



12 Principles For Taking Action

by John Edmiston

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Introduction

Do you want to do good works well? God calls us to do good works, not failed works, half-baked works, or nice attempts!

God has not saved you for you to daydream, “think about”, consider, or imagine doing good works. He has called you to actually do them, and to do them with excellence!

“For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

This will require some form of taking positive and godly action in life.

The question is “What are the principles for taking effective action in the Christian life?” How do we accomplish these good deeds that we are foreordained to do and not just fritter our lives away debating atheists on Facebook? How do we take the right actions in order to produce the right result?

In some rather pietistic circles, it is enough to just pray and read the Bible and offer advice to people. However, I think there is a great deal more to Christian good works than that! Christians should be building schools, hospitals and orphanages, educating the illiterate and taking care of the widow, the orphan and the homeless - and doing so in very effective ways. What use is a half-built school?

I believe that the Creator of the Universe is the God of the Bible and that both the Universe and the Bible point to Jesus Christ who is the Son of God and who holds the entire Universe together with His powerful word (Hebrews 1:1-3, John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-20).

Therefore our faith should operate powerfully in the real world of God’s Universe and not just in Church.

The following 12 Principles For Taking Action are a broad framework for effectively tackling the complexity of the real world. I have written them down concisely. You should be able to read this entire ebook in under 20 minutes.

Blessings,
John Edmiston (johned@Cybermissions.org)



1. Right Goals Produce Right Actions

Our goals direct our actions so that they overcome the chaos of life and lust. Life is complicated and without goals we are soon distracted or overwhelmed. Goals direct our life energy into the correct channels so that we are productive.

No goals produce little action, no action or random action.

Poor goals produce wrong, diminished, illegal or ineffective action.

Your goals should align with the Bible and with what God has called you to do.

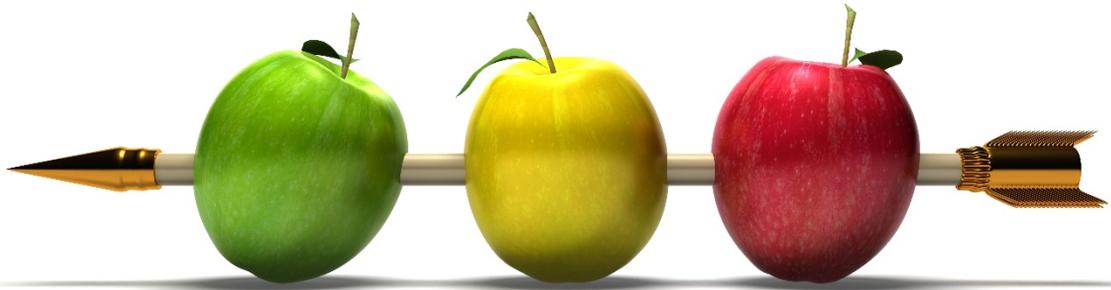
Right goals must be based on right values and be laser focused.

Goals must be godly, specific, achievable, relevant and time-based.

Take time to write down your goals and to make them clear and vivid.

Some people are helped by making pictures and diagrams of their goals.

Goals need not only be about tasks and money, they can also be about people, health, relationships and your prayer life.



2. Right Actions Produce Right Results

Only right actions will produce right results.

Hoping, daydreaming, over-thinking, wishing, analyzing, blaming, making excuses and so on, do not ever produce results.

Wrong actions produce wrong results. Incomplete actions produce inferior results. No action produces no results.

Intelligence on its own does not produce a result. If Albert Einstein puts an egg in a saucepan full of water and forgets to turn on the stove, then even Einstein fails to get a boiled egg for breakfast!

There are many great Ph.D. theses sitting on university shelves that have never made a single improvement in the real world because they were never accompanied by a wise and vigorous series of actions.

Only actions produce results. Words can be a form of action and prayer can be a form of action. But basically nothing happens until you hustle! (And yes you can hustle in prayer – just ask any prayer warrior.)

Newton's First Law of Motion tells us that a body remains at rest or travels in a straight line unless a force acts upon it. If you want to change the world you have to be the "force that acts" upon the world. No force means no change. You have to plan your work and work your plan and take action, after action, after action in the power of God, until your good result is achieved!

Sometimes taking right action requires developing certain skills which leads us to the next principle...



3. Right Practice Produces Right Performance

Practice does not make perfect; only RIGHT practice makes perfect.

