

The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived

*Secrets for Unparalleled Success
and Unshakable Happiness
from the Life of Jesus*

Steven K. Scott



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What the Greatest Man Who Ever Lived Can Do for You

©© Better Than Winning a \$100 Million Lottery

If I could show you a secret that would absolutely, positively enable you to WIN \$100 million in the next mega lottery jackpot, what would you be willing to do to learn that secret? “Wait a minute,” you might say, “how do I know that your secret will really work?” Imagine that I answered your question by revealing, “I won the mega lottery jackpot last year by using this secret, and since then have shared it with my ten closest friends, who also used it to win mega lottery jackpots. In fact, not one person who has tried this secret has failed to win.” Suppose I then gave you their names and you were able to verify that all of us had indeed won mega lottery jackpots. Now, what would you be willing to do to learn the secret I’ve offered to share with you? How much would you be willing to pay me? Would you be willing to take out a

second mortgage on your house to get the necessary funds, or borrow from your 401(k) retirement plan? What if I then told you that I didn't want your money or your house . . . I just wanted you to read a book that I wrote in which I revealed the secret? If I told you that the secret was revealed in chapter 7 of my book, and I handed you that book right now, how much time would you let go by before you would read chapter 7? What if you knew the next mega jackpot was only one day away? When would you get around to reading chapter 7 now? With what level of attention would you read each paragraph in that chapter?

That is like the secret I intend to reveal in this book. During the past twenty years, I have made tens of millions of dollars in personal income. Along with my partners, I've had the thrill of starting businesses from scratch (with a few thousand dollars) and building them into companies that have produced billions—yes, billions—of dollars in sales. And making money through one's own hard work and effort is certainly a lot more fulfilling than winning it in a lottery or at the tables in Vegas. Although winning a pot of money in a stroke of luck may give you a greater thrill initially, that thrill is gone almost as fast as it comes, and the personal and financial losses that usually follow such a windfall can be devastating. Moreover, I've never heard of someone winning a mega lottery a second time.

This being the case, if you were my friend, I would much rather give you the keys you need to succeed in business, marriage, parenting, and life than give you the secret to winning a

lottery. And if I *really* cared about you, I'd lead you step by step through the process of applying these keys to success to the most important areas of your life.

My business success, like my personal happiness, has been the result of the incredible relationships that have come into my life over the past forty-four years, and the wisdom and benefits that have been handed down to me as a result of those personal relationships. But there is one secret that I've rarely shared. Not *one* of these relationships, nor any of the blessings they have given me, would have come about had I not *first* met the greatest man who ever lived.

©© *Embracing Extraordinary Change*

During my business life I have traveled millions of miles on our nation's airlines. I have spent thousands of hours talking with men and women seated next to me about countless subjects. I've heard them complain about their jobs, their spouses, their children, their bosses, and of course their lives in general. When they find out that I'm that rare person who is happy beyond description, more in love with my wife today than I was during our courtship eighteen years ago, and that I persisted through countless failures to create dozens of successful businesses, they often ask me what the "secrets" to my happiness, my marriage, or my success have been. I tell them that it all started with what I learned from a homeless carpenter I first met one night in 1964. Their eyes usually widen with interest. When I tell them that the carpenter's

name is Jesus, their curiosity quickly turns to bewilderment. But as much as they might like to change the subject initially, their curiosity gets the better of them, and they want to hear “the *rest* of the story.”

As I begin to describe the life lessons and wisdom I learned from Jesus, their curiosity usually turns to astonishment. “Is this guy for real?” they seem to be saying to themselves. But as I relate the specific ways in which Jesus miraculously changed my mind and heart, guided me in my relationships and business endeavors, and brought purpose, peace, personal success, and joy into my daily experience, they tend to undergo a transformation of sorts. In part because of the fact that I’ve been so successful in the world of business, they are often interested in what has made me so successful. When they hear how my thinking and attitudes and beliefs were shaped by the timeless teachings of Jesus, their bewilderment turns to amazement, their skepticism to open-minded inquiry. But even when they accept my words at face value, they find it hard to believe that I have become all that I am as a result of my relationship with a man who lived two thousand years ago. From these conversations over the years, I have discovered that there is more misunderstanding about Jesus of Nazareth than about anyone I’ve ever talked about. Most people regard him as a religious leader, the founder of Christianity. Others view him simply as a great teacher of morality. Some are so unfamiliar with historical texts and documents that they think of him as nothing more than a myth or legend. But regardless of their

opinions about Jesus, nearly all of them tragically misjudge the potential relevance of his life and teachings to their own lives. By thinking of him only as one who is “religious,” they have failed to discover all that he can do to shape their thinking and inspire their lives. As a result, their lives are often characterized by uncertainty, frustration, failure, anxiety, discouragement, depression, or even despair. The truth is, Jesus was not *at all* about religion—he was *all* about *reality*.

