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BELIEVE IT'S POSSIBLE

The number one problem that keeps people from winning in the United States today is lack of belief in themselves.

ARTHUR L. WILLIAMS

Founder of A.L. Williams Insurance Company, which was sold to Primerica for \$90 million in 1989

Napoleon Hill once said, "Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve." In fact, the mind is such a powerful instrument, it can deliver to you literally everything you want. But you have to *believe* that what you want is possible.

YOU GET WHAT YOU EXPECT

Scientists used to believe that humans responded to information flowing into the brain from the outside world. But today, they're learning instead that we respond to what the brain, on the basis of previous experience, expects to happen next.

Doctors in Texas, for example—studying the effect of arthroscopic knee surgery—assigned patients with sore, worn-out knees to one of three surgical procedures: scraping out the knee joint, washing out the joint, or doing nothing.

During the "nothing" operation, doctors anesthetized the patient, made three incisions in the knee as if to insert their surgical instruments, and then pretended to operate. Two years after surgery, patients who underwent the pretend surgery reported the same amount of relief from pain and swelling as those who had received the actual treatments. The brain *expected* the "surgery" to improve the knee, and it did.

Why does the brain work this way? Neuropsychologists who study expectancy theory say it's because we spend our whole lives becoming conditioned. Through a lifetime's worth of events, our brain actually learns what to

expect next—whether it eventually happens that way or not. And because our brain expects something will happen a certain way, we often achieve exactly what we anticipate.

This is why it's so important to hold positive expectations in your mind. When you replace your old negative expectations with more positive ones—when you begin to believe that what you want is possible—your brain will actually take over the job of accomplishing that possibility for you. Better than that, your brain will actually expect to achieve that outcome.⁹

“YOU GOTTA BELIEVE”

You can be anything you want to be, if only you believe with sufficient conviction and act in accordance with your faith; for whatever the mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve.

NAPOLEON HILL

Best-selling author of *Think and Grow Rich*

When Philadelphia Phillies pitcher Tug McGraw—father of legendary country singer Tim McGraw—struck out batter Willie Wilson to earn the Phillies the 1980 World Series title, *Sports Illustrated* captured an immortal image of elation on the pitcher's mound—an image few people knew was played out *exactly as McGraw had planned it*.

When I had the opportunity to meet Tug one afternoon in New York, I asked him about his experience on the mound that day.

“It was as if I'd been there a thousand times before,” he said. “When I was growing up, I would pitch to my father in the backyard. We would always get to where it was the bottom of the ninth in the World Series with two outs and three men on base. I would always bear down and strike them out.” Because Tug had conditioned his brain day after day in the backyard, the day eventually arrived where he was living that dream for real.

McGraw's reputation as a positive thinker had begun 7 years earlier during the New York Mets' 1973 National League championship season, when Tug coined the phrase “You gotta believe” during one of the team's meetings. That Mets team, in last place in the division in August, went on to win the

9. Adapted from “Placebos Prove So Powerful Even Experts Are Surprised: New Studies Explore the Brain's Triumph Over Reality” by Sandra Blakeslee. *New York Times*, October 13, 1998, section F, page 1.

National League pennant and reach game 7 of the World Series, where they finally succumbed to the Oakland A's.

Another example of his always optimistic "you gotta believe" attitude was the time, while he was a spokesman for the Little League, that he said, "Kids should practice autographing baseballs. This is a skill that's often overlooked in Little League." And then he smiled his infectious smile.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND GO FOR IT

Sooner or later, those who win are those who think they can.

RICHARD BACH

Best-selling author of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*

Tim Ferriss believed in himself. In fact, he believed so strongly in his abilities that he won the national San Shou kickboxing title just 6 weeks after being introduced to the sport.

As a prior all-American and judo team captain at Princeton, Tim had always dreamed of winning a national title. He had worked hard. He was good at his sport. But repeated injuries over multiple seasons had continually denied him his dream.

So when a friend called one day to invite Tim to watch him in the national Chinese kickboxing championships 6 weeks away, Tim instantly decided to join him at the competition.