Wrong practice just produces a bad habit or a mistake. There are a lot of 3-chord-wonder guitar players, terrible preachers and amateur philosophers out there! They practice, but they practice the wrong thing in the wrong way!

If you practice the right thing, in the right way, at the right time, you will gain in your ability to perform at a certain task; whether it be typing, public speaking, or playing the piano.

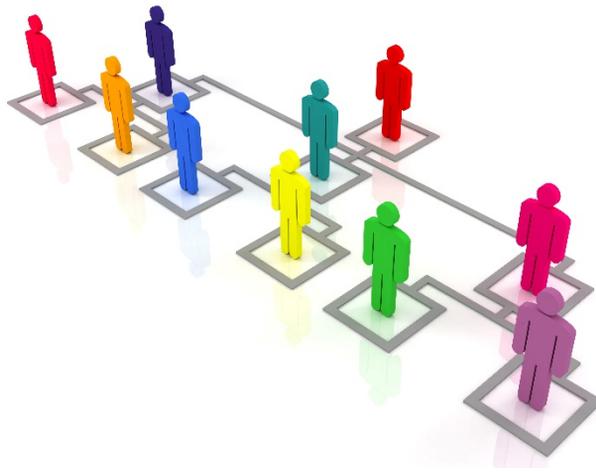
Right practice involves right feedback. This is why it is important to have a coach or mentor; otherwise, we just practice our mistakes, illusions and delusions until they become habits. Supervised practice is a VITAL KEY to success.

This includes the spiritual realm. Prayer must be practiced. Attending prayer meetings, reading about prayer and praying with others who can give you gentle feedback is a key to growing in your prayer life.

Bible-reading takes a great deal of practice and learning to understand the difficult passages, and to break open bible metaphors and cultural references. It is good to attend some lectures and to have a bible dictionary, a concordance, and some bible software.

It is good to ask yourself questions such as: "What small skill must I practice over and over again in order to do X better?" For a musician it might be scales, for a prayer warrior it might be praying the promises of God. Select one small skill and perfect it, then move on to the next skill. Over time you will attain excellence in performance.

Relentless self-criticism is no substitute for actual practice. Self-criticism may help a little but ultimately it paralyzes us; it can be very destructive. Practice generally involves your body physically doing something, activating muscle memory. Do not just perform "in your head," practice in the real world!



4. Right Systems Produce Right Outcomes

Whether you are washing the dishes or landing a rocket on a comet, the **ONLY** way to produce a *consistently good result* is with a **good system**.

Good systems control variation in the product and produce a consistent, high quality result.

If you are to do most things in ministry well, you will need a good system or perhaps many good systems. They will save you time and money and enable you to produce consistently good results.

Poor systems produce chaotic results with very high variability in the outcomes. (e.g. Some dishes clean, some still dirty, some broken.)

Poor mechanical systems produce uncontrolled variation in the product. Just think of the bad years of some car firms.

Poor human systems result in high levels of pain and discord. Just think of the worst company you have ever worked for.

If you are to do all things well for God, you must create good systems and constantly work to improve them. You must “stand outside” your activity and work “on” your ministry, not just “in” your ministry.

It is OK to copy other people’s systems if they are good e.g. for hospital visitation.

If you do not have systems people will “fall through the cracks” and get hurt. Even God has systems – just look at the natural world!



5. Right Logic Produces Right Conclusions

Logic was devised to help people reach right conclusions from good data.

Good logic will help with Bible interpretation.

Good logic will also help you to sort out the false arguments of people who are trying to persuade you to take a foolish course of action.

Poor logic is based on logical fallacies and emotional reasoning.

Poor logic leads to erroneous conclusions. Erroneous conclusions lead to wrong goals, beliefs and actions, which then lead to wrong outcomes and a generally messed up life.

Right logic may feel emotionally constraining but it can save us from making many stupid mistakes in life and ministry. Logic is difficult; however, it is worth it.

While God sometimes asks people to do unusual things, that is only about one percent of the time. The other 99% of the time it is best to operate logically, sensibly and in line with Wisdom. Wisdom is from God, and the natural order is full of laws, systems and logical outcomes.

Ministry based on emotions alone tends to be shallow. It can also hurt people when it creates a mess such as a financially ruinous situation. Therefore, we should train our minds to be logical so that we can build wisely for God.



6. Right Knowledge Produces Right Ideas

(Proverbs 18:15) *The mind of the discerning acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks it.*

Good research comes before wise implementation.

