

PART 55 – GARY’S TOP 10

As we close out this study, I was asked if I would be willing to provide my Top 10 Key Principles – which I thought would be a great idea. In the handout sheet that I have provided for you of my Top 10, you can compare it with your Top 10. Obviously, there is no right or wrong answer. I may not have any that you have and vice versa. Now the problem that I had in developing this final study of this year long series was that when I went through all 195 of the Key Principles, I had 40 favorites. So, I ran just those 40 off separately, then whittled them down to 25, then to 20, then to 15, then to 10. It was much harder than I thought it would be. On the handout that I have provided for you, I have them ranked in the order in which I liked them with the first Key Principle on the handout being my favorite all the way down to the tenth of my favorite Key Principles. So, what I want to do is to briefly go over each one of these again and just share the reason that I thought each one of these principles was so important to me. In what I say about each one, I did not go back to that particular principle and just regurgitate the same information back to you. Rather, I have tried to express in a very condensed way why they meant something to me.

1. KEY PRINCIPLE 39: THE RIGHT WORDS SPOKEN THE RIGHT WAY AT THE RIGHT TIME PRODUCE THE RIGHT RESULTS.

I think that I knew before I ever looked at the list that this would be my favorite simply because I understood how powerful right words can be in someone’s life when they are spoken in the right tone, with the right inflections, the right body language, and at the right time. Words are so powerful, and when those words are based on God’s Word, the weight they carry both in your life personally, as well as the lives of other people is very difficult to deny. No one, absolutely no one, enjoys being around a hothead who is always just speaking their mind, getting angry all of the time and using abusive language. So, the opposite of this principle is also true that the wrong words spoken the wrong way and at the wrong time will always produce the wrong results. The Scriptures are very clear that when you are able to control your speech, to include both how and when you are communicating to someone else, that you are in a place where God can actually use you. However, if you choose to ignore this principle, it is doubtful that you will ever make much of an impact on anyone’s life, except in a negative way.

❖ **Main Point: Words are very powerful when used in the right way.**

2. KEY PRINCIPLE 14: YOU MUST LEARN HOW TO BECOME COMFORTABLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.

Once again, this was one of those Key Principles that greatly strengthened me personally, and it quickly became one of my favorites. The Scriptures are extremely clear that there will always be trials and difficulties and stress and anxious moments that attack each of our lives. This is just a normal part of life and there is no escaping this reality. However, in the midst of those very difficult moments, say when someone speaks to us in a very caustic, sarcastic, demeaning, and toxic way, it is critical that we remain settled, what we called “comfortable”, with how God wants us to respond. We are uncomfortable with what is happening to us at the moment, but we remain comfortable in how we are going to respond to what is happening to us. It is my firm conviction that God is not as concerned with what happens to us as He is in how we respond to what happens to us. Please appreciate that it is the uncomfortable

moments handled properly that God uses to forge and mold your character and integrity. They are what make you spiritually useable. They are the refiner's fire for your life. It is the difficult moments and seasons of your life, not the good times, that are the most revealing of how truly committed your life is to Christ and of what kind of follower of Christ that you have actually become.

❖ **Main Point: You must learn how to become comfortable in uncomfortable situations.**

3. KEY PRINCIPLE 98: DO NOT ASK GOD TO CHANGE SOMEONE ELSE FOR YOU, BUT ASK GOD THAT HE WILL CHANGE YOU FOR SOMEONE ELSE.

I just hate the “blame game” that so many people seem to play. The more that I hear someone blaming other people for nearly everything that may not be going right in their life, it becomes like a red flag as to their personal walk with God. It is the Scriptural idea that we want to get the splinter out of someone else's eye, when all along we have a beam in our own eye. Everything that God is doing in our life, every trial that He is allowing in our life, every hardship, every harsh word, every difficult person – each of those types of struggles are designed to conform us to the image of Christ. [1 Peter](#) clearly teaches that we are not to be surprised at the fiery trials that may often come our way. In the midst of those difficult and trying moments, God is always using them to grow us, to mature us, to change us, to help us, and to motivate us to bring Christlikeness into the volatile and stressful circumstances that we are facing. Normally, those difficult moments are with someone else. So, in the midst of those exasperating and demanding times, just keep asking God to change you and not someone else. You be the strong believer in the difficult moment that brings Christlikeness to bear on those trying times. Be gracious, be kind, be forgiving, be caring. You be the living example to difficult people of what it really means to be “**strong in the Lord**” and to “**put on Christ**”. Please remember that you cannot change anyone. However, what you can do is be a vessel through whom God pours out His life in such a way that people are deeply impacted and influenced by your life.

