

WISDOM PEARLS

**A WORLD IS SUPPORTED BY FOUR THINGS:
THE LEARNING OF THE WISE
THE JUSTICE OF THE GREAT
THE PRAYERS OF THE RIGHTEOUS
AND
THE VALOUR OF THE BRAVE
BUT
ALL OF THESE ARE AS NOTHING
WITHOUT A RULER
WHO KNOWS THE ART OF RULING**

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This Book Contains Inspirational, Motivational &
Encouraging Stories.

DEDICATION

For My Children,
ALI, ANNE & IZZAH,
Who Continue To Astonish Me
With Their
Résilience, Patience & Love

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Contents Of This Book Have Been Selected
From Various Internet Sites.

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SUN RISE

EVERY MORNING IN AFRICA,
WHEN THE SUN RISES, A DEER
AWAKENS,
KNOWING IT HAS TO OUTFRAN THE
FASTEST LION, OR, BE HUNTED TO
DEATH....

EVERY MORNING IN AFRICA,
WHEN THE SUN RISES, A LION
AWAKENS,
KNOWING IT HAS TO OUTFRAN THE
SLOWEST DEER, OR, BE STARVED
TO DEATH....

IT DOES NOT MATTER WHETHER
YOU ARE A DEER OR LION, WHEN
THE SUN RISES, BETTER BE
RUNNING AT YOUR BEST

YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE

Abraham Lincoln's Letter to Headmaster

A letter written by Abraham Lincoln to the Headmaster of a school in which his son was studying. It contains an advice, which is still relevant today for executives, workers, teachers, parents and students.

A WORD TO TEACHERS

"He will have to learn, I know, that all men are not just and are not true. But teach him if you can the wonder of books... but also give him quiet time to ponder the eternal mystery of birds in the sky, bees in the sun and flowers on a green hillside.

In school, teach him it is far more honourable to fall than to cheat... Teach to have faith in his own ideas, even if everyone tells him he is wrong.

Teach him to be gentle with gentlepeople and tough with the tough. Try to give my son the strength not to follow the crowd when everyone getting on the bandwagon...

Teach him to listen to all men; but teach him also to filter all he hears on a screen of truth, and take only the good that comes through.

Teach him, if you can how to laugh when he is sad... Teach him there is no shame in tears.

Teach him to scoff at cynics and to be aware of too much sweetness.

Teach him to sell his brawn and brain to highest bidders, but never to put a price on his heart and soul. Teach him to close his ears to a howling mob... and stand and fight if thinks he is right.

Treat him gently, but do not cuddle him, because only the test of fire makes fine steel. Let him have the courage to be impatient. Let him have the patience to be brave. Teach him always to have sublime faith in himself, because then he will have faith in humankind.

This is a big order, but see what you can do. He is such a fine little fellow my son!

- Abraham Lincoln"

A Brother's Hands

Back in the fifteenth century, in a tiny village near Nuremberg, lived a family with eighteen children. Eighteen! In order merely to keep food on the table for this mob, the father and head of the household, a goldsmith by profession, worked almost eighteen hours a day at his trade and any other paying chore he could find in the neighbourhood. Despite their seemingly hopeless condition, two of Albrecht Durer the Elder's children had a dream. They both wanted to pursue their talent for art, but they knew full well that their father would never be financially able to send either of them to Nuremberg to study at the Academy.

After many long discussions at night in their crowded bed, the two boys finally worked out a pact. They would toss a coin. The loser would go down into the nearby mines and, with his earnings, support his brother while he attended the academy. Then, when that brother who won the toss completed his studies, in four years, he would support the other brother at the academy, either with sales of his artwork or, if necessary, also by labouring in the mines. They tossed a coin on a Sunday morning after church. Albrecht Durer won the toss and went off to Nuremberg.

Albert went down into the dangerous mines and, for the next four years, financed his brother, whose work at the academy was almost an immediate sensation. Albrecht's etchings, his woodcuts, and his oils were far better than those of most of his professors, and by the time he graduated, he was beginning to earn considerable fees for his commissioned works.