Good ideas are based on an abundance of knowledge about the topic or task.

Hare-brained ideas are based on wild imagination and an absence of data.

When a plan is executed based on wrong data, it frequently leads to a poor result, e.g. the missions trip which was a disaster because they did not know that it was typhoon season and that all the roads would be flooded.

Right knowledge allows for right ideas to be constructed and for correct plans to be made. This requires adequate research before attempting a certain task.

Be thorough, ask all of the questions such as: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? And How Much?

Then check out the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to your idea or plan.

It is also good to “know how much you do not yet know”... and to find it out!

It is almost impossible to have perfect knowledge before you launch; however, you should have 70% of the knowledge and be actively researching the rest. You should also accumulate knowledge as you go and document it so that others may tap into it as well.



7. Right Perspective Produces Right Wisdom

A good perspective turns knowledge into wisdom because we see the facts from the correct point of view. We do not end up paranoid, jumpy, fearful or guilt-ridden. Rather we gain a certain peace and calmness, a certain resolution and strength, and the power and the decisiveness to take action.

Our minds fit the facts into frameworks to create stories. If we have the right facts and put them into the correct mental framework, then we create the right story about reality which helps us to take effective action in ministry!

A right perspective sees problems as temporary, external to self, and ultimately under God's control. This creates hope and an upward story in life.

A wrong perspective sees problems as permanent, personal and uncontrollable. This creates fear and despair and a downward story in life.

Are you seeing things from a perspective of faith, hope and love?

Prayer, bible-reading and worship can help us to attain the right perspective on our issues. (Psalm 73:16,17)

Consulting others or even getting some counseling can help us correct negative distortions in the way we view reality.

Stop and ask yourself: "Is there a better and more godly way to see this issue so that I do not over-react? So that I am empowered and can take action?"

Develop an attitude of gratitude; frequently stop and give thanks to God!

Walk in faith and expect great things from God!



8. Right Beliefs Produce Right Emotions



It is our inner beliefs about an incident, object or person that shape our emotions. For instance, as a child I discovered some yellow shiny rocks in the local creek and thought it was gold and I was rich. So my belief made me happy. Later I found out it was just Iron Pyrites (Fool's Gold) and became disappointed. My new belief about the rocks made me unhappy. The rocks did not change one bit. It was my belief about the rocks that changed. And as my belief changed, so did my emotions.

You cannot do ministry effectively with messed up emotions. Messed up emotions often flow from messed up, unbiblical, illogical or untrue beliefs such as "no one could ever love me". By changing your beliefs you can have better emotions.

On the other hand, if we adopt a positive, realistic and biblical belief system, then we will have stable and happy emotions throughout life and an effective ministry. We will have the poise, power and balance we require to take effective action.

If we are not to be crippled by toxic emotions, we must pay attention to our belief system. We must remove all toxic, untrue, neurotic and illogical beliefs from our mind and heart. I have written a book about this process. It is called Biblical EQ: A Christian Handbook For Emotional Transformation. You can get it at <https://biblicaleq.com>

Get out a journal and then write out some beliefs that you have that cause you emotional discomfort. Try to figure out if they are illogical, untrue or unbiblical and then correct them. As you regularly do this you will become more balanced and much more likely to take the right actions that lead to successful outcomes.



9. Right Values Produce Right Energy

Energy drives ministry. High energy people can get a lot of work done for God without getting exhausted. This is because they have powerful and consistent personal values, ethics and principles that are well-aligned with their ministry.

Low energy people tend to have weak values or very conflicted values

If we place a very high value on something, we will then work incredibly hard to make it happen. Values are what we judge to be important in life. They can include moral values, cultural values, work values and personal values.

If we place a very low value on something, we will disregard it, disdain it or even avoid it. We will not invest productive energy into it.

We are driven by our values. Values tell us the amount of our life energy we should expend on things.

When our values are wrong or disordered, then we will expend our life energy unwisely.

When our values are right and well-organized, we have high energy and will live and work peacefully.

First of all, your values should be Christ-centered, biblical and practical. Next, they should be aligned with who you are and with your gifts and personality. It is almost impossible to be enthusiastic about something that is “not you”.

Finally, there should be a strong alignment of your values with your actual tasks.

It is important to regularly take time to assess your life and ministry values and whether you are living them out in the best possible way.



10. Right Attitudes Produce A Right Spirit

You are body, mind and spirit. The spirit reflects your deepest attitudes that will frame your entire existence, e.g. a bitter spirit, a broken spirit, a poisoned spirit, a loving spirit, a joyful spirit or a peaceful spirit.

