

## Possibility thinking

**New year's resolutions – already fallen away?  
...mmmmm. Rather try a  
New LIFE resolution!**

Our world is in a chaotic state, dominated by so much instability and needless suffering. People the world over have too many opinions about who is messing up our world; who is doing wrong, who needs to be punished and so on. We can do with less of that. We need remedial action and we must make good from bad. We need more people to become actively involved with solving our problems rather than shifting the blame and making excuses.

This is an exercise in possibility thinking to provide some healthy food for thought. Imagine what could happen if we were effectively trained to:

1. Accept that we are not called to judge everyone or anyone but ourselves.
2. Care less about getting more money, fame and power and more about being worthy of any money, fame and power that comes our way.
3. Stop looking for easy answers, quick-fix solutions and get-rich-quick-schemes.
4. Develop our talents and vast resources to serve one another, and not just for selfish gain.
5. Pursue our ambitions without harming others and, without harming the environment.
6. Focus on the things we can do rather than whine about things we cannot do.
7. Stop trying to prove that we (and our views) are better or more important than others.
8. Put more effort into making things right instead of trying to prove that our opinions are right.
9. Embrace diversity; reconcile our differences and look for the common ground which allows our varying opinions to provide us with a grander viewpoint.
10. Focus more about our carrying out responsibilities and less on claiming our rights.
11. Honour our commitments: our promises, agreements, covenants, and oaths of office; and deliver our work on time and within budget.
12. Pay more attention to getting the good work done and less about who gets the credit.

What I imagine here is probably very different from what others would. Many will call me naïve, or even stupid to think that things could change so much. Still, everything that we have ever achieved has started in someone's imagination and I challenge all people to imagine a better world, and perhaps then we may someday have a better world. If we effectively *applied* one simple ideal: "do to others as you would have others do to you", then most of what's listed in this essay will be possible. However, we must inspire more people to make a habit of practising this rule instead of just preaching it.

Possibilities are made real by good leadership, and we undoubtedly need to develop a bigger and better crop of leaders to lead the charge for such moral change. We need leaders who:

1. Seek the truth, live the truth and speak the truth rather than promote one-sided opinions.
2. See themselves as servants rather than rulers.
3. Focus more on serving humanity and not just their own interests, or interest groups.
4. Show integrity and set honourable examples.
5. Lead by example, and by inspiration rather than by force or any other form of bullying or manipulation.
6. Put less effort into promoting themselves as special individuals, and put more effort into proving themselves capable of doing something special to serve humanity.
7. Strive to unite people and not act to divide them.
8. Refrain from making promises which they cannot deliver.
9. Report honestly and accurately on matters of common interest, even if it means losing popularity.
10. Avoid creating situations that force us to choose between the lesser of evils, rather than between right and wrong.
11. Conduct their debates in a civil manner: not insulting one another, not misrepresenting facts or presenting biased narratives to suit our agendas.

Develop the leadership potential in others and so create more leaders.

Such an undertaking must first take place in our homes, in our schools and places of worship before it will effectively spread to the rest of the world. It is during the foundation phase of life that the human character is shaped; thus parents, teachers and spiritual leaders play a critical role in shaping our future leaders. They are best positioned to prepare young minds for leadership based on a sound moral foundation—and mostly by the examples that they set.

Let us then imagine some possibilities for the future if we placed more value on improving human integrity:

1. We would treat the family unit as a sacred place, where the foundation and moral fibre of society is established. We would set good examples for our children and eradicate the duplicity that breaks down the moral fibre of society. We would practise what we preach and learn from what we teach. Parents who expect their children not to fight among themselves would not be at war with others, or with one another. We would strive to settle disagreements sensibly. Accepting that we are human and that we are all fallible we would admit our failings instead of covering them up. We would also clean up our own messes and graciously learn from our mistakes.
2. Parents would prioritise quality of life over standard of living; and focus on helping their children instead of pleasing them, especially when they have to say “No”. They would teach the children about the dangers of following the wrong role models; and about the dangers of consumerism, debt and the attitude of entitlement.
3. We would accept that parenting is not easy and the necessary skills do not come to us automatically. We would therefore be in constant training to master this important task. Parents would work hard to make their marriages succeed; more than the effort they put into planning for a successful wedding ceremony. They would have the same passion for bringing up their children as they once had while making the children.
4. Divorce would not be considered as the easy option and parents would honour their vows, work out their differences and make the welfare of their children a priority, rather than