When the young artist returned to his village, the Durer family held a festive dinner on their lawn to celebrate Albrecht's triumphant homecoming. After a long and memorable meal, punctuated with music and laughter, Albrecht rose from his honoured position at the head of the table to drink a toast to his beloved brother for the years of sacrifice that had enabled Albrecht to fulfil his ambition. His closing words were, "And now, Albert, blessed brother of mine, now it is your turn. Now you can go to Nuremberg to pursue your dream, and I will support you."

All heads turned in eager expectation to the far end of the table where Albert sat, tears streaming down his pale face, shaking his lowered head from side to side while he sobbed and repeated over and over, "No ... no ... no ... no."

Finally, Albert rose and wiped the tears from his cheeks. He glanced down the long table at the faces he loved, and then, holding his hands close to his right cheek, he said softly, "No, brother. I cannot go to Nuremberg. It is too late for me. Look, look what four years in the mines have done to my hands! The bones in every finger have been smashed at least once, and lately I have been suffering from arthritis so badly in my right hand that I cannot even hold a glass to return your toast, much less make delicate lines on parchment or canvas with a pen or a brush. No, brother ... for me it is too late."

More than 450 years have passed. By now, Albrecht Durer's hundreds of masterful portraits, pen and silver-point sketches, watercolours, charcoals, woodcuts, and copper engravings hang in every great museum in the world, but the odds are great that you, like most people, are familiar with only one of Albrecht Durer's works. More than merely being familiar with it, you very well may have a reproduction hanging in your home or office.

One day, long ago, to pay homage to Albert for all that he had sacrificed, Albrecht Durer painstakingly drew his brother's abused hands with palms together and thin fingers stretched skyward. He called his powerful drawing simply "Hands," but the entire world almost immediately opened their hearts to his great masterpiece and renamed his tribute of love "***The Praying Hands.***"

A Fascinating Story

A lady in a faded gingham dress and her husband, dressed in a homespun threadbare suit, stepped off the train in Boston, and walked timidly without an appointment into the president of Harvard's outer office. The secretary could tell in a moment that such backwoods, country hicks had no business at Harvard and probably didn't even deserve to be in Cambridge.

She frowned. "We want to see the president," the man said softly. "He'll be busy all day," the secretary snapped. "We'll wait," the lady replied. For hours, the secretary ignored them, hoping that the couple would finally become discouraged and go away. They didn't. And the secretary grew frustrated and finally decided to disturb the president, even though it was a chore she always regretted to do. "Maybe if they just see you for a few minutes, they'll leave," she told him. And he sighed in exasperation and nodded. Someone of his importance obviously didn't have the time to spend with them, but he detested gingham dresses and homespun suits cluttering up his outer office. The president, stern-faced with dignity, strutted toward the couple. The lady told him, "We had a son that attended Harvard for one year. He loved Harvard. He was happy here. But about a year ago, he was accidentally killed. And my husband and I would like to erect a memorial to him, somewhere on campus."

The president was not touched; he was shocked. "Madam," he said gruffly. "We can't put up a statue for every person who attended Harvard and died. If we did, this place would look like a cemetery". "Oh, no," the lady explained quickly. "We don't want to erect a statue. We thought we would like to give a building to Harvard." The president rolled his eyes. He glanced at the gingham dress and homespun suit, and then exclaimed, "A building! Do you have any earthly idea how much a building costs? We have over seven and a half million dollars in the physical plant at Harvard." For a moment the lady was silent. The president was pleased. He could get rid of them now. And the lady turned to her husband and said quietly, "Is that all it costs to start a University? Why don't we just start our own?" Her husband nodded. The president's face wilted in confusion and bewilderment. And Mr. and Mrs. Leland Stanford walked away, travelling to Palo Alto, California where they established the University that bears their name, a memorial to a son that Harvard no longer cared about.

"You can easily judge the character of others by how they treat those who can do nothing for them or to them."

A Glass of Milk

One day, a poor boy who was selling goods from door to door to pay his way through school, found he had only one thin dime left, and he was hungry. He decided he would ask for a meal at the next house. However, he lost his nerve when a lovely young woman opened the door. Instead of a meal he asked for a drink of water. She thought he looked hungry so brought him a large glass of milk. He drank it slowly, and then asked, "How much do I owe you?" "You don't owe me anything," she replied. "Mother has taught us never to accept pay for a kindness." He said..."Then I thank you from my heart." As Howard Kelly left that house, he not only felt stronger physically, but his faith in God and man was strong also. He had been ready to give up and quit.