We are not talking about the Holy Spirit but your personal spirit, which is the deepest part of you that communicates with God.

If your spirit is misaligned then your spiritual tone is “off”, your leadership is “off” and people will find you painful and awkward.

The key to having a right spirit within you is attitude. An attitude of forgiveness not resentment, an attitude of forbearance not impulsiveness, an attitude of patience not irritability, an attitude of generosity not selfishness, and so on...

When you consistently decide to choose the best possible attitude in every circumstance, you are training your human spirit for the art of existence. You can scan your attitudes, then decide to change them.

When Jesus chose to forgive the soldiers saying: “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do,” He was demonstrating the best possible attitude in every circumstance. Right attitudes in time produce a right spirit.

You may need inner healing. You cannot do Christ’s work out of an embittered spirit, a spirit of inferiority, or a spirit full of grudges. The wrong things will flow out of you and you will take the wrong action instead of the right action.

There is always a moment when you can choose your attitude despite the circumstances. You must consistently choose to demonstrate a Christ-like attitude if you are to have a good spiritual tone and be respected by others.



11. Right Faith Produces Right Worship

We worship that which we truly believe in, without any reservation; that which, in its own way, is the totality of our existence.

If we believe in demons then we will worship idols.

If we believe in our ego we then will worship ourselves.

If we believe in some social structure then we will worship our culture.

If we believe in materialism then we will worship money.

If we believe in Jesus then we will truly worship the one true Creator God.

If we believe the right things, then we will value the right things and worship the right things which will create our entire psychological and inner world.

If we are to be made into the image of God, then we must adore God and worship God, the true Creator God, who is love.

People who worship money become cold like money, and people who worship fame become as unstable as fame itself.

But those who worship God will become imitators of God and be holy even as He is holy.

Right worship thus guides all the other actions in our life. For what we do will flow out of who we are, which flows naturally from that which we worship. And who we are dictates, to a large extent, the kind of actions we will engage in.



12. Right Love Produces A Right Community

Love is ultimate form of success that is not just for ourselves but for others. Love must be the reason for, and the nature of, our taking action. Love creates flourishing communities.

Hatred produces a toxic and violent community. Selfishness produces a cold, isolated and competitive environment. Unexpressed love produces a sad, lonely and disappointed group of people. Irresponsible, sentimental love produces a chaotic, manipulative, messy existence and love that is “in word only” produces a place where needs are never met.

We must love God, love others and love ourselves.

Love must not just be in word alone, but in deed and in action.

Love is not just a feeling but a series of wise committed actions that are in the very best interest of the person receiving the love.

Love of self *alone* produces a community of narcissists.

Love of others *alone* produces a humanistic pleasant, dull, lifeless community.

Love of God *alone* produces a community of angry fundamentalists.

Love must be wise. Foolish love can be a disaster e.g. it can create dependency or irresponsibility in others or make serious mistakes in the help provided.

When people in a community love God, each other and themselves in a series of wise committed actions for good, then that community will know great peace: the kind of peace that the Bible calls Shalom. All the other principles in this brief book support this idea that flourishing community is built on the basis of right love, based upon right actions and right beliefs. Love comes from taking right action.



Furthermore....

Life is basically a series of actions in the outer world that are based on the thoughts and intents of the heart in the inner world.

If we want to be successful in life we have to take action to get what we want. If a guy wants to befriend a beautiful woman he has to ask her out! Daydreaming about her accomplishes precisely nothing, and some other guy will get in and he in turn will lose out on his dream girl!

We have all lost out on opportunities by failing to act. We also have messed things up by acting in the wrong way at the wrong time. Therefore we **MUST** act and we should also act wisely and well to produce quality outcomes and flourishing communities and ecosystems.

The Bible indicates that we are what we do. We are our actions. We are judged by our works (1 Peter 1:15-17, Revelation 20:11,12). And in Scripture believing in Jesus is the main good work!

(John 6:28,29) *“What can we do to perform the works of God?” they asked. Jesus replied, “This is the work of God — that you believe in the One He has sent.”*

So there is a big debate among Christians about how many good works we have to do in order to “get into Heaven”. The answer is two-fold:

1. We do not have to do any good works at all in order to be saved.
2. However we are made to do good works and they are to be our lifestyle.