Because he had never been in any kind of striking competition before, he called USA Boxing and asked where the best trainers could be found. He traveled to a tough neighborhood in Trenton, New Jersey, to learn from boxing coaches who had trained gold medalists. And after 4 grueling hours a day in the ring, he put in more time conditioning in the weight room. To make up for his lack of time in the sport, Tim's trainers focused on exploiting his strengths instead of making up for his weaknesses.

Tim didn't want to merely compete. He wanted to win.

When the competition day at last arrived, Tim defeated three highly acclaimed opponents before making it to the finals. As he anticipated what he would have to do to win in the final match, he closed his eyes and visualized defeating his opponent in the very first round.

Later, Tim told me that most people fail not because they lack the skills or aptitude to reach their goal but because they simply don't believe they can reach it. Tim believed. And won.

IT HELPS TO HAVE SOMEONE ELSE
BELIEVE IN YOU FIRST

When 20-year-old Ruben Gonzalez showed up at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Lake Placid, New York, he had in his pocket the business card of a Houston businessman who believed in his Olympic dream. Ruben was there to learn the sport of luge, a sport that 9 of 10 aspirants give up after the first season. Almost everyone breaks more than one bone before mastering this 90-mile-per-hour race against time in an enclosed mile-long downhill track of concrete and ice. But Ruben had a dream, passion, a commitment not to quit, and the support of his friend, Craig, back in Houston.

When Ruben got back to his room after the first day of training, he called up Craig.

“Craig this is nuts! My side hurts. I think I broke my foot. That’s it. I am going back to soccer!”

Craig interrupted him. “Ruben, get in front of a mirror!”

“What?”

“I said, ‘Get in front of a mirror!’”

Ruben got up, stretched the phone cord, and stood in front of a full-length mirror.

“Now repeat after me: No matter how bad it is, and how bad it gets, I’m going to make it!”

Ruben felt like an idiot staring at himself in the mirror, so in the most wimpy, wishy-washy way possible, he said, “No matter how bad it is, and how bad it gets, I’m going to make it!”

“C’mon! Say it right. You’re Mr. Olympic Man! That’s all you ever talk about! Are you going to do it or not?”

Ruben started getting serious. “No matter how bad it is, and how bad it gets, I’m going to make it!”

“Again!”

“No matter how bad it is, and how bad it gets, I’m going to make it!”

And again and again and again.

About the fifth time Ruben said it, he thought, *Hey, this feels kind of good. I’m standing a little bit straighter.* By the tenth time he said it, he jumped up in the air and shouted, “I don’t care what happens. I’m going to make it. I can break both legs. Bones heal. I’ll come back and I will make it. I *will* be an Olympian!”

It’s amazing what happens to your self-confidence when you get eyeball to eyeball with yourself and you forcefully tell yourself what you’re going to

do. Whatever your dream is, look at yourself in the mirror and declare that you are indeed going to achieve it—no matter what the price.

Ruben Gonzales made that declaration, and it changed his life. He went on to compete in three separate winter games in the luge—Calgary in 1988, Albertville in 1992, and Salt Lake City in 2002. And he's currently training for the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics, where he will be 43 years old, competing against athletes half his age.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

You weren't an accident. You weren't mass produced.

You aren't an assembly-line product. You were deliberately planned, specifically gifted, and lovingly positioned on the Earth by the Master Craftsman.

MAX LUCADO
Best-selling author

If you are going to be successful in creating the life of your dreams, you have to believe that you are capable of making it happen. You have to believe you have the right stuff, that you are able to pull it off. You have to believe in yourself. Whether you call it self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-assurance, it is a deep-seated belief that you have what it takes—the abilities, inner resources, talents, and skills to create your desired results.

BELIEVING IN YOURSELF IS AN ATTITUDE

Believing in yourself is a choice. It is an attitude you develop over time. Although it helps if you had positive and supportive parents, the fact is that most of us had run-of-the-mill parents who inadvertently passed on to us the same limiting beliefs and negative conditioning they grew up with.

But remember, the past is the past. There is no payoff for blaming them for your current level of self-confidence. It's now *your* responsibility to take charge of your own self-concept and your beliefs. You must choose to believe that you can do anything you set your mind to—anything at all—because, in fact, you can. It might help you to know that the latest brain research now indicates that with enough positive self-talk and positive visualization combined with the proper training, coaching, and practice, anyone can learn to do almost anything.

