

## **PRINCIPLES THAT GOVERN MY LIFE by Chris Widener**

The strength and durability of a building is found in its foundation. The same is true in a life. What we accomplish and the effect we have on those around us is not only in what we do, but also in who we are. In fact, what we do is driven by who we are, what we believe and value and by the principles that we live by.

**Principles give us direction in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.** They are transferable to any given situation and will determine our direction. Those who do not have permanent principles will find themselves drifting along and making decisions that are personally expedient, short-term oriented and usually bad for their long-term success. So I thought I would share with you the principles that govern my life. These are the ideas and concepts that drive my behavior, my career, and my family. I would encourage you to sit down and write out your own principles. Those that drive your life, or at least that you want to drive your life!

**God first, others second, me third.** Gale Sayers, the running back of the Chicago Bears wrote a book titled "I am Third." This is true. If I am to do and be what I want to do and be in this life, I recognize that I must have my priorities right. Some people think that the way to success is to put themselves first. This is short-term thinking. Yes, you may be able to accomplish much in the near-term, but long-term, the best is accomplished by those who live by the above.

**Always be completely honest.** You really only have your character when it comes right down to it, and honesty is the quickest way to determine your character. Live in such a way that you can be completely honest and be willing to accept the responsibility that being completely honest will bring.

**Make it your goal to help others, income will come from that.** Zig Zigler is the one who got me thinking about that. If you take care of others and their needs, you will earn your income. If you simply try to earn income, people will stop responding to you and you will have defeated yourself.

**You reap what you sow.** This is the most common truth on earth. You put an apple seed into the ground, you get an apple tree. An orange seed produces an orange tree. If you invest, your money will grow. If you eat right and exercise you will lose weight. If you are kind to others they will be kind to you.

**The true measure of a man's wealth is in the things he can afford not to buy.** This is one of my favorite quotes from Ralph Waldo Emerson. Things are great to have and so is money, but true riches are the priceless things we can't buy, like our family, our integrity and the sense of a job well done. Pursue true wealth.

**Work smart - and hard.** Some say you should work smart, not hard. I say work smart and hard. A good day of hard work is a blessing and ought to be appreciated. Hard work is what changes the world - as long as it is smart, hard work!

**Follow through on all commitments.** If there is one thing I can't stand it is when someone doesn't do what they say they will. When we don't do what we say we will, we essentially say

that the job wasn't important, the people we promised it to aren't important, and that we can't be trusted. This is a good way to short-circuit your success.

**Challenge others to greatness.** There are enough people who will hold out the low bar for people to step over. I want to be a person who holds up the high bar, causing people to have to run and jump with all their might. And when they clear that high bar, I want to be there celebrating with them!

**Find ways to generously give of your resources.** The old saying is true - you can't take it with you. But you can spread it around to lots of people while you are here. If we wait until we die to give money away, we don't get any satisfaction in seeing how it is used and enjoyed. Write a few good-sized checks each month!

**Treat people right no matter how they treat you.** You cannot control another person's behavior. It took me a long time to realize that. I can only control my behavior. And I can choose to do what is right no matter how another person treats me. If everybody retaliated every time someone treated them bad, we would have a mess on our hands. Instead, choose to act appropriately at all times.

**When relationships go bad, be the first to hold out the olive branch.** Life is too short to leave a relationship broken. As much as it is up to me, I will pursue reconciliation, for their sake, and for mine. I don't want to get to the end of my life and wish I tried harder in my relationships. For this reason I attempt to restore broken relationships.

**Regularly try new things.** This is what keeps the spice of life going! Try new foods, go to new places, and make new friends. You will be amazed at the joy you receive and are able to give when you make it a habit to try new things. Break out of the mold, do something unusual today!

**Treat everyone equally.** No one is better than anyone else. I know people with tens of millions of dollars and people who do not have two nickels to rub together. They are both equally valuable and worthy of being treated as such. Don't fall into the trap of treating some people better than others. It doesn't matter what color they are or how much money they have or what country they come from, treat them with the respect and dignity each human deserves.

**Use any success you have to help others.** What good is success that only helps you? Instead, use the money you make to help others. Use the connections you make to help someone else up. Use the knowledge you achieve to give someone else a leg up. Take what you have and give to others so that they may join you on the journey of success.

**Look down the economic scale more often than up.** When I look up the economic scale too often I become greedy and unsatisfied. I become selfish. Looking down at others who have less than me on a regular basis keeps me humble. It reminds me of all of the blessings I have and keeps me thankful for them.

I want to encourage you to sit down soon and write out the principles that guide your life. It is an excellent exercise that will help you refocus and keep your life going in the right direction!