

The Strangest Secret (1957)

by Earl Nightingale

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“Have you ever wondered why so many people work so hard and honestly without ever achieving anything in particular, and why others don't seem to work hard, yet seem to get everything? They seem to have the “magic touch.” You've heard people say, “Everything he touches turns to gold.” Have you ever noticed that a person who becomes successful tends to continue to become more successful? And, on the other hand, have you noticed how someone who's a failure tends to continue to fail? The difference is goals.

People with goals succeed because they know where they're going. It's that simple. Failures, on the other hand, believe that their lives are shaped by circumstances ... by things that happen to them ... by exterior forces. Think of a ship with the complete voyage mapped out and planned. The captain and crew know exactly where the ship is going and how long it will take — it has a definite goal. And 9,999 times out of 10,000, it will get there. Now let's take another ship — just like the first — only let's not put a crew on it, or a captain at the helm.

Let's give it no aiming point, no goal, and no destination. We just start the engines and let it go. I think you'll agree that if it gets out of the harbor at all, it will either sink or wind up on some deserted beach — a derelict. It can't go anyplace because it has no destination and no guidance. It's the same with a human being. However, the human race is fixed, not to prevent the strong from winning, but to prevent the weak from losing. Society today can be likened to a convoy in time of war. The entire society is slowed down to protect its weakest link, just as the naval convoy has to go at the speed that will permit its slowest vessel to remain in formation. That's why it's so easy to make a living today. It takes no particular brains or talent to make a living and support a family today. We have a plateau of so-called “security.”

So, to succeed, all we must do is decide how high above this plateau we want to aim. Throughout history, the great wise men and teachers, philosophers, and prophets have disagreed with one another on many different things. It is only on this one point that they are in complete and unanimous agreement — the key to success and the key to failure is this: ” ”

**WE BECOME WHAT WE THINK ABOUT.
This is The Strangest Secret!**

Earl Nightingale was an American radio speaker and author, dealing mostly with the subjects of human character development, motivation, and meaningful existence.

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All the Difference in The World

Every Sunday morning I take a light jog around a park near my home. There's a lake located in one corner of the park. Each time I jog by this lake, I see the same elderly woman sitting at the water's edge with a small metal cage sitting beside her. This past Sunday my curiosity got the best of me, so I stopped jogging and walked over to her. As I got closer, I realized that the metal cage was in fact a small trap. There were three turtles, unharmed, slowly walking around the base of the trap. She had a fourth turtle in her lap that she was carefully scrubbing with a spongy brush.

"Hello," I said. "I see you here every Sunday morning. If you don't mind my nosiness, I'd love to know what you're doing with these turtles." She smiled. "I'm cleaning off their shells," she replied. "Anything on a turtle's shell, like algae or scum, reduces the turtle's ability to absorb heat and impedes its ability to swim. It can also corrode and weaken the shell over time."

"Wow! That's really nice of you!" I exclaimed. She went on: "I spend a couple of hours each Sunday morning, relaxing by this lake and helping these little guys out. It's my own strange way of making a difference." "But don't most freshwater turtles live their whole lives with algae and scum hanging from their shells?" I asked. "Yep, sadly, they do," she replied.

I scratched my head. "Well then, don't you think your time could be better spent? I mean, I think your efforts are kind and all, but there are fresh water turtles living in lakes all around the world. And 99% of these turtles don't have kind people like you to help them clean off their shells. So, no offense... but how exactly are your localized efforts here truly making a difference?" The woman giggled aloud. She then looked down at the turtle in her lap, scrubbed off the last piece of algae from its shell, and said, "Sweetie, if this little guy could talk, he'd tell you I just made all the difference in the world."