Of the hundreds of supersuccessful people I have interviewed for this and other books, almost every one of them told me, "I was not the most gifted or talented person in my field, but I chose to believe anything was possible. I studied, practiced, and worked harder than the others, and that's how I got to where I am." If a 20-year-old Texan can take up the luge and become an Olympic athlete, a college dropout can become a billionaire, and a dyslexic student who failed three grades can become a best-selling author and television producer, then you, too, can accomplish anything if you will simply believe it is possible.

If you assume in favor of yourself and act as if it is possible, then you will do the things that are necessary to bring about the result. If you believe it is impossible, you will not do what is necessary, and you will not produce the result. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

THE CHOICE OF WHAT TO BELIEVE IS UP TO YOU

Stephen J. Cannell failed first, fourth, and tenth grades. He couldn't read and comprehend like other kids in his class could. He would spend 5 hours with his mother studying for a test and then fail it. When he asked his friend who got an A how long he had studied for the test, he replied, "I didn't." Stephen concluded that he just wasn't intelligent.

"But I simply decided, as an act of will, to put it out of my mind," he told me. "I simply refused to think about it. Instead I focused my energies on what I was good at, and that was football. If it hadn't been for football, which I excelled at, I don't know what would have happened to me. I got my self-esteem from playing sports."

Putting all his energy into football, he earned interscholastic honors as a running back. From football, he learned that if he applied himself, he could achieve excellence.

Later he was able to transfer that belief in himself to his career, which oddly enough turned out to be writing scripts for television. Eventually he formed his own production studio, where he created, produced, and wrote over 350 scripts for 38 different shows, including *The A-Team*, *The Rockford Files*, *Baretta*, *21 Jump Street*, *The Commish*, *Renegade*, and *Silk Stalkings*. At the height of his studio career, he had over 2,000 people on his payroll. And if that isn't enough, after he sold his studio he went on to write 11 best-selling novels.

Stephen is a prime example of the fact that it is not what life hands you but how you respond to it, mentally and physically, that matters most.

*I am looking for a lot of men who have an infinite capacity
to not know what can't be done.*

HENRY FORD

YOU HAVE TO GIVE UP "I CAN'T"

*The phrase I can't is the most powerful force of negation
in the human psyche.*

PAUL R. SCHEELE
Chairman, Learning Strategies Corporation

If you are going to be successful, you need to give up the phrase "I can't" and all of its cousins, such as "I wish I were able to." The words *I can't* actually disempower you. They actually make you weaker when you say them. In my seminars, I use a technique called kinesiology to test people's muscle strength as they say different phrases. I have them put their left arm out to their side, and I push down on it with my left hand to see what their normal strength is. Then I have them pick something they think they can't do, such as *I can't play the piano*, and say it out loud. I then push down on their arm again. It is always weaker. Then I have them say, "I can do it," and their arm is stronger.

Your brain is designed to solve any problem and reach any goal that you give it. The words you think and say actually affect your body. We see that in toddlers. When you were a toddler, there was no stopping you. You thought you could climb up on anything. No barrier was too big for you to attempt to overcome. But little by little, your sense of invincibility is conditioned out of you by the emotional and physical abuse that you receive from your family, friends, and teachers, until you no longer believe you can.

You must take responsibility for removing *I can't* from your vocabulary. In the '80s, I attended a Tony Robbins seminar in which we learned to walk on burning coals. When we began, we were all afraid that we would not be able to do it—that we would burn the soles of our feet. As part of the seminar, Tony had us write down every other *I can't* that we had—*I can't find the perfect job, I can't be a millionaire, I can't find the perfect mate*—and then we threw them onto the burning coals and watched them go up in flames. Two hours later, 350 of us walked on the burning coals without anybody getting burned. That night we all learned that just like the belief that we couldn't walk on burning

coals without getting burned was a lie, every other limiting belief about our abilities was also a lie.

DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE BELIEVING YOU CAN'T

In 1977, in Tallahassee, Florida, Laura Shultz, who was 63 at the time, picked up the back end of a Buick to get it off her grandson's arm. Before that time, she had never lifted anything heavier than a 50-pound bag of pet food.

Dr. Charles Garfield, author of *Peak Performance* and *Peak Performers*, interviewed her after reading about her in the *National Enquirer*. When he got to her home, she kept resisting any attempts to talk about what she called "the event." She kept asking Charlie to eat breakfast and call her Granny, which he did.