©© *Whom We Walk With*

A young man during the Great Depression walked out of a bank, despondent after he had been turned down for the loan he desperately needed to save his business. As he walked out, he bumped into Henry Ford. Noticing the young man’s look of desperation, Ford stopped and asked what was troubling him. The man told him that all the banks he had visited had rejected his application for a loan. Ford simply said, “Come with me.” They walked a little farther down the street to yet another bank. This time, as they opened the door, Henry put his arm around the man for just a moment. Henry then called him by name and said, “Let’s get together soon,” loud enough for those in the bank to hear. He then whispered to the young man, “Go ask the manager for your loan.” The young man quickly replied, “But nothing’s changed.” Henry smiled and said, “One thing *has* changed. . . . The manager saw you with *me* . . . and believe me, young man, that’s all he needed to see.” Sure enough, the manager quickly

invited the young man into his office and promptly made the loan.

A single encounter changed that young man's life. My relationship with Jesus Christ did the same for me, following a single encounter . . . not much different from this young man's. Until that night in 1964, I had thought of Jesus as someone who was all about religion. But that night, he became a personal friend to me, who reached out and simply said, "Come with me." From that moment, Jesus no more represented a *religion* to me than Henry Ford represented a religion to that young man. He quickly became my best friend, my mentor and guide, and so much more.

◎◎ From Atheist at Ten to Believer at Sixteen

When I was ten years old, I found out that there was no Santa Claus. I was heartbroken. My parents confirmed that "Santa" was just a figure people had invented to make Christmas more fun. Santa didn't always watch over me, I discovered; he didn't know when I was sleeping and when I was awake. He didn't know if I had been bad or good. When I went to church the following Sunday, I thought, "God is just like Santa. He isn't real. He's just a figure adults created to make us feel better. He doesn't love us or watch over us. He's no more real than Santa." This became part of my emotional geography until I was about sixteen. I kept going to church with my family, but I didn't believe what I heard nor live as if it mattered. When I was eleven, I started going to a different

church with my sister and became very involved with its youth group. I joined the choir and became more closely involved with the church. But I didn't believe. It was easy to be religious—I just had to *do* what the religious people around me did. But *believing* in God was a different story.

In high school I became very interested in science. Most scientists seemed to suggest that religion was more of a crutch than a reality. I found it easier to believe that God did not exist. Then, shortly before I turned sixteen, my sister took me to a meeting of college students in a successful businessman's home. The focus of the meeting was the person of Jesus. The speaker that night was a man who was a scientist—the head chemical engineer of one of the world's largest aerospace companies. He too had been an atheist throughout most of his life. But an amazing thing had happened to him. One day he was in a terrible car accident in which he suffered more than a dozen “fatal injuries”—and yet he had miraculously survived. Afterward, he became convinced that only God could have saved his life. He spent the next six years studying the texts of the world's religions, several hours a night, virtually every night of the week. He initially dismissed Christianity because of all of the hypocrites he knew who claimed to be Christians and yet did not seem to live lives of faith. So he started with the Eastern religions. In all, he studied over three hundred religions during the first years of his quest. He became deeply discouraged by them because in every case they had a common theme—man needed to “work his way” up to God to become acceptable to him. Finally, out of despair, he decided to investigate

Christianity, but not from any particular denomination's point of view. Instead, he decided to just read the Bible and see what Christ had to say.

To his amazement, Jesus didn't talk about religion. He talked about relationships—a relationship with God that men and women could embrace by establishing a personal relationship with Christ. Unlike all of the other religions he studied, Christianity (as explained by Jesus) wasn't about man reaching up to God, it was about God reaching down to man—through the loving sacrifice of His Son.

As I listened to this renowned scientist, I was blown away by his words and his conviction. After the meeting, I talked with him further. He asked me, “Do you do anything around the house to help out your dad?”

“I mow the lawn,” I replied.

“Why?” he asked.

“Because Dad's got a bad back, and it's a way I can help out.”

He asked, “Do you do it so he'll accept you and love you?”

