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The Path of Greatness



The Game of Life and How to Play It
and Other Essential Works

FLORENCE SCOVEL SHINN

Foreword by Joel Fotinos

The Path of Greatness

The Essential Writings of
Florence Scovel Shinn

FLORENCE SCOVEL
SHINN



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Foreword

The Path of Greatness is one of the first titles I chose for the new Library of Spiritual Wisdom series of books. This series is designed to bring the classic spiritual works from the last two centuries to modern readers.

The magic of Florence Scovel Shinn's books—the four of them collected in this volume—is that they have always felt “contemporary,” even (and especially) today. While some of the other books in the series are written in language that can feel dated, Shinn's books remain fresh and easy to read, practical and helpful. They read like the works of your best friend, urging you forward. I've written about Shinn before (portions of this foreword appeared in a different edition of *The Game of Life*), but even now, as I look back at the four works you are holding, I'm struck by just how simple Shinn makes life.

THE GAME OF LIFE

Life is difficult. Everything seems so hard. I'm always broke. I'll never find my soulmate. Work is a grind. Nothing ever seems to work out for me.

These are only some of the many negative thoughts that can run rampant through our minds. Many people can relate to the idea that life doesn't seem to turn out the way we thought it would ... or hoped it would.

But is that true? Or is that just what we tell ourselves? Is it possible that we make life so much more difficult than it needs to be? And ... is it even remotely possible that life can be fun? Even a game?

That is the premise of Florence Scovel Shinn's classic masterpiece, *The Game of Life & How to Play It*. Originally published in 1925, *The Game of Life & How to Play It* has never been out of print, and over the years has

sold millions of copies. Originally self-published by the author after no publisher would accept it, the book has gone on to influence people from all walks of life, from business leaders to students, to spiritual teachers such as Louise Hay, Norman Vincent Peale, and Emmet Fox.

When a book continues to inspire readers nearly a century after original publication, it generally means that the ideas in the book are universal and applicable. That is absolutely true for *The Game of Life & How to Play It*. The book contains simple-yet-powerful advice for living a positive life. In fact, Shinn shows how we can turn our life into a game, turn our minds into power attractors of abundance at every turn, in every area of our lives.

Filled with stories from the author's life as well as the lives of her many students, *The Game of Life & How to Play It* also contains instructions on changing your viewpoint from one of limitation and negativity, to that of possibility and positivity. She also shows how affirmations can yield powerful effects, and even gives us affirmations to use.

FLORENCE SCOVEL SHINN

Shinn used these ideas and practices in her own life. Born in New Jersey in 1871, Shinn became an artist, book and magazine illustrator, and even an actress in New York City. For a time, she married Everett Shinn, an artist of some note, part of the Ashcan school of American art, which was popular in the early 1900s. They were a bohemian couple, friendly with many of the movers and shakers in the New York art scene, and even traveled together to Europe. The marriage, however, didn't last.

Known to her friends as "Flossie," the divorced Shinn ended up living on her own in Manhattan. Shinn became interested in New Thought teachings, and eventually became a popular spiritual teacher. It is from these experiences that she wrote her books. *The Game of Life & How to Live It* was the one that captured the attention of millions over the years, and continues to change reader's lives to this day.

THE FOUR BOOKS

As described above, *The Game of Life* is her most well-known book, but her other three books are just as deserving.

Your Word Is Your Wand is a collection of affirmations, designed to help the reader enlarge their thoughts and increase their ability to receive life's riches.

The Secret Door to Success is Shinn's volume that shows how to direct your thoughts toward creating success in every area of your life.

The Power of the Spoken Word is her definitive teaching on the power of positive thinking, and how our words have power.

We titled this book *The Path of Greatness* because read together, they are like a compass, leading the reader toward their own highest potential. Each of her four books are short, to the point, and motivational. She tells story after story—from her life, and the lives of those around her—of how she and others were able to turn their lives around and experience abundance and joy. The stories are often what people love the most about Shinn's books, since they show how we can apply the concepts to our lives.

YOUR TURN

As you read the book, be prepared to see your life in a new way. Shinn is clear that we have a choice in how we perceive and live our lives. Not only that, but that we have a responsibility to elevate our attitude and thoughts, which will in turn change every area in our life. She doesn't leave room for doubt, complaints, or procrastination. Follow the positive ideas in this book and see positive effects ripple in your life as well.