Finally he got her to talk about "the event." She said she didn't like to think about it because it challenged her beliefs about what she could and couldn't do, about what was possible. She said, "If I was able to do this when I didn't think I could, what does that say about the rest of my life? Have I wasted it?"

Charlie convinced her that her life was not yet over and that she could still do whatever she wanted to do. He asked her what she wanted to do, what her passion was. She said she had always loved rocks. She had wanted to study geology, but her parents hadn't had enough money to send both her and her brother to college, so her brother had won out.

At 63, with a little coaching from Charlie, she decided to go back to school to study geology. She eventually got her degree and went on to teach at a local community college.

Don't wait until you are 63 to decide that you can do anything you want. Don't waste years of your life. Decide that you are capable of doing anything you want and start working toward it now.

IT'S ALL ABOUT ATTITUDE

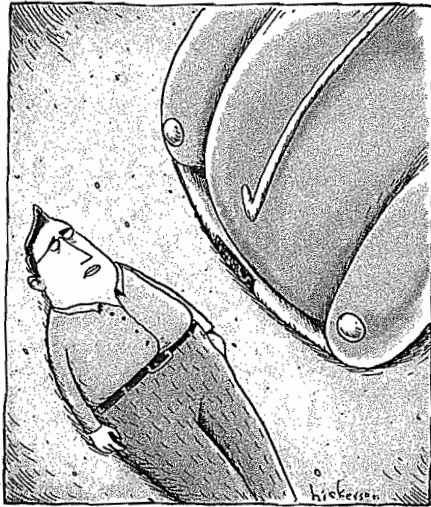
When baseball great Ty Cobb was 70, a reporter asked him, "What do you think you'd hit if you were playing these days?"

Cobb, who had a lifetime batting average of .367, said, "About .290, maybe .300."

The reporter replied, "That's because of the travel, the night games, the artificial turf, and all the new pitches like the slider, right?"

"No," said Cobb, "it's because I am seventy."

Now that's believing in yourself!



Encumbered by a low self-image,
Bob takes a job as a speed bump.

DON'T ASSUME YOU NEED A COLLEGE DEGREE

Here's another statistic showing that belief in yourself is more important than knowledge, training, or schooling: 20% of America's millionaires never set foot in college, and 21 of the 222 Americans listed as billionaires in 2003 never got their college diplomas; 2 *never even finished high school!* So although education and a commitment to lifelong learning are essential to success, a formal degree isn't a requirement. This is true even in the high-tech world of the Internet. Larry Ellison, CEO of Oracle, dropped out of the University of Illinois and at the time of this writing was worth \$18 billion. And Bill Gates dropped out of Harvard and later founded Microsoft. Today he is considered one of the richest men in the world, with a net worth of over \$46 billion.

Even Vice President Dick Cheney dropped out of college. When you realize that the vice president, the richest man in America, and many \$20 million-a-movie actors, as well as many of our greatest musicians and athletes, are all college dropouts, you see that you can start from anywhere and create a successful life for yourself.¹⁰

10. From "Some Billionaires Choose School of Hard Knocks," June 29, 2000; Forbes.com, 2003 Forbes 400 Richest People in America. Statistics were revised based on the 2003 edition of the Forbes 400 Richest People in America.

WHAT OTHERS THINK ABOUT YOU IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS

—MELINDA GIBSON, *Entrepreneur*

You have to believe in yourself when no one else does.

That's what makes you a winner.

VENUS WILLIAMS

Olympic gold medalist and professional tennis champion

If having others believing in you and your dream was a requirement for success, most of us would never accomplish anything. You need to base your decisions about what *you* want to do on *your* goals and desires—not the goals, desires, opinions, and judgments of your parents, friends, spouse, children, and coworkers. Quit worrying what other people think about you and follow your heart.

I like Dr. Daniel Amen's 18/40/60 Rule: When you're 18, you worry about what everybody is thinking of you; when you're 40, you don't give a darn what anybody thinks of you; when you're 60, you realize nobody's been thinking about you at all.