Year's later that young woman became critically ill. The local doctors were baffled. They finally sent her to the big city, where they called in specialists to study her rare disease. Dr. Howard Kelly was called in for the consultation. When he heard the name of the town she came from, a strange light filled his eyes. Immediately he rose and went down the hall of the hospital to her room. Dressed in his doctor's gown he went in to see her. He recognized her at once. He went back to the consultation room determined to do his best to save her life. From that day he gave special attention to the case. After a long struggle, the battle was won. Dr. Kelly requested the business office to pass the final bill to him for approval. He looked at it, and then wrote something on the edge and the bill was sent to her room. She feared to open it, for she was sure it would take the rest of her life to pay for it all. Finally she looked, and something caught her attention on the side of the bill. She read these words... "Paid in full with one glass of milk"

A Mothers Love

A little boy came up to his mother in the kitchen one evening while she was fixing supper, and handed her a piece of paper that he had been writing on. After his Mom dried her hands on an apron, she read it, and this is what it said:

For cutting the grass: \$5.00

For cleaning up my room this week: \$1.00

For going to the store for you: \$.50

Baby-sitting my kid brother while you went shopping: \$.25

Taking out the garbage: \$1.00

For getting a good report card: \$5.00

For cleaning up and raking the yard: \$2.00

Total owed: \$14.75

Well, his mother looked at him standing there, and the boy could see the memories flashing through her mind. She picked up the pen, turned over the paper he'd written on, and this is what she wrote:

*For the nine months I carried you while you were growing inside me:
No Charge*

*For all the nights that I've sat up with you, doctored and prayed for you:
No Charge*

*For all the trying times, and all the tears that you've caused through the years:
No Charge*

*For all the nights that were filled with dread and for the worries I knew were ahead:
No Charge*

*For the toys, food, clothes, and even wiping your nose:
No Charge*

*Son, when you add it up, the cost of my love is:
No Charge.*

When the boy finished reading what his mother had written, there were big tears in his eyes, and he looked straight at his mother and said, "Mom, I sure do love you." And then he took the pen and in great big letters he wrote: "PAID IN FULL".

A Wonderful Story

A woman came out of her house and saw 3 old men with long white beards sitting in her front yard. She did not recognize them. She said, "I don't think I know you, but you must be hungry". Please come in and have something to eat."

"Is the man of the house home?" they asked.

"No", she replied. "He's out."

"Then we cannot come in", they replied.

In the evening when her husband came home, she told him what had happened.

"Go tell them I am home and invite them in!"

The woman went out and invited the men in"

"We do not go into a House together," they replied.

"Why is that?" she asked.

One of the old men explained: "His name is Wealth," he said pointing to one of his friends, and said pointing to another one, "He is Success, and I am Love." Then he added, "Now go in and discuss with your husband which one of us you want in your home."

The woman went in and told her husband what was said. Her husband was overjoyed. "How nice!!" he said. "Since that is the case, let us invite Wealth. Let him come and fill our home with wealth!"

His wife disagreed. "My dear, why don't we invite Success?"

Their daughter-in-law was listening from the other corner of the house. She jumped in with her own suggestion: "Would it not be better to invite Love? Our home will then be filled with love!"

"Let us heed our daughter-in-law's advice," said the husband to his wife. "Go out and invite Love to be our guest."

The woman went out and asked the 3 old men, "Which one of you is Love? Please come in and be our guest."

Love got up and started walking toward the house. The other 2 also got up and followed him. Surprised, the lady asked Wealth and Success: "I only invited Love, Why are you coming in?" The old men replied together: "If you had invited Wealth or Success, the other two of us would've stayed out, but since you invited Love, wherever He goes, we go with him.

Wherever there is Love, there is also Wealth and Success!!!!!!

All the Time in the World

While at the park one day, a woman sat down next to a man on a bench near a playground. "That's my son over there," she said, pointing to a little boy in a red sweater who was gliding down the slide.

"He's a fine looking boy," the man said. "That's my son on the swing in the blue sweater." Then, looking at his watch, he called to his son. "What do you say we go, Todd?"