I answered, “No, I do it because I love him. . . . He's my dad.”

“And he loves you because you mow the lawn?” he asked.

“No, he loves me because I'm his son.”

“How much does he love you?” he asked.

“A lot more than I deserve!” I answered. Then he made a statement I'll never forget. “*That's* a relationship! *That* is what Jesus wants to have with you . . . a relationship . . . not a religion!”

When he told me that, the light went on for me. Nevertheless, my doubts about the existence of God were as strong as ever. When I told the scientist that, he went out to his car and brought back a book. “This man was just like you and me,” he said, referring to the author. “A professor at the most renowned university in the world, he didn’t believe in God. Then one day, a friend of his gave him a logical argument that he realized he couldn’t refute. And overnight, his doubts were erased, and he too became a believer in God and a follower of Jesus.” The author was Professor C. S. Lewis, and the book was *Mere Christianity*. That night I went home and began reading this book. When I came to the chapter entitled “The Shocking Alternative,” I came to the same conclusion C. S. Lewis had come to—that God *did* exist, and that Jesus was indeed the person he claimed to be. That night I truly met this man named Jesus and accepted him for all he was.

In the forty-four years that have followed that first encounter, everything in my life that I value most has emanated from my personal relationship and daily walk with him. I have experienced countless miracles, in both my personal and business lives. Not that my life hasn’t had its share of failures and trials. To the contrary, my own foolishness has created more failures and trials than I can number. While most of my “trials” have been self-induced, a number have come my way that I didn’t create or contribute to. But regardless, through every trial, whatever its severity or cause, my relationship with Jesus has seen me through to the other side, bringing levels of peace, joy, fulfillment, and success beyond my wildest dreams.

Jesus did not walk the earth to start a religion. He came to accomplish a specific mission. In the process, he revealed the keys to living a life of unparalleled achievement and attaining the security and strength to overcome even the greatest adversities.

Jesus didn't walk among us simply to add his ideas to those that had already been passed down through the ages by philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle or religious leaders such as Moses or Buddha. He came to earth to accomplish a specific mission—to provide the means by which mankind could become united with God. Both his life and his words provided the means by which that mission would be accomplished. But that is not the focus of this book. After all, there have been countless books about Jesus's spiritual teachings from counselors and ministers and spiritual leaders far more knowledgeable than I. What I have to offer are the ways in which my personal relationship with Jesus and his teachings and leadership have helped to guide and shape my success in business and at home, ways that I think can help you to transform your life as well. In a way, my goal in writing this book is to look at the "by-products" of Jesus's mission—namely, the extraordinary, life-changing principles and values that he proclaimed with his words and demonstrated with his life—by-products that for anyone else would constitute an achievement unparalleled in human history. As powerful as these principles are, they do not encompass the real purpose of Jesus's mission on earth, nor express but a fraction of the totality of his teachings. Nonetheless, as part of *his*

teachings, they provide a powerful means to achieve extraordinary success in our lives, in ways that no one in history has matched or approached.

©© Why Are the Teachings of Jesus Critical to Our Future?

For thousands of years, men and women have tried to understand themselves and the meaning of life. Most of us have yet to figure it out. Jesus, on the other hand, had it *all* figured out. His knowledge of our minds and hearts enables him to “tell it like it is” like no one else, before or since. His intimate knowledge of our natural inclinations, our motives, and our strengths and weaknesses, as well as his perfect knowledge of what’s best for us now and in the future, makes him the *ultimate* counselor and guide.

©© Your Personal GPS

I love GPS (global positioning satellite) systems. Because I often talk on the cell phone when I’m driving, I can easily get lost, even in my hometown. When I’m out of town, it’s literally impossible for me to go anywhere without missing a number of critical exit ramps or turns. GPS has changed everything for me. I no longer have to look at a map, because a nice lady’s voice guides me to my destination quickly and efficiently. If I’m in the wrong lane and miss a turn or an exit, she instantly tells me that she’s “recalculating” and directs me

to my destination in spite of my mistake. How does the GPS system work? Quite simply, the GPS satellites have a perfect bird's-eye view of the car I'm driving, my current location, the destination I'm traveling to, and every street and turn along the way. It can calculate the best route for me to take. Because I have my own mind and will, I sometimes stray from that path (or forget to turn the GPS on). But when I'm lost or stuck in traffic, I turn it on; it picks up my signal and quickly directs me to an alternate route to my destination as efficiently as possible.

