their job? They repeatedly say how this time is that last straw, this time they are going to re-write their résumé and they are out of there. That kind of person seldom leaves. It is far easier to complain about our lives than actually do something about it.

One way to get beyond this barrier and move forward is the fourth step, **Practice**. By practicing the principles of success in our lives we open ourselves to more and more of the good we say we want. Rev. Edwene Gaines once said that every time her life gets better than she thought possible, it seems that God somehow opens another door and things get even more exciting and rewarding. This caused her to coin the phrase that she must “increase her tolerance for pleasure.”

We all say we want to have wonderful lives, full of love, prosperity, perfect health, and satisfying careers, yet a closer examination finds most of us ill prepared to accept such magnificence. The philosophy of “Wait till the other shoe drops,” or “This is too good to be true” permeates our culture.

The old saying that God works in mysterious ways is true only because it is a mystery to us – not to God. The child who asks the parent to take them to the amusement park does not concern himself or herself with the parent obtaining the day off from work, arranging for younger siblings to have a sitter, saving the money for the admission charges and food, or how they will get to the park. That’s all taken care of by the parent. We have a wise and loving parent in the form of God. Spirit can produce results and opportunities far beyond our imagination, *if* we are willing to allow God to work in our lives.

We have discussed the **Possibility** of creating a life worth living. We have looked at the Divine **Power** at our disposal. We learned more about what it means to have **Passion** for our desires and life. In this lesson we covered the reason that many people begin to have the life they want only to lose it. To experience continued success we are required to **Practice**. Next week we'll add the fifth "P," which is **Purpose**, because if we don't know why we need to do something, if we don't have a higher purpose to our actions, we're likely not to be successful.

Here are several exercises and suggestions that can be incorporated in your practice as you continue to discover and live a successful life. There's much more here than you can, or should, so in one week. Try the ones you're drawn to; save the rest for another time!

Exercise #1A - What Do You Want?

For this exercise I suggest using a yellow, legal-sized pad. The important factor here is that you have plenty of room to write. Set a timer for five minutes. Write down every desire you have – do not question it, do not edit your list, do not ask how, do not ask why, do not ask where and above all: Do Not Judge Your Desires! Keep writing until the full five minutes is up. Then move into **Exercise #1B**.

Exercise #1B - Our Feelings About Success

For our hopes, dreams and goals to become realities, both our conscious and subconscious mind must be able to accept those realities. Read back through the list you just created, one item at a time. Start with the first item. Accept that item as already yours. For the sake of an example let's say that the first item was a new car. Speaking out loud and say, "I have a beautiful new car!", then write a few lines about what immediate thoughts popped into your head.

Perhaps you will think, "YES! It is dark blue with black leather interior, a top-of-the-line sound system synched with my mobile devices, and a sunroof." Or, you may find a little voice saying, "Yeah, right...like you're going to pay hundreds of dollars more a month for a new car you do not need and cannot afford. Who do you think you're kidding?" It's then up to you to determine who that second voice is; and, to whom you want to listen.

Exercises #1A & #1B are not ones you should complete quickly. Allow yourself the luxury of time and then enjoy the benefits of working on the only person who can truly make a difference in your life: You.

Exercise #2 - Writing Lists

Create lists. Make a list of what you want, another list of what you do not want and a list of the things for which you are thankful, including your blessings or demonstrations.

Exercise #3 - Meditate

There are a multitude of meditation practices available from which to choose. Taking time to still our chattering minds and listen to our deepest thoughts will center us, allowing us to focus on

the moment. Extensive training in meditative practices can be enriching and literally a life's work all unto itself. But meditation does not have to be esoteric, nor does it require years of training to begin. Meditation can consist of gazing at a candle, closing our eyes and listening to our breathing or chanting. It can be taking a walk in the woods. It is the space we provide for Spirit to enter into our conscious recognition and guide us through intuition.

Exercise #4 - Ask, "Why?"

No worthwhile quest will crumble under questioning. If we are unable to state why we want to accomplish a goal we may find success to be illusive or delayed. The answer may be that we feel a strong desire. That, in and of itself, may be all the answer we need, or it could be a excuse for feeling victimized in our current situation and just wanting relief. By regularly questioning our desires and motives we open up to being further guided by Spirit, which may, in turn, open our eyes to hidden agendas or secret motives. We may discover that our desire for something material is only a weak physical representation of a more personal and inner desire for satisfaction. That fulfillment can appear only by changing our belief system about ourselves.

Exercise #5 - Forgive - DAILY!

Lack of forgiveness will stop or delay our progress. It will also affect us in other ways. Holding grudges, or refusing to forgive others and ourselves, will eventually cause us harm by manifesting as physical and psychological illnesses.

This is an exercise we must continue throughout our lifetime. Part of being human means we make mistakes. We cannot take chances and risks without the possibility that our actions may not work out the way we originally planned. If we are not willing to make mistakes then we will not even start a project, or will give up at the first sign of difficulty. Forgiving ourselves for these mistakes is essential. Missing the mark is not a huge issue, unless we choose to make it so or refuse to let it go. Forgiveness of others and ourselves opens us to releasing the past, enjoying the present and moving powerfully into the future.

Exercise #6 - Giving Thanks and Showing Appreciation

While retiring for the night is a great time for forgiving, waking up in the morning provides a unique opportunity to give thanks. I like to do "cat stretches" in the morning, instead of leaping out of bed. It helps to move our bodies from a night of lying there to a day of upright movement. As I do that and before getting out of bed I give thanks for anything in my life for which I am thankful. Imagine starting your day with heartfelt appreciation instead of dread about the world situation at that moment or all the chores you may have chosen to plan for that day.

Exercise #7 - Release

Let go and let God. This phrase sounds far too simplistic for many in-charge types of people. It is also the perfect way of getting off our manipulation of life and back to the blissful workings of Spirit. This may sound a little airy-fairy, the "go with the flow attitude," but it is not without

direction. We can let go and let God because we have already set the course, input the desire and started the ball rolling. We can go with the flow because we have carefully chosen the river or the stream in which to swim. One person told me he almost always got a good night's sleep by praying, "God, I worked the day shift. Now it's your turn." We could all learn to form a better partnership with Divine Wisdom. Releasing our desires is an excellent way to begin. While waiting impatiently for an elevator one day my eyes glanced at a sign in the shop next to where I was standing. It read:

**Good Morning! This is God.
I'm going to handle all your problems today.
Won't be needing your help.
Enjoy yourself
and have a nice day!**

Exercise #8 - Have Fun!

This is not all about working! If you are extremely structured and analytical you may need to schedule time to play. You may have to force yourself to have fun. Do it! Enlist the aid of friends who know how to play. I learned how from children I observed. At one time I had a "play alarm" of sorts. I used to have two cats, both with individual personalities. When one of them thought I had been at the computer long enough he would come to my desk and place both paws on the keyboard or flop their head against my leg. It was his way of saying it was time to go into the living room for a kitty massage, his daily brushing or a wrestling session. If I refused to go, I found a cat on the desk, laying on my arm or my computer mouse. He was relentless, so I learned not to avoid this form of play in my life.

Copyright © 2018 Terry Drew Karanen. All rights reserved.

This message may be re-printed, copied and/or forwarded without permission, as long as the content is not altered in any way and credit is given to the author.