❖ **Main Point: Always be open to God changing you in the midst of your difficult moments. Get better, not bitter.**

4. KEY PRINCIPLE 115: IF YOU BELIEVE A LIE, IT BECOMES A TRUTH TO YOU.

It is so critical to the Christian life that you develop discernment. I am often asked by my students what is the one area that seems to plague the church more than anything else, and very often my answer to them is a fundamental lack of discernment and good judgment. It is almost like if some article or book is packaged in a Christian manner that we just casually assume that what someone is saying is true – but that is certainly not always the case. I have said it for years that I believe that there is as much false teaching that plagues the Christian culture and the church as there is solid, biblical teaching. We have just as many false teachers as we have true godly teachers. If you were to go into a Christian bookstore and make a decision to purchase one book over several others based solely on the cover of the book, you would probably be terribly disappointed with that choice in the end. The enemy disguises himself as an “**angel of light**”. He loves to use Christian words, but minimize their content and meaning. Eventually, he will get you to buy into just one of his lies, and the moment that he accomplishes that, his lie becomes your new truth. It is the seedbed for ungodly “**strongholds**” to be built into your brain, and eventually into your life. The result is that you begin to build your life on Satan's “lies” rather than God's truth. Talk about building your house on the sand, well, this is how it happens. Whatever spiritual convictions

that you develop in your life must be based on Scripture. If that does not happen, then you have no weapons with which to discern and cast down the lies of the devil that eventually he will use to destroy parts of your life.

❖ **Main Point: You must discern between Satan's lies and God's truth. The enemy tries to make them look alike.**

5. KEY PRINCIPLE 49: THE RESULTS YOU ARE GETTING OUT OF YOUR LIFE ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF THE THOUGHTS YOU ARE PUTTING INTO YOUR MIND.

Obviously, this principle goes both ways. It can refer to the old adage of "*garbage in, garbage out*", or as I prefer to say "*truth in, life out*". [Proverbs](#) affirms that "**as a man thinks in his heart so is he**". I.e., you become what you think. I understand that life can present each of us with some really difficult circumstances and choices, but even in the midst of those kinds of struggles, what we put into our mind will have a greater bearing on our life than anything that may be happening to us. When we finally decide to let our life be governed by the Word of God and learn how to think like God thinks, it is then that we can let go of fear, make better decisions, overcome anxiety, or conquer the chaos that is so often in our mind. So, if you are willing to take a genuine look at your life and the different areas of your life that may not be working out like you wanted them to work out, there may be an underlying reason as to why not. Let me say very quickly, do not blame someone else for what is not going right in your life. You have to take responsibility for how you think, and if you are blaming someone else for all of the issues that you may be facing, then you are not thinking like God wants you to think. If you get into the mindset of always blaming someone else, you will never experience the life that God wants to provide for you.

❖ **Main Point: Your life is a reflection of what and how you think.**

6. KEY PRINCIPLE 12: THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD FOR YOUR LIFE IS ALWAYS A SPECIFIC TRUTH IN THE WORD OF GOD.

God's Word has answers. It has principles, values, standards, truth, and encouragement that cannot be found anywhere else. It provides direction, wisdom, and understanding to those who are willing to spend time in it. It offers hope to those who have no hope. It gives strength that is made perfect in weakness. It offers grace to the vilest of sinners. However, it also provides everything that someone needs to just live out a simple day. The goal of this principle was very simple. When you find yourself not knowing what to do or how to respond or what choices to make, there will always be a specific verse or a specific passage that your heart will be drawn to that will provide you with a very simple answer. When your heart frets and worries, just "**look at the birds**". When you find yourself being the blunt of someone's anger, just speak a soft word because a "**soft answer turns away wrath**". When you are discouraged or struggling in some area of your life or some relationship, just rest in the truth "**that all things work together for good for those who love God...**" Go to the Word of God and look up as many Scriptures as you can relative to the issue that you are facing, then simply submit your life to those truths. It may well be just one specific truth that anchors and steadies your life if you will just simply commit your life to that truth. There was a time in my life when I became angry more than I should have, but I found in the Word of God that I was simply to "**put off anger**" like I was taking off my shirt and just laying it aside and never wearing it again. I did that and my life was forever changed. It was just one small

phrase, just one verse, just one encouragement to do what God wanted me to do, and I found in that verse all of the strength that I needed to be obedient to His clear direction for my life.

❖ **Main Point: God's Word is your roadmap for being successful in your Christian life.**

