



# Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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## The Power of Principles

Several years ago, during a typical midwest winter, my wife and I decided to drive from our western Michigan home to Chicago. Our route took us along the southern shore of Lake Michigan, an area noted for its winter storms. As we drove, such a storm blew up, transforming our leisurely ride into a white-knuckled struggle with white-out conditions. The snow made it difficult to distinguish sky from ground, road from ditch. While stopping would turn us into an obstacle for vehicles behind us, continuing on seemed so uncertain ... that is, until the snowplow arrived. The rumbling truck passed us and quickly disappeared into the blowing snow. It was gone ... except for the bright light on its tailgate. That light became our beacon. As long as we kept it in sight and followed it, we stayed on course. Ultimately, we broke through the storm and arrived at our destination.

Many of us today are facing our own storms. For some of us, the storm is financial. For others, it's work or career related. Still others of us are caught in relationship or legal storms. Our life conditions have changed, and it's hard to see our way. While the storm swirls around us, we might "freeze in place", unsure of what to do. But eventually, decisions and movement by us are called for, and a

guiding light shining through the storm would be so helpful.

Fortunately, such lights exist, if we have the insight and clarity to identify them. They exist in the form of personal *principles*, those life guidelines we adopt as "codes of conduct". They may sound like "Earn, *then* spend" or "Hurt no one on purpose" or "Give thanks daily". Such principles are important not only because they point the way for our decisions and behavior, but also because they reflect our heart. They grow from and reveal the truths we believe and the values we hold dear.

Given the guiding power of principles, let's note a few more things about them.

1) Personal principles cannot be ordered or imposed. Specific behaviors can be ordered, as we see in the rules of organizations and societies. Principles, on the other hand, grow from inner convictions that are "taught and caught". This reinforces the significant, though limited, role we have as parents in helping to develop and shape healthy morals and beliefs within our children. It also raises the important question regarding who else is teaching and modeling values for them.

2) Personal principles apply across circumstances. They are not situationally determined, but rather apply to varied situations. While the

specific application of a principle may vary from situation to situation, it does so without compromising the character of the principle.

3) Personal principles are not determined by popularity. They are not established by vote and do not necessarily represent the path of least resistance. Since values and beliefs vary between individuals, some clash of principles can be expected. Because of this, ...

4) Personal principles can be costly, at least in the short run. Holding to our principles can result in many different types of losses, including position and popularity. It is crucial to remember, however, that loss in these "less important" (though possibly significant) areas is accepted in order to maintain the integrity of what is most important - the values and beliefs upon which our principles are based.

5) While very enduring, personal principles are not forever cast in stone. As we grow and mature, our beliefs and values, and thus our principles, reflect the progress of this growth, remaining a true indicator of who we are and seek to be.

Personal principles - guiding lights pointing the way during both calm and storm. Let's take the time to clearly identify the ones we claim, and then follow them with passion and courage!



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## CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work.

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## Laws and Principles

One of the greatest dangers we face as we seek to "live rightly" is the danger of getting buried under a burdensome load of laws designed to control and direct our behavior. The rules and laws are considered necessary by some because their focus is on externally controlling behavior. The assumption is that without such laws, behavior is chaotic or simply urge driven. We often find, however, that rather than controlling behavior, laws simply inform us of when our behavior is "wrong".

Fortunately, we can step behind our behaviors and address the attitudes, beliefs, and emotions that direct our behaviors. This is the inner world of principles, the world where we set guidelines for our decisions and behavior, guidelines that can motivate and direct our inner exercise of self control.

Where laws condemn, but fail to control, personal principles (reflecting our spirit and God's Spirit within us) provide us with the focus, direction, purpose, and power for handling the decisions of each new day.

Let's tap into this power and direct our lives as guided from within. Let's be free and courageous, and let our principles reveal the truth and love of God's Spirit wherever we go.



" When one bases his life on principle, 99 percent of his decisions are already made."

- Anonomous