Shinn is the perfect travel guide to this adventure called life. While her family was not poor, she also wasn't born with a silver spoon in her mouth. She also never claimed to be a pious spiritual guru, removed from the world. Instead she was just like so many of us. She was a divorced woman in the early 20th Century, who worked for a living and used the principles she taught and wrote about in these four books to create her best life.

Now it's your turn. Read and enjoy Shinn's practical wisdom. Think of her as your friend, wanting the best for you and your life, and showing you how. Use her affirmations, or write your own. Whatever you do, have fun learning and living the game of your life. Flossie would be proud!

—Joel Fotinos

THE GAME OF LIFE AND HOW TO PLAY IT

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The Game

Most people consider life a battle, but it is not a battle, it is a game.

It is a game, however, which cannot be played successfully without the knowledge of spiritual law, and the Old and the New Testaments give the rules of the game with wonderful clearness. Jesus Christ taught that it was a great game of *Giving and Receiving*.

“Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” This means that whatever man sends out in word or deed, will return to him; what he gives, he will receive.

If he gives hate, he will receive hate; if he gives love, he will receive love; if he gives criticism, he will receive criticism; if he lies he will be lied to; if he cheats he will be cheated. We are taught also, that the imaging faculty plays a leading part in the game of life.

“Keep thy heart (or imagination) with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23.)

This means that what man images, sooner or later externalizes in his affairs. I know of a man who feared a certain disease. It was a very rare disease and difficult to get, but he pictured it continually and read about it until it manifested in his body, and he died, the victim of distorted imagination.

So we see, to play successfully the game of life, we must train the imaging faculty. A person with an imaging faculty trained to image only good, brings into his life “every righteous desire of his heart”—health, wealth, love, friends, perfect self-expression, his highest ideals.

The imagination has been called, “*The Scissors of the Mind*,” and it is ever cutting, cutting, day by day, the pictures man sees there, and sooner or

later he meets his own creations in his outer world. To train the imagination successfully, man must understand the workings of his mind. The Greeks said: “Know Thyself.”

There are three departments of the mind, the *subconscious*, *conscious* and *superconscious*. The subconscious, is simply power, without direction. It is like steam or electricity, and it does what it is directed to do; it has no power of induction.

Whatever man feels deeply or images clearly, is impressed upon the subconscious mind, and carried out in minutest detail.

For example: a woman I know, when a child, always “made believe” she was a widow. She “dressed up” in black clothes and wore a long black veil, and people thought she was very clever and amusing. She grew up and married a man with whom she was deeply in love. In a short time he died and she wore black and a sweeping veil for many years. The picture of herself as a widow was impressed upon the subconscious mind, and in due time worked itself out, regardless of the havoc created.

The conscious mind has been called mortal or carnal mind.

It is the human mind and sees life as it *appears to be*. It sees death, disaster, sickness, poverty and limitation of every kind, and it impresses the subconscious.

The *superconscious* mind is the God Mind within each man, and is the realm of perfect ideas.

In it, is the “*perfect pattern*” spoken of by Plato, *The Divine Design*; for there is a *Divine Design* for each person.

“*There is a place that you are to fill and no one else can fill, something you are to do, which no one else can do.*”

There is a perfect picture of this in the *superconscious mind*. It usually flashes across the conscious as an unattainable ideal—“something too good to be true.”

In reality it is man’s true destiny (or destination) flashed to him from the Infinite Intelligence which is *within himself*.

Many people, however, are in ignorance of their true destinies and are striving for things and situations which do not belong to them, and would only bring failure and dissatisfaction if attained.

For example: A woman came to me and asked me to “speak the word” that she would marry a certain man with whom she was very much in love.

(She called him A. B.)

I replied that this would be a violation of spiritual law, but that I would speak the word for the right man, the “divine selection,” the man who belonged to her by divine right.

I added, “If A. B. is the right man you can’t lose him, and if he isn’t, you will receive his equivalent.” She saw A. B. frequently but no headway was made in their friendship. One evening she called, and said, “Do you know, for the last week, A. B. hasn’t seemed so wonderful to me.” I replied, “Maybe he is not the divine selection—another man may be the right one.” Soon after that, she met another man who fell in love with her at once, and who said she was his ideal. In fact, he said all the things that she had always wished A. B. would say to her.

She remarked, “It was quite uncanny.”

She soon returned his love, and lost all interest in A. B.