Todd pleaded, "Just five more minutes, Dad. Please, just five more minutes." The man nodded and Todd continued to swing to his heart's content.

Minutes passed and the father stood and called again to his son, "Time to go now?" Again Todd pleaded, "Five more minutes Dad, Just five more minutes." The man smiled and said, "Okay."

"My, you certainly are a patient father," the woman responded. The man smiled and then said, "My older son Tommy was killed by a drunk driver last year while he was riding his bike near here. I never spent much time with Tommy and now I'd give anything for just five more minutes with him. I've vowed not to make the same mistake with Todd. "He thinks he has five more minutes to swing. The truth is . . . I get five more minutes to watch him play."

Build a Bridge

Once upon a time two brothers who lived on adjoining farms fell into conflict. It was the first serious rift in 40 years of farming side by side, sharing machinery, and trading labour and goods as needed without a hitch. Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding and it grew into a major difference, and finally it exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence. One morning there was a knock on John's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox. "I'm looking for a few days work," he said. "Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there I could help with? Could I help you?"

"Yes," said the older brother. "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbour; in fact, it's my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us and he took his bulldozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll go him one better. See that pile of lumber by the barn? I want you to build me a fence--an 8-foot fence--so I won't need to see his place or his face anymore."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the post hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you."

The older brother had to go to town, so he helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he was off for the day. The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, nailing. About sunset when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished his job. The farmer's eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped. There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge--a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other! A fine piece of work handrails and all--and the neighbour, his younger brother, was coming across, his hand outstretched.

"You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done." The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge, and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder.

"No, wait! Stay a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother.

"I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but I have many more bridges to build."

Bend, but Don't Break

One of my fondest memories as a child is going by the river and sitting idly on the bank. There I would enjoy the peace and quiet, watch the water rush downstream, and listen to the chirps of birds and the rustling of leaves in the trees. I would also watch the bamboo trees bend under pressure from the wind and watch them return gracefully to their upright or original position after the wind had died down.

When I think about the bamboo tree's ability to bounce back or return to its original position, the word resilience comes to mind. When used in reference to a person this word means the ability to readily recover from shock, depression or any other situation that stretches the limits of a person's emotions.

Have you ever felt like you are about to snap? Have you ever felt like you are at your breaking point? Thankfully, you have survived the experience to live to talk about it.

During the experience you probably felt a mix of emotions that threatened your health. You felt emotionally drained, mentally exhausted and you most likely endured unpleasant physical symptoms.

Life is a mixture of good times and bad times, happy moments and unhappy moments. The next time you are experiencing one of those bad times or unhappy moments that take you close to your breaking point then bend but don't break. Try your best not to let the situation get the best of you.

A measure of hope will take you through the unpleasant ordeal. With hope for a better tomorrow or a better situation, things may not be as bad as they seem to be. The unpleasant ordeal may be easier to deal with if the end result is worth having.

If the going gets tough and you are at your breaking point, show resilience like the bamboo tree, bend, but don't break!

Butch O'Hare

During the course of World War II, many people gained fame in one way or another. One man was Butch O'Hare. He was a fighter pilot assigned to an aircraft carrier in the Pacific. One time his entire squadron was assigned to fly a particular mission. After he was airborne, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized that someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank. Because of this, he would not have enough fuel to complete his mission and get back to his ship. His flight leader told him to leave formation and return. As he was returning to the mother ship, he could see a squadron of Japanese Zeroes heading toward the fleet to attack. And with all the fighter planes gone, the fleet was almost defenceless. His was the only opportunity to distract and divert them. Single-handily, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes and attacked them. The American fighter planes were rigged with cameras, so that as they flew and fought, pictures were taken so pilots could learn more about the terrain, enemy manoeuvres, etc. Butch dove at them and shot until all his ammunition was gone, then he would dive and try to clip off a wing or tail or anything that would make the enemy planes unfit to fly. He did anything he could to keep them from reaching the American ships. Finally, the Japanese squadron took off in another direction, and Butch O' Hare and his fighter, both badly shot up, limped back to the carrier. He told his story, but not until the film from the camera on his plane was developed, did they realize the extent he really went to, to protect his fleet. He was recognized as a hero and given one of the nation's highest military honours. And as you may know, O'Hare Airport was named after him.