Similarly, through the example of his life, Jesus provides us with a "MapQuest" map of the way we should live and the way we should treat others around us. Through his words, he provides us with a GPS system that, when we take the time to listen, guides us step by step through opportunity and adversity in our day-to-day lives. When we fail to heed his directions and end up lost, in a place we did not intend to be, he can offer the directions we need to get from our current location to our ultimate destination. Because the people of his day had no understanding of cars, satellites, or GPS systems, he talked to them in language they could picture and understand. He called himself the "Good Shepherd" and described his followers as his flock. What does a shepherd do? He leads his sheep to food, water, shelter, and safety. He watches over them. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly" (Jn. 10:10b). He came to give us an *abundant* life. Does that sound like a religious message, or a promise about how to enrich our lives in the

ways that matter most? Like the GPS system, he does not coerce us into following his way. Rather, he simply offers it to us, so that we decide whether to listen and follow him or ignore his words and go our own way.

We often think our way of doing things is the only way, and yet most people today are *not* as successful and satisfied in their lives and careers as they want to be. Most are less than completely happy with some of the choices they have made or the lives they live. Most do not feel they have done everything they might have with their talent and their time.

Now, don't get me wrong, the "abundant life" Jesus offers us does not refer to material wealth. I've known millionaires, and even billionaires, many of whom are more miserable and "empty" than people of ordinary means. As Jesus said, "One's life does *not* consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Lk. 12:15, NKJV). I have known a great many people who have thought that their dissatisfaction would disappear when they got a new car, a new house, a new spouse, a new title, or whatever they had set their sights set on. But shortly after they acquired what they had worked so hard to gain, they discovered that it did not provide the fulfillment they had longed for. As Jesus declared, the best life has to offer cannot be found in a thing. He said, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" (Lk. 9:25, NKJV). If we are lost in a forest, on an ocean, or in the desert, does it make any difference how rich we are or how much we possess? When we're truly lost, we're lost. When a man is killed in a car wreck, does it

matter if he was killed in a new Lexus or a used Chevrolet? On the other hand, if a person is truly happy, fulfilled, and secure, does it really matter if he or she is wealthy or not? The good news is, when we follow Jesus's principles, leadership, and advice, we don't have to wait a single pay period, much less a year or a decade, to gain greater fulfillment. The abundant life he wants us to experience is available right now. But to receive it, we have to trust in his directions and follow them.

◎◎ Better Than Winning a Lottery?

Is following the words and wise guidance of this "homeless carpenter" *really* better than winning a lottery? Absolutely! Believe me, no lottery jackpot could have created the lifetime of loving and fulfilling friendships and family relationships that I have experienced thanks to Jesus's guidance. No lottery could have created the successful business career that I have enjoyed. Over the last thirty-two years, my projects have generated more personal wealth than I ever could have imagined possible and have enabled me to form friendships with some of the world's most famous and accomplished individuals. None of that would have been possible without the wisdom and example of Jesus. And no lottery ever could have carried me through the greatest trials of my life. And I'm not alone. I have seen the incredible differences he has made in the lives of so many of my friends. To those who have followed his wise counsel and guidance, Jesus has made the fearful

courageous, the anxious confident, the hopeless faithful, the worthless valuable, the failed successful, the selfish caring, the hateful loving, the greedy generous, the unattractive desirable, the insecure secure, the sick healthy, and those who were spiritually lost found.

No lottery jackpot can provide all these benefits. And yet Jesus leads us into this *abundant* life with no strings attached. In the chapters that follow, you will learn a number of his keys to significance, success, and happiness—principles that once acquired can never be taken away. Jesus said, “I am *the* way, *the* truth and *the* life” (Jn. 14:6, NASB). He didn’t claim to simply offer *a* way or *a* truth *or* *a* life; he claimed to *be* the pathway itself, the full embodiment of truth and the ultimate source of life. This ultimate GPS can take us down the path to what matters most in life. So buckle up and get ready for the ride of your life.

“He is no fool who gives that which he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose!”—Jim Elliot, martyred at twenty-nine in 1956 in the jungles of Ecuador



Wake Up and Smell the Starbucks

“Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?”

—JESUS (MARK 8:17–18, NIV)

©© More *Real* Than Dr. Phil

When Dr. Phil is counseling someone on his television show, at some point he usually cuts through all of the distractions, excuses, and “minor” issues that are voiced and brings that person down to earth with his familiar admonition, “Let’s get real.” The fact is, at any given moment, in any given situation, we live in two completely different worlds—a world of illusion and a world of reality.