This shows the law of substitution. A right idea was substituted for a wrong one, therefore there was no loss or sacrifice involved.

Jesus Christ said, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you,” and He said the Kingdom *was within man*.

The Kingdom is the realm of *right ideas*, or the divine pattern.

Jesus Christ taught that man’s words played a leading part in the game of life. “By your words ye are justified and by your words ye are condemned.”

Many people have brought disaster into their lives through idle words.

For example: A woman once asked me why her life was now one of poverty and limitation. Formerly she had a home, was surrounded by beautiful things and had plenty of money. We found she had often tired of the management of her home, and had said repeatedly, “I’m sick and tired of things—I wish I lived in a trunk,” and she added: “Today I am living in that trunk.” She had spoken herself into a trunk. The subconscious mind has no sense of humor and people often joke themselves into unhappy experiences.

For example: A woman who had a great deal of money, joked continually about “getting ready for the poorhouse.”

In a few years she was almost destitute, having impressed the subconscious mind with a picture of lack and limitation.

Fortunately the law works both ways, and a situation of lack may be changed to one of plenty.

For example: A woman came to me one hot summer's day for a "treatment" for prosperity. She was worn out, dejected and discouraged. She said she possessed just eight dollars in the world. I said, "Good, we'll bless the eight dollars and multiply them as Jesus Christ multiplied the loaves and the fishes," for He taught that *every man* had the power to bless and to multiply, to heal and to prosper.

She said, "What shall I do next?"

I replied, "Follow intuition. Have you a 'hunch' to do anything, or to go anywhere?" Intuition means to be taught from within. It is man's unerring guide, and I will deal more fully with its laws in a following chapter.

The woman replied: "I don't know—I seem to have a 'hunch' to go home; I've just enough money for carfare." Her home was in a distant city and was one of lack and limitation, and the reasoning mind (or intellect) would have said: "Stay in New York and get work and make some money." I replied, "Then go home—never violate a hunch." I spoke the following words for her: "*Infinite Spirit open the way for great abundance for——. She is an irresistible magnet for all that belongs to her by divine right.*" I told her to repeat it continually also. She left for home immediately. In calling on a woman one day, she linked up with an old friend of her family.

Through this friend, she received thousands of dollars in a most miraculous way. She has said to me often, "Tell people about the woman who came to you with eight dollars and a hunch."

There is always *plenty on man's pathway*; but it can only be *brought into manifestation* through desire, faith or the spoken word. Jesus Christ brought out clearly that man must make the *first move*.

"Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Mat. 7:7.)

In the Scriptures we read:

"Concerning the works of my hands, command ye me."

Infinite Intelligence, God, is ever ready to carry out man's smallest or greatest demands.

Every desire, uttered or unexpressed, is a demand. We are often startled by having a wish suddenly fulfilled.

For example: One Easter, having seen many beautiful rose-trees in the florists' windows, I wished I would receive one, and for an instant saw it mentally being carried in the door.

Easter came, and with it a beautiful rose-tree. I thanked my friend the following day, and told her it was just what I had wanted.

She replied, "I didn't send you a rose-tree, I sent you lilies!"

The man had mixed the order, and sent me a rose-tree simply because I had started the law in action, and *I had to have a rose-tree*.

Nothing stands between man and his highest ideals and every desire of his heart, but doubt and fear. When man can "wish without worrying," every desire will be instantly fulfilled.

I will explain more fully in a following chapter the scientific reason for this and how fear must be erased from the consciousness. It is man's only enemy—fear of lack, fear of failure, fear of sickness, fear of loss and a feeling of *insecurity on some plane*. Jesus Christ said: "Why are ye fearful, oh ye of little faith?" (Mat. 8:26.) So we can see we must substitute faith for fear, for fear is only inverted faith; it is faith in evil instead of good.

The object of the game of life is to see clearly one's good and to obliterate all mental pictures of evil. This must be done by impressing the subconscious mind with a realization of good. A very brilliant man, who has attained great success, told me he had suddenly erased all fear from his consciousness by reading a sign which hung in a room. He saw printed, in large letters, this statement—"*Why worry, it will probably never happen.*" These words were stamped indelibly upon his subconscious mind, and he has now a firm conviction that only good can come into his life, therefore only *good can manifest*.

In the following chapter I will deal with the different methods of impressing the subconscious mind. It is man's faithful servant but one must be careful to give it the right orders. Man has ever a silent listener at his side—his subconscious mind.