Surprise, surprise! Most of the time, nobody's thinking about you at all! They are too busy worrying about their own lives, and if they are thinking about you at all, they are wondering what you are thinking about them. People think about themselves, not you. Think about it—all the time you are wasting worrying about what other people think about your ideas, your goals, your clothes, your hair, and your home could all be better spent on thinking about and doing the things that will achieve *your* goals.

BECOME AN INVERSE PARANOID

*I've always been the opposite of a paranoid.
I operate as if everyone is part of a plot to
enhance my well-being.*

STAN DALE

Founder of the Human Awareness Institute and author of *Fantasies Can Set You Free*

My earliest mentor, W. Clement Stone, was once described as an inverse paranoid. Instead of believing the world was plotting to do him harm, he chose to believe the world was plotting to do him good. Instead of seeing every difficult or challenging event as a negative, he saw it for what it could be—something that was meant to enrich him, empower him, or advance his causes.

What an incredibly positive belief!

Imagine how much easier it would be to succeed in life if you were constantly expecting the world to support you and bring you opportunity.

Successful people do just that.

In fact, there is growing research that the vibrations of positive expectation that successful people give off actually attract to them the very experiences they believe they are going to get.

Suddenly, obstacles and negatives are seen not as just another example of “Gee, the world hates me,” but as opportunities to grow and change and succeed. If your car suddenly breaks down on the side of the road, instead of imagining a serial rapist pulling over to take advantage of you, think of the possibility that the guy who stops to help you will be the man you fall in love with and marry. If your company downsizes you out of a job, suddenly the chances are good that you’ll find your dream job with more opportunity at much better pay. If you develop cancer, the possibility exists that in the process of reorganizing your life to effect a cure, you’ll create a more healthy balance in your life and rediscover what’s important to you.

Think about it.

Was there a time in your life when something terrible happened that later became a blessing in disguise?

*Every negative event contains within it the seed
of an equal or greater benefit.*

NAPOLEON HILL

Author of the success classic *Think and Grow Rich*

The big blessing for me came in the 1970s when they closed the Job Corps Center in Clinton, Iowa, where I worked as a curriculum development specialist pioneering radical new learning systems for teaching underachieving students. I had unlimited support from the administration, I was working with an exciting team of bright young people who shared the same vision of making a difference, and I really enjoyed my work.

Then, out of the blue, the government decided to relocate the center. It meant I would lose my job for at least 6 months. At first I was upset at the decision, but while attending a workshop at the W. Clement & Jesse V. Stone Foundation in Chicago, I shared my predicament with the leader, who happened to be the vice president of the foundation. As a result, he offered me a job: "We'd love to have someone like you who has experience with inner-city black and Hispanic kids. Come work for us." They gave me more money, an unlimited budget, the ability to attend any workshop, training, or convention that I wanted—and I was now working directly with W. Clement Stone, who had introduced me to these success principles to begin with.

And yet, when they first announced the relocation of the Job Corps Center and my being laid off, I was angry, scared, and despondent. I thought it was the end of the world. I thought it was a bad thing. Instead, it turned out to be the major turning point of my life. In less than 3 months, my life had gone from good to great. For 2 years, I worked with some of the most amazing people I have ever met before I left to enter a doctoral program in psychological education at the University of Massachusetts.

Now, when anything "bad" happens, I remember that *everything* that ever happens to me has within it the seed of something better. I look for the upside rather than the downside. I ask myself, "Where's the greater benefit in this event?"

I'm sure that you, too, can think back to several times in your life when you thought what had happened was the end of the world—you flunked a class, lost your job, got divorced, experienced the death of a friend or a business failure, had a catastrophic injury or illness, your house burned down—and later you realized it was a blessing in disguise. The trick is to realize that whatever you are going through now is going to turn out better in the future as well. So look for the lemonade in the lemons. The more you begin to look

for the good, the sooner and more often you will find it. And if you take the attitude that it is coming, the less upset and discouraged you'll get while you're waiting for it.

HOW DO I USE THIS EXPERIENCE TO MY ADVANTAGE?

When life hands you a lemon, squeeze it and make lemonade.