Prior to this time in Chicago, there was a man called Easy Eddie. He was working for a man Al Capone. Al Capone wasn't famous for anything heroic, but he was notorious for the murders he'd committed and the illegal things he'd done. Easy Eddie was Al Capone's lawyer and he was very good. In fact, because of his skill, he was able to keep Al Capone out of jail. To show his appreciation, Al Capone paid him very well. He not only earned big money, he would get extra things, like a residence that filled an entire Chicago city block. The house was fenced, and he had live-in help and all of the conveniences of the day. Easy Eddie had a son. He loved his son and gave him all the best things while he was growing up, - clothes, cars, and a good education. And, because he loved his son he tried to teach him right from wrong. But one thing he couldn't give his son was a good name, and a good example. Easy Eddie decided that this was much more important than all the riches he had given him. So, he went to the authorities in order to rectify the wrong he had done. In

order to tell the truth, it meant he must testify against Al Capone, and he knew that Al Capone would do his best to have him killed. But he wanted most of all to try to be an example and to do the best he could to give back to his son, a good name. So he testified. Within the year, he was shot and killed on a lonely street in Chicago. These sound like two unrelated stories, but Butch O'Hare was Easy Eddie's son.

Care

Always remember those who serve you.

In the days, when an ice cream sundae cost much less, a 10 years old boy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass of water in front of him.

"How much is an ice cream sundae?" he asked.

"Fifty cents," replied the waitress.

The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied the coins in it.

"Well, how much is a plain dish of ice cream?" he inquired.

By now more people were waiting for a table and the waitress was growing impatient.

"Thirty-five cents," she brusquely replied.

The little boy again counted his coins.

"I'll have the plain ice cream," he said.

The waitress brought the ice cream, put the bill on the table and walked away. The boy finished the ice cream, paid the cashier and left. When the waitress came back, she began to cry as she wiped down the table. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies.

You see he couldn't have the sundae, because he wanted enough left to leave her a tip.

Perseverance

An eight-year-old child heard her parents talking about her little brother. All she knew was that he was very sick and they had no money left. They were moving to a smaller house because they could not afford to stay in the present house after paying the doctor's bills. Only a very costly surgery could save him now and there was no one to loan them the money.

When she heard her daddy say to her tearful mother with whispered desperation, 'Only a miracle can save him now', the little girl went to her bedroom and pulled her piggy bank from its hiding place in the closet. She poured all the change out on the floor and counted it carefully.

Clutching the precious piggy bank tightly, she slipped out the back door and made her way six blocks to the local drugstore. She took a quarter from her bank and placed it on the glass counter.

"And what do you want?" asked the pharmacist.

"It's for my little brother," the girl answered back. "He's really very sick and I want to buy a miracle."

"I beg your pardon?" said the pharmacist.

"His name is Andrew and he has something bad growing inside his head and my daddy says only a miracle can save him. So how much does a miracle cost?"

"We don't sell miracles here, child. I'm sorry," the pharmacist said, smiling sadly at the little girl.

"Listen, I have the money to pay for it. If it isn't enough, I can try and get some more. Just tell me how much it costs."

In the shop was a well-dressed customer. He stooped down and asked the little girl, "What kind of a miracle does your brother need?"

"I don't know," she replied with her eyes welling up. "He's really sick and mommy says he needs an operation. But my daddy can't pay for it, so I have brought my savings".

"How much do you have?" asked the man.

"One dollar and eleven cents; but I can try and get some more", she answered barely audibly.

"Well, what a coincidence," smiled the man, "A dollar and eleven cents - the exact price of a miracle for little brothers."

He took her money in one hand and held her hand with the other. He said, "Take me to where you live. I want to see your brother and meet your parents. Let's see if I have the kind of miracle you need."

That well-dressed man was Dr Carlton Armstrong, a surgeon, specialising in neuro-surgery. The operation was completed without charge and it wasn't long before Andrew was home again and doing well.

"That surgery," her mom whispered, "was a real miracle. I wonder how much it would have cost."

The little girl smiled. She knew exactly how much the miracle cost ... one dollar and eleven cents ... plus the faith of a little child.