Every thought, every word is impressed upon it and carried out in amazing detail. It is like a singer making a record on the sensitive disc of the phonographic plate. Every note and tone of the singer's voice is registered. If he coughs or hesitates, it is registered also. So let us break all the old bad records in the subconscious mind, the records of our lives which we do not wish to keep, and make new and beautiful ones.

Speak these words aloud, with power and conviction: “I now smash and demolish (by my spoken word) every untrue record in my subconscious mind. They shall return to the dust-heap of their native nothingness, for they came from my own vain imaginings. I now make my perfect records through the Christ within—The records of *Health, Wealth, Love and perfect self-Expression.*” This is the square of life, *The Game completed.*

In the following chapters, I will show how man can *change* his *conditions by changing his words.* Any man who does not know the power of the word, is behind the times.

“*Death and Life are in the power of the tongue.*” (Prov. 18:21.)

The Law of Prosperity

“Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defense and thou shalt have plenty of silver.”

One of the greatest messages given to the race through the scriptures is that God is man's supply and that man can release, *through his spoken word*, all that belongs to him by divine right. He must, however, have *perfect faith in his spoken word*.

Isaiah said, “My word shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that where unto it is sent.” We know now, that words and thoughts are a tremendous vibratory force, ever moulding man's body and affairs.

A woman came to me in great distress and said she was to be sued on the fifteenth of the month for three thousand dollars. She knew no way of getting the money and was in despair.

I told her God was her supply, and *that there is a supply for every demand*.

So I spoke the word! I gave thanks that the woman would receive three thousand dollars at the right time in the right way. I told her she must have perfect faith, and act her *perfect faith*. The fifteenth came but no money had materialized.

She called me on the 'phone and asked what she was to do.

I replied, “It is Saturday, so they won't sue you today. Your part is to act rich, thereby showing perfect faith that you will receive it by Monday.” She asked me to lunch with her to keep up her courage. When I joined her at a restaurant, I said, “This is no time to economize. Order an expensive luncheon, act as if you have already received the three thousand dollars.”

“All things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive.” “You must act as if you *had already received*.” The next morning she called me on the ’phone and asked me to stay with her during the day. I said “No, you are divinely protected and God is never too late.”

In the evening she ’phoned again, greatly excited and said, “My dear, a miracle has happened! I was sitting in my room this morning, when the door-bell rang. I said to the maid: ‘Don’t let anyone in.’ The maid however, looked out the window and said, ‘It’s your cousin with the long white beard.’

“So I said, ‘Call him back. I would like to see him.’ He was just turning the corner, when he heard the maid’s voice, and *he came back*.

“He talked for about an hour, and just as he was leaving he said, ‘Oh, by the way, how are finances?’

“I told him I needed the money, and he said, ‘Why, my dear, I will give you three thousand dollars the first of the month.’

“I didn’t like to tell him I was going to be sued. What shall I do? I won’t *receive it till* the first of the month, and I must have it tomorrow.” I said, “I’ll keep on ‘treating.’”

I said, “Spirit is never too late. I give thanks she has received the money on the invisible plane and that it manifests on time.” The next morning her cousin called her up and said, “Come to my office this morning and I will give you the money.” That afternoon, she had three thousand dollars to her credit in the bank, and wrote checks as rapidly as her excitement would permit.

If one asks for success and prepares for failure, he will get the situation he has prepared for. For example: A man came to me asking me to speak the word that a certain debt would be wiped out.

I found he spent his time planning what he would say to the man when he did not pay his bill, thereby neutralizing my words. He should have seen himself paying the debt.

We have a wonderful illustration of this in the Bible, relating to the three kings who were in the desert, without water for their men and horses. They consulted the prophet Elisha, who gave them this astonishing message:

“Thus saith the Lord—Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain, yet make this valley full of ditches.”

Man must prepare for the thing he has asked for, *when there isn't the slightest sign of it in sight.*

For example: A woman found it necessary to look for an apartment during the year when there was a great shortage of apartments in New York. It was considered almost an impossibility, and her friends were sorry for her and said, "Isn't it too bad, you'll have to store your furniture and live in a hotel." She replied, "*You needn't feel sorry for me, I'm a superman, and I'll get an apartment.*"

She spoke the words: "*Infinite Spirit, open the way for the right apartment.*" She knew there was a supply for every demand, and that she was "unconditioned," working on the spiritual plane, and that "one with God is a majority."