(Ephesians 2:8-10) *For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift — not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.*



As Ephesians 2:10 says, we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. That means that the new creation Christian is made to do good, day in and day out. That is our identity, that is our calling, that is what we are about!

(Galatians 5:5,6) *For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision accomplishes anything; what matters is faith working through love.*

Faith works through love. Faith gets into action to help others just like the Good Samaritan did. (Luke 10:30-37)

But then, if we do not have to do any good works to "get into heaven" then why not just back and cruise? Because our actions are a true indication of the nature and the aliveness of our faith!

(James 2:14-26) *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself..... For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*



Not only do our actions show the nature and liveliness of our faith, our actions also indicate whether or not the love of the Father is actually in us:

(1 John 3:16) *This is how we have come to know love: He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has this world's goods and sees his brother in need but closes his eyes to his need — how can God's love reside in him? Little children, we must not love with word or speech, **but with truth and action.** This is how we will know we belong to the truth and will convince our conscience in His presence, even if our conscience condemns us, that God is greater than our conscience, and He knows all things.*

So the Bible is very clear about the fact that we must put our faith into action. But what happens to those who mess it up, who are lazy like some of the stewards in the parables of Jesus, or who do very low quality work made of “wood, hay and stubble”.

(1 Corinthians 3:12-15) *If anyone builds on that foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become obvious, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work. If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, it will be lost, but he will be saved; yet it will be like an escape through fire.*

The Christian whose works fall short gets into Heaven” and is saved, however “it will be like an escape through fire” and they will have no eternal reward.

So doing God's works in God's way so that we produce high quality results (gold, silver, precious stones) is of eternal significance for you.



This brief ebook is designed to help you to do high quality and effective work for God, so that you can put your faith into action and reap an eternal reward. It does not cover everything, however it does cover the main things.

You have to have right goals that lead to right actions, that produce right results, which are perfected through practice and arranged into systems that produce wonderful outcomes for people, society and the Church.

Having right logic, right knowledge, right perspective, and right beliefs helps us to base our action on something solid and to not fly off at tangents. These things set the tone for everything else that we do.

Finally, right values, right faith, right worship and right love give us the energy and spiritual qualities to create flourishing communities and the Shalom of God, that the Scriptures and the commandments of Christ always point to.

I hope that reading this brief book has blessed you and that you will be able to put some of it into action!



Using The 12 Principles In A Mastermind Group

Get 5 people together, weekly or every two weeks, for 90 minutes and have a strict time-keeper. Discuss just one principle per session. Give out this ebook two weeks prior to the start so they can read it in plenty of time.

In our example group we have Dave, Sue, Bob, Sam and Cynthia and one of these, say Cynthia, can be the time-keeper. Group members should be Christians who want to grow!

First 15 minutes – Clearing

Each of the 5 people get 3 minutes each to say anything about the past week just to get things off their chest so they can dive into the 12 Principles with a clear mind and heart. So, Dave, Sue, Bob, Sam and Cynthia each get 3 minutes to “clear” their week. Make sure to keep to time!

Middle 65 Minutes - Discuss And Apply That Session’s Principle

Each person gets 5 minutes to discuss that week’s principle, what they think of it, and how they are applying it / going to apply it. The application can be to their life, work, business, church or personal ministry.

Then the others get exactly 2 minutes each to give feedback (in a spirit of gracious Christian love) to that person who just shared. So if Dave shares for 5 minutes then Sue, Bob, Sam and Cynthia feed back to him for 2 minutes each. Then they each get their own turn.

So each person speaks for 5 minutes then receives a total of 8 minutes of feed back, this comes to 13 minutes. Multiplied for each of the five people, that equals 65 minutes.

Last 10 Minutes – Final Comments and Prayer

Two minutes each for Dave, Sue, Bob, Sam and Cynthia to make final comments and/or to pray.



John Edmiston is a Christian author, bible-teacher and missionary who is the CEO of Cybermissions. John lives in Los Angeles and is available for speaking engagements. His contact email is:

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If you feel blessed and want to support us the link is:

<https://Cybermissions.org/give>

OTHER BOOKS, EBOOKS AND RESOURCES

[Biblical EQ: A Christian Handbook For Emotional Transformation](#)

[The Spiritual Continuum \(Holy Spirit Led Discipleship\)](#)

[Solution-Focused Faith \(free brief ebook\)](#)

[Productive Ministry Volunteers \(brief ebook, free\)](#)

[Time Management For Christian Disciples \(free workbook\)](#)

[How To Become A Christian](#)