As Jesus was walking through the streets of Jerusalem with his disciples, they came upon a man who had been blind from birth. Because of his blindness, the only way he could survive was to beg for money from the passing crowds—as he had been doing his entire adult life. As they approached, Jesus’s disciples asked him, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” They assumed that the only

way God would permit such a terrible thing to happen to a child was if the parents had done something terrible, or if God knew the baby would do something terrible in the future and punished him in advance of his deed. Because they believed that God was both loving and just, they saw the situation from *their* perspective—that the man’s afflictions were punishment for his sins. Jesus corrected their misunderstanding: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life” (Jn. 9:3, NIV).

How many times had that poor man’s parents asked, “Why did this happen to our son? What did *we* do that brought this on?” For his entire childhood the man had been deprived of all the wonderful things other kids with normal sight could experience. He had never seen a sunrise or sunset. He could never play the way other kids could play. He could never see his mother’s comforting smile or his father’s reassuring face. And when he became an adult and his parents could not afford to support him, he was relegated to a life of begging on the streets. “What a tragedy,” we think. People at the time looked for reasons for his affliction. But Jesus explained to his followers that this man’s plight did not occur as punishment for some action of his or his parents’. Instead, he told them, it served a larger purpose—to reveal to the world the work of God. Jesus then healed the man of his blindness. In a matter of minutes, word of the healing began to spread throughout Jerusalem. The man and his parents were called before a group of the top religious leaders, who

grilled them about what had happened. When he insisted that Jesus had healed him, they verbally attacked Jesus. This young man stood up to them and gave one of the most inspiring defenses of Jesus recorded in the Bible. And as a result, he did indeed help to display the work of God to the world. Ridiculed and kicked out of the meeting a short time later, he met Jesus face-to-face and became a devout follower of his.

The blind man and his parents lived under the illusion that his birth defect was a terrible tragedy, and even worse, a punishment from God. They and the community they lived in assumed that was the case because it was the only reason they could think of to explain the young man's affliction. The point is, when we make assumptions about God's intent, we are likely to be wrong—because our own understanding and perspective are so limited. What the boy and his parents were blind to was the *reality*—his blindness had in fact been a gift, one that ultimately brought him to Jesus. Not only did Jesus restore his sight, but his affliction helped lead him to Jesus. What he experienced had literally separated him from the crowd and had transformed him into a man of tremendous influence for the rest of his life, and to countless generations after his death.

Too often we focus on the illusions that appear to be important, but in reality are not. For example, we live with the illusion that we have “all the time in the world,” and we respond by procrastinating. We waste time instead of doing the more important things that we should be doing. The illusion is that we have an unlimited amount of time. The reality is that our time is extremely limited, even irreplaceable.

We live under the illusion that money is our most precious possession, and that time is our least precious. The reality is that our time is far more precious than money. The money we spend or lose can usually be replaced. On the other hand, lost time can *never* be regained, not a single minute. The average American lives for 3,952 weeks. If you are fifty years old, you've already lived 2,600 of those weeks. Most people treat their time as if it were a clock that will never stop ticking. In reality, their time is like the countdown clock at a football game . . . except there are no time-outs. From the moment we're born, the clock starts its countdown, and it never stops. Every minute, day, and week that passes is a minute, day, and week gone from our lives that can never be replaced. The fact is, we are not guaranteed another moment, much less an endless expanse of time.

Time and money are just two examples of how we are often blind to reality. Think of the words we speak, or neglect to speak. We convince ourselves that cutting, condescending, or hurtful words don't impact the person we're speaking to. Our spouses, children, employees, or peers will "get over it." The reality is that the hurtful words we utter often do severe damage to the other person and may never be forgotten or easily remedied. Many psychologists believe that verbal and emotional abuse inflict deeper wounds than physical abuse, and are much more difficult to recover from.

Or think of parents who have kids playing sports. Kids play to have fun. Parents and coaches, on the other hand, treat the games or matches as if their children were vying for college scholarships or trying out for the pros—as if a child's

future rides on his or her performance. I've seen parents screaming at their own kids, as well as at the kids on the opposing team. One of my sons had a baseball coach who wanted him to "crowd the plate," to let himself be hit by a pitch, in order to advance a runner on first base. My son was nine years old at the time. And when the coach on the other team protested, the two got into a verbal exchange that almost turned into a fistfight.

