

**LINES**  
**OF A**  
**LAYMAN**



J. C. PENNEY

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**OF A**  
**LAYMAN**

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*The Golden Rule in Everyday Living*

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NORTH VALLEY PUBLICATIONS  
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North Valley Publications  
3530 De La Cruz Boulevard  
Santa Clara, California 95054  
408.988.8881  
nvpublications.org

ISBN: 978-1-60171-724-5

**Printed in the United States of America**

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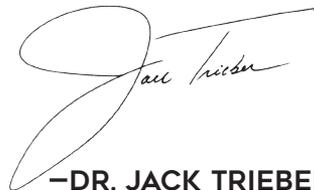




## FOREWORD

It is my delight to introduce to you one of my favorite books—*Lines of a Layman* by J. C. Penney. I received my first copy of this title when I was in Bible college. At the time, I thought I was simply gaining an addition to my library. Little did I know how influential this book would really become in my life. Since then, I have read through the book several times, and I reference it often. What a tremendous read!

In *Lines of a Layman*, J. C. Penney speaks very powerfully on the subjects of character, work, ethics, and patriotism. Each chapter is approximately one page, making it an easy selection for all ages. I have encouraged our church family at North Valley to purchase a copy for themselves and each of their children, grandchildren, friends, employers, and employees. It is my prayer that you will be as helped and strengthened by Mr. Penney's thoughts as I have been through the years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jack Trieber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

**—DR. JACK TRIEBER**  
*Pastor, North Valley Baptist Church*



## INTRODUCTION

*Lines of a Layman*, by Mr. J. C. Penney, has been for nearly a generation one of the most popular features of *Christian Herald Magazine*—and increasingly popular it is. These characteristic, scintillating and often profoundly moving lay sermonettes are now yours in a volume which, we believe, will become a bestseller in its field.

Mr. Penney is today the most distinguished merchant prince of our time. He lives and moves—and how he does move—in the tradition of John Wanamaker. And even the career of John Wanamaker was not more versatile and many-sided than is that of the author of *Lines of a Layman*. From his “Six Principles of Daily Living” through his “Four-square Men,” his “Faith of Personal Experience,” his chapter on family and young people, his vivid personal reminiscences, his “Christian and the Social Order,” his eloquent “The American Way”—these chapters, with their many facets which include religion, patriotism, human relationships, social adjustments and sound advice for getting on in business and industry, lead to such conclusions as this: “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?...That question is for nations as well as for individuals. Neither men nor nations can live by physical bread alone.”

Mr. Penney's own rich and poignant experience, which led him deep into pain, sorrow and disillusionment, but out of the darkness at last into full light of radiant Christian achievement, proves the validity of that conclusion.

Today, when practically all men of his years would be in retirement, this man is living more vigorously than in any period of his life before. He continues to travel the continent and world. As I write these lines, he is with Mrs. Penney in India, visiting a daughter. His schedule calls for an extended journey to the Far East, including Formosa where his youngest son resides. He is the active Chairman of the Board of the company he founded more than half a century ago.

Beginning in the pioneer town of Kemmer in western Wyoming, the organization which proudly bears his name has expanded into one of the few billion-dollar enterprises of America. His interests are multiple. He is the President of a distinguished enterprise of Christian laymen; President of the Friends of the Chapel of Four Chaplains, the unique Interfaith Memorial at the heart of Temple University in Philadelphia; Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Allied Youth, Inc., perhaps the most remarkable high school activity on this continent (the character of the program is distinguished by one of its slogans, "Fun Without Alcohol"). But it would be quite

impossible to enumerate the many fields in which this remarkable man continues to release his life.

Recently, when his family, neighbors and his friends from all over America gathered to celebrate his eightieth anniversary, he was the life of the party. More than five hundred were present, and that occasion was in all respects characteristic of the man. It, too, was “fun without alcohol.”

My association with the versatile author of these “Lines” reaches back into the years for considerably more than a quarter of a century. I have watched him grow in breadth of vision and versatility of speech and writing, and I believe that on these pages, as nowhere else, you will find the measure of the man.

**—DANIEL A. POLING**



# ONE

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*Lessons for Everyday Living*

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## FOUR-SQUARE MAN

This subject is the one nearest my heart. It is unfortunate that so many men go through life in just the ordinary way. Many are inclined to think that only geniuses, or men with special privileges, succeed. To my way of thinking, success is but a result of which the four-square man is the cause. But in order to be a four-square man, one must possess the essential qualities, the first of which I should say is *purpose*.

In other words, a man must have a vision. A man of vision is a man of imagination. Imagination is the power back of initiative. The individual without the fully-developed imaginative faculty is certain to get into a rut. It is this quality in man which has lifted us from the plane of the savage to our present degree of civilization.

Contemplate the developments in science, art, literature, religion, and inventions during the last century. Think of what the railroads have done for this country. Consider what electricity has accomplished; what the developments in agriculture, mining and irrigation have achieved. These inventions and developments were not the result of chance, but the outcome of someone's thought, the fruits of constructive imagination and purpose.

Now, think of man in his primitive state, dwelling in caves, subsisting on roots, clothing himself from the skins of animals.

What a change in a few hundred years, and what an incentive for us to use our powers of constructive imagination!

An objective is necessary. Yet, how many men are drifting, are human derelicts floating on the sea of life with no objective in view.

The mind, feelings and the physical body are Divine gifts, and the man who fails to make use of these gifts is the man of no purpose.

