

# PRINCIPLE

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Mrs. Wesley wrote to her son Samuel, who was at school in Westminster, in 1709: “I would advise you, as much as possible, to throw your business into a certain method, by which means you will learn to improve every precious moment, and find an unspeakable facility in the performance of your respective duties. In all things act upon principle.”

By principle, she did not mean character alone, nor conscience, nor honesty, nor benevolence, but all of these together.

Tact and push, without principle, are dangerous possessions. A practical turn at iniquity, accompanied by energy enough to make it telling, develops the scamp. But principle controls tact, and puts a check rein on push. It is the skillful driver of a mettlesome pair, having the grand team well in hand.

Mrs. Wesley knew that her boy Sam would never amount to much without principle, and she said so. The same is true of every other boy. To attempt to cross the Atlantic Ocean without a compass is no greater folly than to make the voyage of life without principle. There is no friendly port for either.

The late Ichabod Washburn, of Worcester, Massachusetts, was left fatherless when he was two months old, in a moneyless, but Christian home. At nine years of age poverty crowded him out of that humble home, and he went forth to battle with hardships: but he took with him the only capital his excellent mother could provide—principle. She taught him, as Mrs. Wesley did her Samuel, to “always act on principle,” and he never forgot it. First, he lived with a soulless harness and carriage maker, who compelled him to sleep in the cold, desolate loft above the shop, to which he ascended by a ladder. He sent him to mill in mid-winter, horseback, without stockings or shoes, and paid no more attention to his intellect and soul than he did to his feet. Yet he served this wretch five years, patiently, uncomplainingly, and faithfully, because of his mother’s lesson. Then he went to Worcester, Massachusetts, seeking work. He soon found it with a blacksmith, to whom he apprenticed himself for board and clothes. He began to

attend public worship on his first Sabbath in Worcester. He hired a seat for which he paid fifty cents annually. To meet this expense, and provide himself pocket money, he made and sold pot-hooks, out of working hours.

At thirty-three we find him a manufacturer of wire in his adopted city, universally respected and trusted. He made first-class wire; his principle would not allow him to make any other. The Washburn wire soon became popular. It was the best wire in the market for pianos, telegraphs, and skirts. His business increased rapidly, until he employed seven hundred men. His profits became enormous. His benevolence was as large as his profits; his hand was open to aid every good cause. He gave away thousands of dollars annually, just as a rich man should; and when he died he left a large fortune, leaving in his will four hundred and twenty-four thousand dollars to objects of charity. Principle did it.

The apprentice who will cheat his employer out of time, or slight his work when it is possible, is devoid of principle. This is equally true of him when he profanes the name of God, or uses his Sabbath for pecuniary gain or pleasure. The farmer who puts the best apples on top of the barrel, the merchant who scrimps weight or measure, the taxpayer who conceals a portion of his property, and the laborer who will shorten his ten hours' work at both ends, are not actuated by principle.

Victoria, the beloved Queen of England, from her coronation at eighteen years of age, shared the confidence of her subjects by her Christian spirit and honest, noble purpose. She was twelve years of age, shared the confidence of her subjects by her Christian spirit and honest, noble purpose. She was twelve years of age when her governess called her attention to the honors that awaited her. The modest girl could scarcely realize the fact at first, but when she fairly took in the situation she burst into tears and exclaimed, "I will be good. I understand now why you wished me so much to learn...I will be good." She appears to have thought that, whatever other qualities she may have possessed, goodness was indispensable for the throne. Long after the crown of England was placed on her head, she said, referring to the time when her governess told her that she would be queen, "I cried much on learning it." It was this sense of personal responsibility, awakening the desire to become worthy of the British throne, that

challenged universal confidence, and made her reign a model. Moral, rather than mental, qualities have made her the successful ruler of a mighty nation, on whose dominions the sun never sets.

“Gaining Favor with God and Man” by William Thayer, pp. 225-227 (abridged)