wasting the time and energy fighting about custody, visitation rights and the like. Families would stay together and spend time doing things to improve the family unit. There would be fewer abandoned children and fewer dysfunctional families. Many families would plan for one parent to stay home and focus on child-rearing during the formative years would be a priority.

Great stability would be found in such homes; and from these examples the children would learn how to work within the boundaries of decency; showing respect and consideration for others. In such homes we would produce a great crop of individuals with integrity, who will grow up to become honourable leaders to reform the various structures that prop up society, including governments, security, legal and justice, media, entertainment, commerce and industry, health care, education, food security, and the church.

Our schools would be led with passionate teachers. Parents would parent, teachers would teach and learners would learn, all supporting one another's roles. A system overall could mean 10 years of basic education, followed by about 2-3 years of social service when learners are conscripted to serve their communities while learning useful skills. This may include repairing state buildings, vehicles and equipment; directing traffic, fighting fires, repairing roads, supporting policing and collecting garbage. Conscripts would be encouraged to prove themselves as worthy servants and so earn apprenticeships, bursaries and internships for further learning. By the time they leave school and their conscripted services, they would have some skills with which to serve their communities and, they would feel good about paying back instead of demanding free stuff. More talent would be developed as older people, after retirement, worked part time to pass the best of their expertise and years of wisdom onto the upcoming generation. This would create more respect between the young and the old and provide greater skill-sets for each generation (the best of the old and new combined). We would still have an imperfect world, but we would make a better future for our children and, for their children. And the world's suffering would be significantly reduced.

I truly believe that this could happen in one generation if we made a serious attempt to apply one simple rule: "do to others as you would have others do to you"; but we must get rid of the notion that knowledge is power. Knowledge is not power although it provides potential power. What we know does not count for much; it is only what we do with what we know that truly matters. Most people know that they ought to treat others as they want to be treated, but this means absolutely nothing unless we apply it. There are many people who want to see good overcome evil, but we must no longer complain about the evil in this world and not do anything about it. We must accept that the rotten state of our world also exists because of what those who see themselves as the good guys have failed to do.

This message was inspired by the realisation that I have failed my God – and my world – in so many ways. I have woken up rather late in life to the fact I have not realised my true potential as a parent, and I did not set the right foundations to help my children deal with the powerful negative influences that dominate world events. Still, better late than never: so where I have failed, I want my efforts to help those who come after me to enjoy more success than I've had.

Many years ago I receive a postcard showing the image of two fleas on a dog. They were in a fight to prove who owns the dog, which reminded me of our human folly. We come into this world with nothing and we leave with nothing, but what we leave behind will impact ensuing generations. Every one of us must surely strive to leave more integrity so that our children, and their children, may have a better world. We strive to own more and to show that we are better than others, and

then we die - but not before we pass the same nasty and self-centred habits onto the ensuing generations. It is foolish to accumulate material wealth, fame and power only to pass on a world destined for destruction. Thank goodness people can change, and this is what we must now look for! We must unite against evil, greed and selfishness, but we must not condemn people; so even whilst we frown upon wrong-doing, we must do our best to redeem and rehabilitate wrong-doers.