The second essential quality in the four-square man is that of *integrity*. The word is derived from the Latin *integer*, meaning whole. Hence, an honest man is a whole man, not a fraction of a man. He is not one thing above the line and something else below it; not one thing at home and something else away from home; but a whole man.

I do not mean to apply this to the handling of money alone. Some men think that so long as they can get by, or keep out of jail, they are honest. A man of integrity is a man of sterling character: one whose word is as good as his bond; who would not think of taking a minute of time that did not belong to him; a man honest with himself. Franklin and Lincoln were such men, men whose names are immortal and whose lives are an inspiration to thousands of others.

My father used to say that he never aspired to be rich, but he wished that when life was over, people in passing

his grave might say: "Here lies an honest man." This statement has had tremendous influence on my life.

The moral grandeur of independent integrity is the sublimest thing in nature; so if a man is a man of integrity, and of purpose, he is well on his way to being the four-square man.

Even though the four-square man possesses purpose and integrity, these qualities are of little use if he is not a man of *service*.

Service is coming to be one of the biggest words in the English language. Life's greatest pleasure and satisfaction is found in giving; and the greatest gift of all gifts is that of one's self. You cannot render service if you are selfish or jealous, or not willing to sacrifice. How we admire the individual who is thoroughly unselfish, who thinks of the other fellow before he thinks of himself. How much more pleasure the man gets out of life who "gives before he gets."

Very often someone says, "What's the use? People do not remember what you have done after one is dead and gone."

Do you think I shall ever forget my father? Didn't your mother stint in order that you might have advantages which you could not otherwise have enjoyed? My parents did, and I shall never forget the many sacrifices they made for their children.

The fourth side of the square has to do with a man's soul, and for that reason it is the most important of all.

In reality these bodies of ours are leased to us for a term of years. We should so live that it may be said of us, "The world is better for his having lived."

Such an individual is in tune with the Infinite. He is not only happy, but he makes others happy. He has faith in God and love for his fellow man. He is charitable, which enables him to see the good in folks. Just as each member of an orchestra will tune to a certain pitch before playing, so a man each day should tune to the Infinite in order that his ideals may be high and right.

A good motto to follow is found in the words of Henry Van Dyke:

*"Be a breeze from the mountain height;  
Be a fountain of pure delight;  
Be a star serene, shining clear and keen  
Through the darkness and dread of the night;  
Be something Holy and helpful and bright;  
Be the best that you can with all your might."*

## PRAYER AS A WAY OF LIFE

In discussing prayer, you and I need to remember that our actions should conform to the spirit of our prayers. “To pray on rising and then to behave the rest of the day like a pagan is absurd.” None of us wants to be guilty of this. To avoid the possibility we need to pray all through the day. The suggestion of one is, “Very brief thoughts, mental invocations can hold a man in the presence of God. All conduct is then inspired by prayer. Thus when prayer is so understood, it becomes a way of life.”

This would not deny the value of a set time for prayer. Some would go so far as to urge the value of a specific place. For some time now I have found the spending of fifteen to thirty minutes each day just before retiring in reading and prayer to be exceedingly helpful—so much so that I would not let the day go by without this practice. I read from one or more of several books which I have found helpful. In this way my last thoughts before going to sleep are on God, on Christ, on my spiritual needs and those of others. Such a plan may not work for you. But human nature being what it is, I sincerely believe some plan is needed for each of us, and that as we grow, it will be adjusted to meet our spiritual needs. “Every technique of prayer is good which draws man nearer to God.”

## THE PRIVILEGE OF LOVING GOD

There is an element in the practice of prayer which we men especially are reluctant to consider because it appears to be a feminine characteristic. That is love. Yet those who write with authority on prayer insist that if we can arouse love in the hearts of men, we will not need to spend time trying to convince them that they must pray—both for themselves and for their neighbors.

A basic law in religion is devotion to our God. Jesus shows this perfectly in His devotion to God, from Whom He was never separated. If we must love God as sincerely as we do the person dearest to us, how can we do it? Perhaps it will help us if we first recognize the privilege we have of loving God. Let us remind ourselves that a full understanding of life is impossible without love for God. We should try spending some time each day recalling His goodness, our dependence, and finally offering gifts to Him, such as an act of self-denial, an act of kindness to one in need but done in His name.

As for loving our fellow man, we are conditioned against this. By custom real affection is reserved for the few members of our immediate family and an occasional friend. But such is less than what Christ taught. A man will not carry his share of responsibility for sustaining a brotherhood of men if he does not at the same time love God. Neither can he love God if he does not have real affection for his fellow man.

## TO SUCCEED, WIN MAN'S RESPECT

If you want to do well by yourSELF, if you want to make a place for yourself in this world, win the respect of those with whom you come in contact; don't overlook what the Golden Rule philosophy can do for you. Bread cast upon the waters returns to you manyfold.

What I have said applies to your dealings with human beings in every walk of life. It applies to your friends, to your business associates. It applies to the driver of the bus who takes you to work, to the girl behind the counter who sells you something you need. And it applies to people of every race, nationality and faith. As the prophet Malachi said: "Have we not one Father? Hath not one God created us?"

This would be a good thing to keep in mind in our daily rounds, to remind us that all of us are the children of God, those children to whom the great Teacher said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

I did not mean to make this sound quite so much like a preachment, but I did want to share with you some of the conclusions I have come to from many, many years of dealing with people. If you are fortunate, as I was, you learn sooner or later that you cannot live quite successfully without faith in God and in His creations. I hope I have