She had contemplated buying new blankets, when "the tempter," the adverse thought or reasoning mind, suggested, "Don't buy the blankets, perhaps, after all, you won't get an apartment and you will have no use for them." She promptly replied (to herself): "I'll dig my ditches by buying the blankets!" So she prepared for the apartment—acted as though she already had it.

She found one in a miraculous way, and it was given to her although there were over *two hundred other applicants.*

The blankets showed active faith.

It is needless to say that the ditches dug by the three kings in the desert were filled to over-flowing. (Read, II Kings.)

Getting into the spiritual swing of things is no easy matter for the average person. The adverse thoughts of doubt and fear surge from the subconscious. They are the "army of the aliens" which must be put to flight. This explains why it is so often, "darkest before the dawn."

A big demonstration is usually preceded by tormenting thoughts.

Having made a statement of high spiritual truth one challenges the old beliefs in the subconscious, and "error is exposed" to be put out.

This is the time when one must make his affirmations of truth repeatedly, and rejoice and give thanks that he has already received. "Before ye call I shall answer." This means that "every good and perfect gift" is already man's, awaiting his recognition.

Man can only receive what he sees himself receiving.

The children of Israel were told that they could have all the land they could see. This is true of every man. He has only the land within his own mental vision. Every great work, every big accomplishment, has been brought into manifestation through holding to the vision, and often just before the big achievement, comes apparent failure and discouragement.

The children of Israel when they reached the "Promised Land," were afraid to go in, for they said it was filled with giants who made them feel like grasshoppers. "And there we saw the giants and we were in our own sight as grass-hoppers." This is almost every man's experience.

However, the one who knows spiritual law, is undisturbed by appearance, and rejoices while he is "yet in captivity." That is, he holds to his vision and gives thanks that the end is accomplished, he has received.

Jesus Christ gave a wonderful example of this. He said to his disciples: "Say not ye, there are yet four months and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are ripe already to harvest." His clear vision pierced the "world of matter" and he saw clearly the fourth dimensional world, things as they really are, perfect and complete in Divine Mind. So man must ever hold the vision of his journey's end and demand the manifestation of that which he has already received. It may be his perfect health, love, supply, self-expression, home or friends.

They are all finished and perfect ideas registered in Divine Mind (man's own superconscious mind) and must come through him, not to him. For example: A man came to me asking for treatments for success. It was imperative that he raise, within a certain time, fifty-thousand dollars for his business. The time limit was almost up, when he came to me in despair. No one wanted to invest in his enterprise, and the bank had flatly refused a loan. I replied: "I suppose you lost your temper while at the bank, therefore your power. You can control any situation if you first control yourself." "Go back to the bank," I added, "and I will treat." My treatment was: "You are identified in love with the spirit of everyone connected with the bank. Let the divine idea come out of this situation." He replied, "Woman, you are talking about an impossibility. Tomorrow is Saturday; the bank closes at twelve, and my train won't get me there until ten, and the time limit is up tomorrow, and anyway they won't do it. It's too late." I replied, "God doesn't need any time and is never too late. With Him all things are

possible.” I added, “I don’t know anything about business, but I know all about God.” He replied: “It all sounds fine when I sit here listening to you, but when I go out it’s terrible.” He lived in a distant city, and I did not hear from him for a week, then came a letter. It read: “You were right. I raised the money, and will never again doubt the truth of all that you told me.”

I saw him a few weeks later, and I said, “What happened? You evidently had plenty of time, after all.” He replied, “My train was late, and I got there just fifteen minutes to twelve. I walked into the bank quietly and said, ‘I have come for the loan,’ and they gave it to me without a question.”

It was the last fifteen minutes of the time allotted to him, and Infinite Spirit was not too late. In this instance the man could never have demonstrated alone. He needed someone to help him hold to the vision. This is what one man can do for another.

Jesus Christ knew the truth of this when he said: “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.” One gets too close to his own affairs and becomes doubtful and fearful.

The friend or “healer” sees clearly the success, health, or prosperity, and never wavers, because he is not close to the situation.

It is much easier to “demonstrate” for someone else than for one’s self, so a person should not hesitate to ask for help, if he feels himself wavering.

A keen observer of life once said, “no man can fail, if some one person sees him successful.” Such is the power of the vision, and many a great man has owed his success to a wife, or sister, or a friend who “believed in him” and held without wavering to the perfect pattern!