Professor Greg Smalley of John Brown University recently told me that in a marriage, when an argument *escalates*, the escalation is not about the issue that started the argument. That's only the illusion. The reality is, the escalation takes place because there is a deeper issue that lies festering, unresolved. And as the argument spirals out of control, the real issue rises to the surface, with all the anger and resentment and fear that person has been holding back.

Most of our days and weeks are focused upon the illusions of life rather than on the realities. And as a result, our more fundamental concerns often go unaddressed. As a result, we do not accomplish the things that matter most to us. And our lives hold an undercurrent of discontentment, frustration, stress, disappointment, and failure. Our creativity, productivity, and sense of achievement are limited, and our sense of fulfillment and happiness is compromised.

@@ A Mirage Will Never Give You a Drop of Water!

Growing up in Phoenix, I've seen lots of mirages in the desert. Before I knew what a mirage was, I could have passed

a lie-detector test swearing that I saw a pond of water on the highway ahead. The illusions of our daily lives are similar, because we behave as if they reflect reality. For example, I lost my first eight jobs after college. At the time, I believed that losing these jobs meant that I was a failure, that I would never be successful in business. In fact, my third boss said as much when he fired me. “Steve,” he said, “you are the single greatest disappointment in my entire career—you will *never* succeed in marketing. You’ve got twenty minutes to clean out your desk!” Since the man making these statements was the senior vice president of marketing, and I was only a twenty-three-year-old assistant product manager in the marketing department, I believed him. I accepted his judgment of me and my capabilities. His illusion became my belief. It wasn’t until job number ten, when I started a new company with my mentor, that I was able to break free from that illusion and believe that I *could* achieve extraordinary success. In our new “start-up,” I also dispelled the illusion that I could succeed on my own; I realized that to achieve extraordinary success, I needed to effectively partner with my mentor and others. In a matter of months our new business grew from nothing to millions of dollars per month in sales—all as a result of the very marketing skills that my ex-boss had claimed I didn’t possess. When a person begins to see the true reality of any given situation, illusions can no longer prevent or limit his or her success. This is true in business, marriage, parenting, and every other arena in our lives.

◎◎ Dispelling Illusion with a Light Switch

The \$64,000 question is, “What can we *do* to see, understand, and respond to the reality of each situation, and *not* be deceived or distracted by illusion?”

Have you ever walked into a room that was totally dark? It’s very easy to become disoriented. I’ve walked into walls, broken my toes on doorjambs, tripped over toys, and banged my shins on chairs and tables. Walking in darkness, you are *not able to see* the reality that surrounds you; it is also conducive to creating further illusions. But if we turn the lights on, we can instantly see everything in its proper perspective. The walls, the tables and chairs, the toys on the floor are clearly visible. And once seen, they are easily avoided.

Jesus said that the world in which we live is filled with darkness. Our natural inclination is to “walk” in that darkness. Consequently, we are easily misled. We believe and embrace illusions about ourselves and others. We misjudge our worth, our abilities, and our potential. We misunderstand the words, actions, and motives of others. We mistakenly value unimportant things and ignore the things that matter most. And in relationships, rather than accepting our own responsibility and mistakes, we are quick to blame the other person.

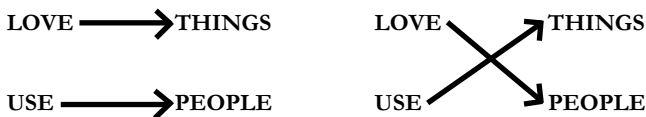
In John 8:12, Jesus told us, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” In other words, the wisdom and insights that Jesus offers can illuminate every area of our lives and can expose the illusions that we have lived by and reveal the reality

behind them. The advice and counsel he gives can empower us to achieve higher levels of success and fulfillment than we could imagine.

©© The Difference Jesus's Light Can Make

People often ask me, “How can your relationship with Jesus make a difference in your career or professional life?” The fact is, Jesus’s insights and wisdom have changed everything about my business life. I look at people and opportunities from a different perspective. Too many managers look at employees and potential customers as a *means* of achieving an end. If the employee fulfills their assigned role, the manager or owner embraces them—if they don’t, he fires them. In a nutshell, he *uses* people. It is not uncommon for such a person to put a higher value on projects and “things” than on people. To my embarrassment, I’ve been guilty of this myself. A few years ago, I fell in love with a beautiful, fire-engine red, four-passenger Mercedes convertible that I saw in a showroom. I drove it home that night. A few months later, my three-year-old son decided to take his tricycle out of our garage and go for a ride. It got stuck between my new car and our second car, so he decided to force his way out of the garage. As he pushed it forward, the tricycle gouged a six- or seven-foot gash into the side of the car. At age three, my son didn’t think anything of it, other than that he was proud of how strong he was. When I discovered the gash a couple of hours later, I was in shock. I grabbed Ryan, took him out to