7. KEY PRINCIPLE 116: THE PERSON WHO PUSHES YOU TOWARD GODLINESS AND FAITH IS THE PERSON WHO CARES THE MOST ABOUT YOU.

You should do everything in your power to surround your life with godly men and women who are more mature than you are. This would be people who you know are strong Christians and who have consistently lived out their Christian faith. Find people who will mentor you. Find people who are willing to counsel you and encourage you. If we know that “**evil company corrupts good morals**”, we also know that godly company will make you wise. If you do not have these kinds of people in your life on a consistent basis, and people that you are actually listening to, then most likely you are not growing that much spiritually. It does not take much to just “**drift away**” and drift along in your Christian life as [Hebrews 2:1](#) says. That is actually the first and the mildest of the six major warnings in [Hebrews](#), but it is why the next five warnings are even necessary. It is because it is easy to become complacent and even indifferent to the Word of God and what it seeks from our lives if we are not surrounding our lives with people who are willing to correct us and to challenge us to excellence in the Christian life. I tell my students all the time that “*the ministry demands excellence*”, but I think that I can just as easily say that “*the Christian life demands excellence*”, and the person who is consistently pushing you in that direction is someone that you need to latch on to and not let go. If you are surrounded by friends who are always dragging you down rather than building you up in your faith and in your Christian walk, then you need some new friends. You might say to me “*Yea Gary, but I want to evangelize them.*” Forget about evangelizing people who are always having a negative and debilitating influence in your life until you know that your spiritual life is stronger than those who are dragging you down. I remember when I first got saved. It was amazing to say the least. However, one of the things that happened to me was that I lost all of my so-called friends. They no longer wanted to have anything to do with me because of my faith and my witness. They were always trying to discourage me and get me to go back to my old lifestyle. So, what did I do? I found people who were willing to invest their life into my life, people who knew the Word of God, people who were encouragers, people who were strong in the Lord. They became my mentors, my teachers, my new friends, and they were the people who really loved and cared for me the most.

❖ **Main Point: Godly friends are a treasure for your life because they will love you and push you.**

8. KEY PRINCIPLE 29: PRE-DECIDE HOW GODS WANTS YOU TO RESPOND TO A DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCE BEFORE IT EVER HAPPENS.

In all of life, being prepared is much better than being surprised. Here is what we know. We know that we will face difficult circumstances and difficult people. That is a given and we know that reality much too well. So, if we know that we will face those kinds of stressful moments in our life, and maybe on a daily basis, would you not think that it would be best to determine beforehand how God would want you to respond to them? I certainly do. Just suppose that you know that when your marriage partner comes home every day that they are going to be tired, grumpy, and often times pretty short in how they communicate. If that is the case, just accept that you cannot change them, but that you can be prepared

to respond to them before some potentially volatile moment happens in your marriage. If you cannot figure it out on your own, then get someone to help you, someone who will be there to remind you at 4pm that this afternoon at 5pm when your marriage partner comes home grumpy and tired and irritable that you will not let it impact you. Figure out how to think differently than just reacting to something that is said, especially if you know that something often times is said that is inappropriate. Be prepared, pre-decide, pre-determine, and resolve how you are going to respond. Settle this in your mind beforehand and you will be much more satisfied with the results.

❖ **Main Point:** **Be prepared so that you respond properly and do not just react to the uncomfortable moments in your life.**

9. KEY PRINCIPLE 78: THE MORE YOU THINK LIKE GOD THINKS, THE MORE INSTINCTIVE AND INTUITIVE HIS THINKING BECOMES TO YOU.

I just love this principle simply because thinking like God thinks is exactly what I am looking for in my life. I know that if I fail to think like God thinks, that the inevitable result is that by thinking the wrong way that I am removing God's blessings from my life. I forfeit His wisdom. I lose sight of what the Christian life is all about and how it is supposed to be lived out in the world. I will find myself further and further away from God's best for my life. I will miss all of the opportunities that God desires for my life to respond to the difficulty in a Christlike way. On the other hand, however, the more effort that I put into thinking like God thinks, the more intuitive, the more instinctive, the more perceptive, and the more discerning His thinking will become to me.

If I can say this in a little different way, but everytime that something difficult or trying takes place in my life, I do not want to have to go somewhere and pray about how to handle that difficult moment. I want the time that I have previously spent with God to have created an intuitive basis for me being able to make good and godly decisions when they are actually needed. Maybe the word to use here would be a word like the word "natural". I.e., thinking like God thinks just becomes natural to us. We instinctively know what is the right thing to do. How would we know? It is because we have spent meaningful time in His Word. We know His heart, we know His passion, we have learned His truth. Eventually, it becomes intuitive and instinctive. There are some things that I simply will not do because I know that they are not what God would want me to do, so I will not do them. There are certain ways that God does not want me to talk because I have spent time in His Word to know what is the godly way to talk and what is not the right way to talk. I have developed a strong neural pathway to talk a certain way, and I like it a lot better than just speaking my mind when I do not like what has been said to me.

❖ **Main Point:** **The more time you spend in the Word of God, the more intuitive God's will becomes to you.**

10. KEY PRINCIPLE 133: YOU MUST DISCIPLINE AND TRAIN YOUR MIND TO SEE GOD'S HAND IN EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN YOUR LIFE.

This principle is not saying that when something negative happens to you that God caused that to happen. The better way of seeing this principle is that in the sovereignty and the providence of God that He is still very much involved in helping you to move through those very negative and testing moments in your life. He is there. He is present in your life. He cares about everything that you are experiencing,

and He wants to help you navigate through your trials and struggles. You will be okay if you will just start looking for Him in what is happening to you in your life, if you will just take the time to discipline your mind and train your mind to look for His goodness in everything that happens in your life.

❖ **Main Point: The Lord will never leave you or forsake you, so keep seeking Him even when life is very difficult. He never fled when the difficult moments happened to you. He remained right there.**