Perseverance can make miracles happen!

Cure for Sorrow

There is an old Chinese tale about a woman whose only son died. In her grief, she went to the holy man and said, "What prayers, what magical incantations do you have to bring my son back to life?"

Instead of sending her away or reasoning with her, he said to her, "Fetch me a mustard seed from a home that has never known sorrow. We will use it to drive the sorrow out of your life." The woman went off at once in search of that magical mustard seed.

She came first to a splendid mansion, knocked at the door, and said, "I am looking for a home that has never known sorrow. Is this a place? It is very important to me."

They told her, "You've certainly come to the wrong place," and began to describe all the tragic things that recently had befallen them.

The woman said to herself, "Who is better able to help these poor, unfortunate people than I, who have had misfortune of my own?" She stayed to comfort them, and then went on in search of a home that had never known sorrow. But wherever she turned, in hovels and in other places, she found one tale after another of sadness and misfortune. She became so involved in ministering to other people's grief that ultimately she forgot about her quest for the magical mustard seed, never realizing that it had, in fact, driven the sorrow out of her life.

Cut the Rope

This story might strengthen our faith! May God! They tell the story of a mountain climber, desperate to conquer the Aconcagua, initiated his climb after years of preparation. But he wanted the glory to himself; therefore, he went up alone. He started climbing and it was becoming later and later. He did not prepare for camping but decided to keep on going. Soon it got dark . . . Night fell with heaviness at such high altitude and there was zero visibility. Everything was black, no moon, and the stars covered by clouds. As he was climbing a ridge at about 100 meters from the top, he slipped and fell. Falling rapidly he could only see blotches of darkness that passed in the same darkness and a terrible sensation of being suctioned by gravity. He kept falling and in those anguishing moments' good and bad memories passed through his mind. He thought he would die. Nevertheless, he felt a jolt that almost tore him in half. Like any good mountain climber he had staked himself with a long rope tied to his waist. In those moments of stillness, suspended in the air he had no other choice but to shout, "HELP ME GOD", "HELP ME!" All of a sudden he heard a deep voice from heaven. "What do you want me to do?" "SAVE ME" "Do you REALLY think that I can save you?" "OF COURSE, MY GOD" "Then cut the rope that is holding you up." There was another moment of silence and stillness. The man held tighter to the rope. The rescue team says that the next day they found, a frozen mountain climber hanging strongly to a rope TWO FEET off the ground . . .

What about you? How trusting are you in that rope? Why don't you let it go? I tell you, God has great and marvellous things for you.

CUT THE ROPE AND SIMPLY TRUST IN HIM.

Dad's Eyes

A teenage boy lived alone with his father. The two of them had a very special relationship. Even though the son was always "warming the bench", his father was always in the stands cheering. He never missed a game. This young man was still the smallest of the class when he entered high school. But his father continued to encourage him but also made it very clear that he did not have to play football if he didn't want to. But the young man loved football and decided to hang in there.

The son was determined to try his best at every practice, and perhaps he'd get to play when he became a senior. All through high school he never missed a practice but still remained a bench warmer all four years. His faithful father was always in the stands, always with words of encouragement for him.

When the young man went to college, he decided to try out for the football team as a "walk-on." Everyone was sure he could never make the cut, but he did. The coach admitted that he kept him on the roster because he always puts his heart and soul to every practice and, at the same time, provided the other members with the spirit and hustle they badly needed.

The news that he had survived the cut thrilled him so much that he rushed to the nearest phone and called his father. His father shared his excitement and was sent season tickets for all the college games. This persistent young athlete never missed practice during his four years at college, but he never got to play in the game.

It was the end of his senior football season, and as he trotted onto the practice field shortly before the big play-off game, the coach met him with a telegram. The young man read the telegram and he became deathly silent. Swallowing hard, he mumbled to the coach, "My father died this morning. Is it all right if I miss practice today?" The coach put his arm gently around his shoulder and said, "Take the rest of the week off, son. And don't even plan to come back to the game on Saturday."

Saturday arrived, and the game was not going well. In the third quarter, when the team was ten points behind, a silent young man quietly slipped into the empty locker room and put on his football gear. As he ran onto the sidelines, the coach and his players were astounded to see their faithful teammate back so soon.