the garage, and yelled at him. As he realized what he had done, his eyes filled with tears. He started crying . . . not because he had made a scratch on Dad's car, but because the biggest hero in life, his father, was disappointed and angry with him. It was at that moment that the words of Jesus came to me: "For one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Lk. 12:15, NKJV). I had fallen into the trap of believing that my \$80,000 thing was more important than my *priceless* son. The *reality* was, the scratch could be fixed, and the car itself was replaceable. My son is *irreplaceable*. His personal esteem is worth far more to me than any possession. A friend once shared the following two diagrams with me. The one on the left is how most people treat people and things, while the one on the right reflects the reality that Jesus revealed.



The diagram on the right should become a model of how we prioritize our behavior in any situation.

In March of 1976, I was coordinating the launch of a national television advertising campaign for Ambassador Leather, an Arizona-based catalog company. I flew to Omaha, Nebraska, to meet the owner of a call center that would be taking the orders in response to our commercials, which were due to

begin airing soon. When I travel, I usually rent a car at the airport. This time, however, I was picked up at the airport by the owner of the call center, taken to dinner, and then dropped off at my hotel. I didn't want to be stuck at the hotel without a car, so I asked the hotel staff if their driver could take me back to the airport so I could rent a car. On the way to the airport, the driver casually mentioned that Pat Boone was in town and was performing at a concert that night. I asked if he was staying at the hotel, and the driver replied, "I'm not supposed to tell."

When I came back to the hotel, I was tired and started toward my room. I had always wanted to meet Pat Boone but realized he was at the concert and probably wouldn't be back until much later. Besides, I was a twenty-six-year-old kid, and he was one of America's greatest entertainers. How could I possibly meet him? But then a statement that Jesus had made instantly came into my mind, so I wrote a note to Pat. I went up to the hotel's front desk and said to the clerk, "Pat Boone is at the concert right now, but would you please leave this note in his box and make sure he gets it when he returns?" She smiled, took the note, and placed it in his box. A few minutes after midnight, my phone rang. When I picked it up, the voice on the other end of the line said, "Steve? . . . Pat Boone." We talked for two hours and then met for breakfast the next morning. By the time breakfast was over, we had become friends.

A week later, a businessman I respected more than any other, an entrepreneurial genius, Bob Marsh, made me an incredible offer. "If you could find a product that you and I

could market on TV, we could start our *own* television marketing company.” The next day I called Pat Boone and told him that I was looking for a unique product and that if he found one, I could go into business with the one man on earth I most wanted to work with. And I would make Pat the spokesperson in the national television commercial that we would create to sell the product. He promised to keep his eyes open for one. One week later, he was invited to a Passover dinner at the home of a Beverly Hills rabbi. At that dinner, the rabbi’s sister-in-law, who was a doctor, told Pat about an acne product she had created. She went to her car and pulled out a couple of bottles for Pat to give to his teenage daughters. They began using the product and loved it. So Pat called me at my office and told me about the product. I asked for samples and began handing them out a few days later. Everyone who tried it loved it. Bottom line: I quit my job at the catalog company and moved back to Philadelphia to start a television marketing company with Bob Marsh. Pat and his daughter Debby agreed to be in our commercial to market the acne cream for no up-front fee (something that was unheard of in entertainment circles). So I produced a commercial with Pat and his daughter. That two-minute commercial turned Bob’s and my little start-up company into a multimillion-dollar business within a few months. We went on to create dozens of companies and hundreds of television campaigns to sell our services and products. During the next thirty years, our companies produced billions of dollars in sales and affected the lives of millions of families.

What is my point? Until that night in Omaha, I had never

written a note to anyone I didn't know, much less a celebrity. My assumption was, "Pat Boone probably won't respond to a note, so why even bother?" And until that night in Omaha, Pat Boone had *never* responded to the hundreds of notes from strangers left for him during his multidecade singing career. Had I followed my normal routine, I would have rented a car at the airport when I landed and never would have heard from the hotel limo driver that Pat Boone was in town. Had Pat not responded to my note, we never would have met. Had Pat not gone to the Passover dinner, he never would have met the rabbi's sister-in-law, the doctor. Had Pat not agreed to be in our commercial, and agreed to do so for no up-front fee, we could not have afforded to produce the commercial. All of this happened as a result of following specific teachings of Jesus. For example, Jesus said that if I would *knock* on doors in faith, they would be opened; if I would *ask* in faith, I would receive; and if I would *seek* in faith, I would find. His teachings taught me to open my eyes to the opportunities in front of me, and courageously walk through doorways that would have otherwise intimidated me.