Let us then imagine more good news if we applied the simple rule: "do to others as you would have others do to you": The elimination of evil would be a common goal and police services and communities would work together to eliminate crime. No drug dealing, human trafficking, illicit arms dealing, tax evaders, fraud, muggings, burglaries, no road rage or reckless and drunk driving and so on. With an end to wars, our security forces would have a new priority: The aversion of war and elimination of warmongering and crime syndication and other such enemies of society. Such public servants (or forces) would be re-trained and be ever ready to restore stability whenever disaster or instability threatens. Our legal structures would be set on finding the truth and promoting fairness, instead of carrying out battles between complainants and defendants whose success depend largely on who has the most resources available to make their argument, or who is best at finding or hiding the evidence. Lawyers would settle many disputes as mediators and arbitrators, and could find great honour in becoming peacemakers.

In this improved social backdrop leaders would put humanity's welfare before profits, and business leaders would realise that it is because of people that they have so many wonderful markets and opportunities to develop. They would exploit opportunities to serve people rather than exploit people to serve their business interests. They would classify the pollution of our environment, misrepresentation, corruption, collusion staff-abuse, fraud (and the like) as defecating on society, and they would rise up against such contempt. Employers and employees would share their profits and, manage the tough times together. They would unite in the drive to constantly improve productivity, avoid losses and create profits for all to share and expand. They would eradicate policies that create poverty and suffering through misrepresentation, debt entrapment, materialism and consumerism. They would live up to their advertising, and avoid messages that psychologically stimulate our carnal desires and promise easy remedies, get rich quick schemes and easy ways to success.

The truth would be treated as one of our great treasures, and media staff would report accurately instead of sensationalising headlines to sell stories. This industry would accept that freedom of speech comes with the responsibility to account for what they report. They would show great respect for the honour to inform and influence society, and would not misuse the privilege. The entertainment industry would not under-estimate the power to influence society, nor would they abuse the privilege. They would maturely show the difference between fact and fiction and adopt responsible standards to control the use of promiscuity, vulgarity, violence, prejudice and so on.

Inspired by our religious leaders communities would work together, sharing their talents and resources to assist others: They would uplift the unemployed, the hurt, the lost and the abandoned, the elderly and so on – not to give them hand-outs, but to develop and offer genuine programs that give them a hand up. Many communities would run their own schools, half-way houses, rehab centres clinics, and warm to the idea that we are all created to serve, and in this we find our best human form. The oaths of office – like that taken by doctors - would be highly respected. Healthcare would be a matter of service rather than profit. Medical professionals would

unite and share their expertise and they would spend more time dealing with the prevention of sickness and getting to know their patients as people rather than clients. We would become less dependent on a pill for every symptom. The health care and the food supply chains would work together to ensure a healthy and secure food supply. They would deliver quality foods and avoid adding harmful chemicals to our foods. They would give us respectable farming, breeding and harvesting methods, and teach us to cut out reckless and extravagant behaviour.

Until we inspire more people to take up this cause the trend will remain: *Good-natured people will remain passive while the evil-minded aggressively take advantage of the weak and continue to destroy our world.* We must say; "No more!" but the time has also come for us to do more! We must make honourable living standards a priority and, we must accept that our self-centred human nature will usually get in the way of doing what's right for humanity; so we're going to need help, which we must pray for constantly. Let's also commit to improving the examples we set in our homes and trust that it will eventually spread into our world.

**Take up this challenge – and share it with those close you:** Make several copies of the sign below and place these where you will see them every day. Whenever you catch a glimpse of one of these copies, try to check if you are making progress by testing your actions against this simple self-evaluation question" *"Am I treating others as I want to be treated?"*

**Am I treating others as I want like to be treated?**

Reflect on your recent thoughts, words, and actions to identify how you can do better with applying the golden rule. Do this for about a month and the habit will continue sub-consciously, helping you to set your mind on applying this rule. Remember this: *most people know this rule but few apply it well enough; and what we know does not count for much – it is what we do with what we know that matters.*

- Chris Lew May 2016

**Visit our website on [www.winningedge.co.za](http://www.winningedge.co.za)  
Or find us on Facebook or Twitter**



*This motivator is sent out only to those who have subscribed for mail. If you wish to unsubscribe, please [email](mailto:unsubscribe@winningedge.co.za) us with 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.*