W. CLEMENT STONE

Self-made multimillionaire and former publisher of *Success Magazine*

Captain Jerry Coffee was a pilot who was shot down during the Vietnam War. He spent 7 years as a prisoner of war in some of the most hellish conditions known to humankind. He was beaten, became malnourished, and was kept in solitary confinement for years. But if you ask him how he feels about that experience, he would tell you that it was the most powerful transformational experience of his life. As he entered his cell for the first time, he realized he would be spending a lot of time alone. He asked himself, *How can I use this experience to my advantage?* He told me that he decided to see it as an opportunity rather than as a tragedy—an opportunity to get to know both himself and God—the only two beings he'd be spending time with—better.

Captain Coffee spent many hours each day reviewing every interaction he had ever had with anyone in his life. Slowly he began to see the patterns of what had worked and what hadn't worked in his life. Over time, he slowly psychoanalyzed himself. Eventually he came to totally know himself at the deepest levels. He fully accepted every aspect of his being, developed a profound sense of compassion for himself and all of humanity, and came to fully understand his true nature. As a result, he is one of the most wise, humble, and peaceful men I have ever met. He literally radiates love and spirituality. Though he admits that he would never want to have to do it again, he also says that he would not trade his experience as a prisoner of war for anything, for it has made him who he is today—a deeply spiritual and happy family man, a successful author, and one of the most moving inspirational speakers you could ever hope to hear.

LOOK FOR THE OPPORTUNITY IN EVERYTHING

What if you, too, were to greet every interaction in your life with the question "What's the potential opportunity that this is?" The supersuccessful

approach every experience as an opportunity. They enter every conversation with the idea that something good will come from it. And they know that what they seek and expect, they will find.

If you take the approach that “good” is not an accident—that everyone and everything that shows up in your life is there for a reason—and that the universe is moving you toward your ultimate destiny for learning, growth, and achievement, you’ll begin to see every event—no matter how difficult or challenging—as a chance for enrichment and advancement in your life.

Make a small sign or poster with the words *What’s the opportunity that this is?* and put it on your desk or above your computer, so you will be constantly reminded to look for the good in every event.

You might also want to start each day by repeating the phrase, “I believe the world is plotting to do me good today. I can’t wait to see what it is.” And then look for the opportunities and the miracles.

HE SAW THE OPPORTUNITY

Mark Victor Hansen, my partner and coauthor on all of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul*® books, sees every encounter as an opportunity. He teaches everyone to say, “I’d like to be your partner on that. I can see many ways to expand your idea, reach more people, sell more, and make more money.” That’s how he became my partner on the *Chicken Soup* books. We were having breakfast one day, and he asked me, “What are you up to? What are you excited about?” I told him that I had decided to take all of the motivational and inspirational stories that I had been using in my talks and put them into a book without all of the other prescriptions for living that most self-help books contained. It would just be a book of stories that people could use in any way they wanted. After I described the book to him, he said, “I want to be your partner on this book. I want to help you write it.”

I replied, “Mark, the book is already half written. Why would I let you be my partner at this stage of the project?”

“Well,” he replied, “a lot of the stories you tell, you learned from me. I have a lot more you have never heard, I know I can get great stories from lots of other motivational speakers, and I can help you market the book to people and places you’ve probably never even thought of.”

As we continued to talk, I realized Mark would be a great asset to the project. He is the consummate salesperson, and his dynamic energy and tireless promotional style would be a huge plus. So we struck a deal. That one conversation has been worth tens of millions in book royalties and licensing income to Mark.

You see, when you approach every encounter as an opportunity, you treat

it like an opportunity. Mark saw my book project—as he sees every project he encounters—as an opportunity, and he approached the conversation from that perspective. The result has been a wonderful and profitable 12-year business relationship for both of us.

GOD MUST HAVE SOMETHING BETTER IN STORE FOR ME

In 1987, along with 412 other people, I applied to the state government to be part of the 30-member California State Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. Fortunately, I was selected; however, my longtime friend Peggy Bassett, the popular minister of a 2,000-member church, was not. I was surprised because I thought she would have been a perfect member. When I asked her how she felt about not being selected, she answered with a phrase that has stuck with me. I have since used it many times in my own life. She smiled and said, “Jack, I feel fine about it. It just means that *God has something better in store for me.*” She knew in her heart of hearts that she was always being led to the right experiences for her. Her positive expectancy and her certainty that all was in divine order were an inspiration to everyone who knew her. That’s why her church had grown so large. It was one of the core principles of her success.