©© The World's Ultimate Counselor

In Proverbs, King Solomon warns us that without counsel our plans will fail, and that with a multitude of counselors they will succeed (Prov. 15:22). I've had the benefit of a wonderful coterie of counselors, advisers, partners, and mentors in both my personal and business lives. Without their counsel and wisdom, I would have experienced far more failures and

far fewer successes, and much less fulfillment. But even the best counselors are limited in what they can offer. They may know more than we know, but their information, too, is limited. In contrast, Jesus's teachings are not based upon theory, human logic, or reason, or upon human experience, but rather upon truth. Jesus understood in a way none of us can the hearts and minds of men and women, their natural inclinations, their strengths, and their weaknesses.

@@ Why Is It Critical to Discover, Embrace, and Respond to Realities?

When my son Devin was fifteen, he told my wife, "I hate Dad's cell phone. . . . I wish I could throw it into the trash!" When Shannon told me this, I realized that I had fallen into the trap of believing the illusion that business was more important than giving my undivided attention to my son when we were together. The illusions I had believed were (1) It really didn't matter to him that I was on the phone; (2) It was critical that I handle business affairs whenever they intruded upon our time, even when I was with my children; and (3) My kids could wait, and business couldn't. But the realities that I was ignoring were (1) Devin is a million times more important to me than a fleeting business need; (2) My time with him is limited and precious; and (3) Diverting my attention away from him for the sake of being overly solicitous to a client or business associate was sending him the *wrong* message about my feelings for him and was hurting him.

Jesus warned his followers *not* to allow the needs of adults to crowd out the needs of children. While it was my wife who brought the situation to my attention, it was Christ’s words that convinced me I needed to change my behavior.

Throughout my life, the words of Christ have illuminated my path in business and in life. Having met countless people in my business and personal life, I can assure you that focusing on the illusions that surround us is the norm in life, rather than the exception. Here are a few of the common illusions we embrace:

ILLUSION

REALITY

Success is measured by material wealth, job titles, and social status.

Success is evidenced by the positive difference we make and the fulfillment we bring into our own lives and the lives of others.

Love is a feeling.

Love is a decision to act in someone else’s best interest.

You have to be “in love” to love, and be loved.

You love because you choose to love, not because you are loved or in love.

The business of adults is more important than kids.

Kids and adults are equally important, but the vulnerability of children gives them a higher priority.

People who are wealthy or successful are more important than those who are not.

All women and men are equally important.

I'll be happy when I get a . . .	True happiness is not a function of getting, but a function of giving and serving.
The future matters more than the present.	Focusing forever on the future robs us of the power of the present.
My past failures mean I cannot succeed in the future.	Past failures can provide the wisdom and insights necessary for success now and in the future.
What I can achieve is limited by education, knowledge, skills, talents, and money.	What we can achieve in the future is determined by the strategies we utilize and the diligence and energy with which we pursue them.
This is as good as it gets.	We can make our lives richer and better.
I'll do it tomorrow.	If you put something off until tomorrow, you'll probably never do it.
Loving "things" is part of life.	Loving things is a waste of affection and time.
Using others for personal gain is par for the course.	Serve others—never use them.

These are just a few of the hundreds of illusions and realities that Jesus illuminates with his words and insights. For every illusion he exposes, he reveals a reality that will bring us higher levels of success and greater degrees of happiness and fulfillment. In the chapters ahead, you'll discover the how-tos of using the power of his wisdom and the example of his daily life to improve and enrich every area of your life.

Understanding Changes Minds— Action Changes Lives

TURNING UNDERSTANDING INTO ACTION

1. List the illusions that you embrace in your life. (First, list as many illusions as possible that you hold in your attitudes, beliefs, or behavior. Next, list those illusions that you hold in your relationships with friends, spouses, or children. Finally, list those that are true of your business life.)
 2. For each illusion you identify above, identify a corresponding reality that you have overlooked or been blind to.
 3. List specific things you can do to change how you think or respond.
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