"Coach, please let me play. I've just got to play today," said the young

man. The coach pretended not to hear him. There was no way he wanted his worst player in this close playoff game. But the young man persisted, and finally feeling sorry for the kid, the coach gave in. "All right," he said. "You can go in."

Before long, the coach, the players and everyone in the stands could not believe their eyes. This little unknown, who had never played before was doing everything right. The opposing team could not stop him. He ran, he passed, blocked and tackled like a star. His team began to triumph. The score was soon tied. In the closing seconds of the game, this kid intercepted a pass and ran all the way for the winning touchdown!

The fans broke loose. His teammates hoisted him onto their shoulders. Such cheering you've never heard! Finally, after the stands had emptied and the team had showered and left the locker room, the coach noticed that the young man was sitting quietly in the corner all alone. The coach came to him and said, "Kid, I can't believe it. You were fantastic! Tell me what got into you? How did you do it?"

He looked at the coach, with tears in his eyes, and said, "Well, you knew my dad died, but did you know that my dad was blind?" The young man swallowed hard and forced a smile, "Dad came to all my games, but today was the first time he could see me play, and I wanted to show him I could do it!"

Desire

An emperor was coming out of his palace for his morning walk when he met a beggar. He asked the beggar, "What do you want?"

The beggar laughed and said, "You are asking me as though you can fulfil my desire!"

The king was offended. He said, "Of course I can fulfil your desire. What is it? Just tell me."

And the beggar said, "Think twice before you promise anything."

The beggar was no ordinary beggar; he was the emperor's past life master. He had promised in that life, "I will come and try to wake you in your next life. This life you have missed but I will come again." But the king had forgotten completely -- who remembers past lives? So he insisted, "I will fulfil anything you ask. I am a very powerful emperor, what can you possibly desire that I can not give to you?"

The beggar said, "It is a very simple desire. You see this begging bowl? Can you fill it with something?"

The emperor said, "Of course!" He called one of his viziers and told him, "Fill this mans begging bowl with money." The vizier went and got some money and poured it into the bowl, and it disappeared. And he poured more and more, and the moment he would pour it, it would disappear. And the begging bowl remained always empty.

The whole palace gathered. By and by the rumour went throughout the whole capital, and a huge crowd gathered. The prestige of the emperor was at stake. He said to his viziers, "If the whole kingdom is lost, I am ready to lose it, but I cannot be defeated by this beggar."

Diamonds and pearls and emeralds, his treasuries were becoming empty. The begging bowl seemed to be bottomless. Everything that was put into it -- everything! -- Immediately disappeared, went out of existence. Finally it was the evening, and the people were standing there in utter silence. The king dropped at the feet of the beggar and admitted his defeat. He said, "Just tell me one thing. You are victorious - but before you leave, just fulfil my curiosity. What is the begging bowl made of?"

The beggar laughed and said, "It is made up of the human mind. There is no secret. It is simple made up of human desire."

This understanding transforms life. Go into one desire -- what is the mechanism of it? First there is a great excitement, great thrill, and adventure. You feel a great kick. Something is going to happen; you are on the verge of it. And then you have the car, you have the yacht, you have the house, and suddenly all is meaningless again.

What happens? Your mind has dematerialised it. The car is standing in the drive, but there is no excitement anymore. The excitement was only in getting it. You became so drunk with the desire that you forgot your inner nothingness. Now the desire is fulfilled, the car in the drive, the money in your bank account - again excitement disappears; again the emptiness is there, ready to eat you up. Again you have to create another desire to escape this yawning abyss.

That is how one moves from one desire to another desire. That's how one remains a beggar. Your whole life proves it again and again -- every desire frustrates. And when the goal is achieved, you will need another desire. The day you understand that desire as such is going to fail comes the turning point in your life.

The other journey is inwards. Move inwards; come back home.

Disciple Hood

When the great Sufi mystic, Hasan, was dying, somebody asked "Hasan, who was your master?"

He said, "I had thousands of masters. If I just relate their names it will take months, years and it is too late. But three masters I will certainly tell you about.

