

Garfield's Rules for Successful Living

by Beulah Hughes

One of the most illustrious careers found in the pages of American history is that of James Abram Garfield, twentieth President of the United States. Before his election to this country's highest office, he was a college president, state senator, major-general, U.S. Congressman and U.S. Senator, a combination of honors without parallel in the national annals.

When Garfield was a young man, someone placed in his hand one day a slip of paper, which he carried with him all his life. Inscribed on this paper were the following lines:

- ✓ **Make few promises.**
- ✓ **Always speak the truth.**
- ✓ **Live within your income.**
- ✓ **Never speak evil of anyone.**
- ✓ **Keep good company or none.**
- ✓ **Never play games of chance.**
- ✓ **Drink no intoxicating drinks.**
- ✓ **Good character is above everything else.**
- ✓ **Keep your own secrets if you have any.**
- ✓ **Never borrow if you can possibly avoid it.**
- ✓ **Do not marry until you are able to support a wife.**
- ✓ **Keep yourself honest if you would be happy.**
- ✓ **When you speak to a person, look into his eyes.**
- ✓ **Make not haste to be rich, if you would prosper.**
- ✓ **Save when you are young to spend when you are old.**
- ✓ **Never run into debt, unless you see a way out again.**
- ✓ **Good company and good conversation are the sinews of virtues.**
- ✓ **Your character cannot be badly hurt except by your own vices.**
- ✓ **If anybody speaks evil of you, let your life be so that no one will believe it.**
- ✓ **Never be idle. If your hands cannot be employed usefully, attend to the culture of your mind.**

As one thinks of this great and successful man, it is well to remember that he was devotedly religious. From his mother Garfield learned the value of prayer and daily Bible reading. It was his practice through life to pause each evening at sunset and read the Scriptures. Because of his belief in prayer, he was often referred to as the "praying colonel" during his army career. Moreover, he always faithfully met with the church for worship. Garfield firmly believed that "there is nothing that can make youth so shapeful, manhood so strong, and old age so beautiful, as the religion of Jesus Christ."

While yet a teenager, he espoused the cause of Christ and took his stand with those calling for a complete return to the New Testament. A few months after preaching his first sermon, Garfield wrote to a friend: "I tell you, my dear brother, the cause in which we are engaged must take the world. It fills my soul when I reflect upon the light, joy and love of the ancient gospel."

Christ and his gospel can give real meaning and purpose to your life! Without Him, no life can be truly successful. Open your heart to him today; for says He: "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me*" (Revelation 3:20).