



## HOW MY FAITH HAS HELPED ME

BY J. C. PENNEY



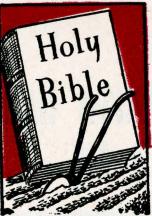
**C**NE OF OUR store managers wrote me recently that these times tend to fill everyone with pessimism. That should not be. We should recognize our times for what they are: periods of tribulation but not of pessimism. They should inspire us to re-examine our faiths and to re-establish our convictions more firmly. As long as we have any faith at all in God, we must know that He is all-powerful, that justice and right are His will for the world and that eventually His purpose will be established here on earth. Good emerges slowly, but we must not doubt its final outcome.

And just as with individuals, so as a nation will our fate be determined by our choice of the hard right, instead of the easy wrong. America was founded in prayer, in faith and in the heroic

MR. PENNEY, founder of the great store system bearing his name, sincerely believes in the practical application of religion. An outstanding business leader, he is also beloved for his many deeds of human helpfulness.

spirit of sacrifice. Comfortable living in easy-going years tends to soften us, and both our spiritual and our physical muscles become flabby. Times like the present are testing periods. The harder they become, the more determined we should be not to be infected by doubts and fears which bedevil the world. Those who continue in self-indulgence, those who lack courage and stamina to strive, slacken their efforts in times like these. Real men tighten their belts, throw full weight into the harness of their daily activities, and pull with all their might.

The present state of the world, and of people in it, does not shake my faith in the ultimate triumph of freedom and justice,



for I was reared by parents whose faith in God and whose belief that right will triumph are too deeply ingrained in me to cause me to doubt. From a worldly standpoint, my parents were humble folk. My father was an old-school Baptist minister who preached the better part of his lifetime and never took one penny of remuneration for it. He earned his living as a farmer. Though brought up very strictly, I have always been thankful that my parents were God-fearing, for I learned early to honor and obey them—and to work.

If I could get a message over to the youth of this country, it would be that success in life does not depend on genius. Any young man of ordinary intelligence, who is morally sound, above-board in his dealings and not afraid of work, should succeed in spite of obstacles and handicaps, if he plays the game fairly and squarely and keeps everlastingly at it. The possibilities before one are measured by the determination which is within one.

For many years I selected personally our store managers.

After I had satisfied myself about a prospect's character and qualifications, I inquired about his home life. Was it happy and harmonious? Did his wife have his interests at heart? Would she stand at his side and help him to attain his ambitions? If I did not believe that his wife measured up, I did not employ the man. If I found that his wife was a true helpmate, I felt that he would succeed, other things being equal, for a good woman's power to encourage is well-nigh unlimited.

In 1910, the mother of my two oldest sons died after a brief illness. The shock was so sudden and severe that it nearly overwhelmed me. Although I never drank liquor even moderately, I had an intense desire to drink. The reason was doubtless the unconscious desire of drowning sorrow, yet also instinctively I knew that I must not yield; that if ever the desire got one foot within the door it would come in bodily and I would go down. The craving lasted not only for months but for years. Many a

night I walked the streets, battling with grief and temptation that had fastened upon me.

This was the most critical time of my life, but the memory of my father's faith buoyed me up. His words when I first went to work—"Jim will make it; I like the way he has started out"—again and again came to my rescue.

This experience altered my viewpoint about things that matter and those which are non-essential. It enlarged my vision and increased my interest in my fellow-men. Life took on a different aspect. I had always been interested in seeing that men in our stores had their opportunities, but until then it was largely because I too benefited by their successes.

But after that experience my interest was no longer one of dollars and cents. Instead, it was an interest in the welfare and advancement of our men so that they might take their rightful places in society. I realized that money — neces-

sary as it is—should be a means to a worthy aim and not the end in itself. Up to this time

I had been in poor health but along with my change of thought—the result of a spiritual awakening—I began to develop a stronger body.

At one time during my business career I broke down, both nervously and physically, and went to a sanitarium. One night while there I had an overwhelming conviction that this was my last night of life. So sure was I that my time had come that I got up and wrote farewell letters to my family. The next morning, however, I passed a parlor in the sanitarium and heard singing. A few people were gathered in a religious meeting. I felt the urge to enter. In great weariness of spirit I listened to the hymns, to the Scripture reading and to the prayers. Then, a profound sense of inner release came over me. A heavy weight seemed lifted from my spirit. I was amazed at my change and in the days that followed I regained mental and bodily health. Perhaps the feeling of death that night was a symptom of a new man being born in me.

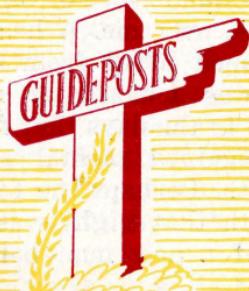
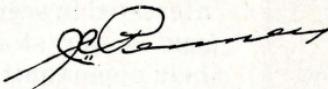
I do not mean to give the im-



pression that because of these experiences I have successfully applied Christian principles to all phases of my life. It is true that God has blessed me beyond what I deserve. Because our company has been conscientious in practice of the Golden Rule, success has blessed our business. I feel ashamed, however, that in other ways I have not followed Christ's teachings as well as I might. I have not loved God as I should. I neglected my obligations to the Church until recent years. I certainly have not worked for the brotherhood of man outside my business to the degree that should be expected of a good Christian. But I am now trying earnestly to make up for what I failed to do.

The practice of Christian principles was desirable when our company was started. But even some men who did not

practice them succeeded. In my early days, one could put religion in one compartment of his life, his business relations in another, and gain a measure of success. But it is not true in the same way today. I believe that the stepped-up business cycle, a product of the industrial revolution and mass production, makes this practice today a virtual necessity. Those who have the greater part of their adult life before them should study with great earnestness the relation between Christ's two commandments—to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. With such a balance of these two great laws worked out in one's everyday life, you may be sure of a life of spiritual blessing and, I hope, one of material prosperity.



#### PERSONAL SPIRITUAL LETTERS TO YOU FROM GREAT LEADERS

...These eloquent personal messages are mailed at intervals in packets of four each.

If these letters inspire and help you, ask to be put on Guideposts' mailing list to receive 48 letters—twelve mailings—for \$1. Some member of your family, some friend or associate, may be helped by this personal service. If so, send \$1 for each name. If you don't wish to hold for future reference, conserve paper by circulating these helpful messages among others.

#### GUIDEPOSTS ASSOCIATES, Inc.

Norman Vincent Peale, Editor

Raymond Thornburg, Managing Director

QUAKER HILL

PAWLING, N. Y.

Three additional copies of this letter free upon request; five copies or more, 3 cents each, postpaid anywhere.

ASK FOR NUMBER 6