One was a thief. Once I got lost in the desert, and when I reached a village it was very late, everything was closed. But at last I found one man who was trying to make a hole in the wall of a house. I asked him where I could stay and he said 'At this time of night it will be difficult, but you can stay with me - if you can stay with a thief'. And the man was so beautiful. I stayed for one month! And each night he would say to me, 'Now I am going to my work. You rest, you pray.' When he came back I would ask 'Could you get anything?' He would say, 'Not tonight. But tomorrow I will try again, God willing.' He was never in a state of hopelessness, he was always happy. When I was meditating and meditating for years on end and nothing was happening, many times the moment came when I was so desperate, so hopeless, that I thought to stop all this nonsense. And suddenly I would remember the thief who would say every night, 'God willing, tomorrow it is going to happen.'

And my second master was a dog. I was going to the river, thirsty and a dog came. He was also thirsty. He looked into the river, he saw another dog there -- his own image -- and became afraid. He would bark and run away, but his thirst was so much that he would come back. Finally, despite his fear, he just jumped into the water, and the image disappeared. And I knew that a message had come to me from God: one has to jump in spite of all fears.

And the third master was a small child. I entered a town and a child was carrying a lit candle. He was going to the mosque to put the candle there. 'Just joking,' I asked the boy, 'have you lit the candle yourself?' He said, 'Yes sir.' And I asked, 'There was a moment when the candle was unlit, and then there was a moment when the candle was lit. Can you show me the source from which the light came?' And the boy laughed, blew out the candle, and said, 'Now you have seen the light going. Where has it gone? You will tell me!' My ego was shattered; my whole knowledge was shattered. And that moment I felt my own stupidity. Since then I dropped all my knowledge ability.

It is true that I had no master. That does not mean that I was not a disciple -- I accepted the whole existence as my master. My Disciple

hood was a greater involvement than yours is. I trusted the clouds, the trees. I trusted existence as such. I had no master because I had millions of masters I learned from every possible source. To be a disciple is a must on the path. What does it mean to be a disciple? It means to be able to learn, to be available to learn, to be vulnerable to existence. With a master you start learning to learn.

The master is a swimming pool where you can learn how to swim. Once you have learned, all the oceans are yours."

Don't Wait

This is a story that makes you see why you should live each day as if it were your last...

There was a guy that was born with cancer, a cancer that has no known cure. He was 17 years old and could die at any moment. He was always at home, under his mother's care.

One day he decided to go out, even if it was just once. He asked his mother for permission and she agreed. Walking down his block he saw many stores. Stopping at a music store he looked in and saw a very pretty girl of his own age, it was love at first sight and he walked in.

He walked up to the counter where the girl was. She smiled at him and asked "Can I help you with anything?" The guy could only think that it was the most beautiful smile he had ever seen and stuttered, "Well, ummm, I'd like to buy a CD". He grabbed the first one he saw and gave her the money. "Do you want me to wrap it?" the smiling girl asked. The guy said yes and the girl went into the back room to wrap it. The guy took the wrapped CD and walked home.

From that day on he visited the music store everyday, and each day he bought a CD. And each day the girl wrapped them up and the guy stored them unopened in his closet.

He was a very shy boy, and although he tried he couldn't find the nerve to ask the girl out. His mother noticed this and encouraged him.

The next day the guy set out for the store with a determined mind, like the previous days he bought a CD and the girl wrapped it as usual. While she was busy he left his telephone on the counter and rushed out of the store.

The following day the guy didn't visit the store, and the girl called him. His mother answered the phone, wondering who it could be. It was the girl from the music store! She asked to speak with her son and his mother started crying. The girl asked her what was the matter. "Don't you know? He died yesterday." There was a long silence on the phone...

Later that afternoon the guy's mother entered his room to remember her son. She decided to start with his closet, and to her surprise she saw a big pile of unopened CDs wrapped in festive paper. She was curious because there were so many of them, and she opened one.

As she tore open the package she noticed a slip of paper that said:
*"Hi! You're cute; I would love to meet you. Let's go out sometime.
Sophie"*

The mother started crying as she opened another, and another, and another. Every single CD contained a slip of paper that said the same.

Moral: That's the way life is, don't wait to show those special people the way you feel, tomorrow could be too late.

A way of Love

There was once this guy who is very much in love with his girl. This romantic guy folded 1,000 pieces of paper-cranes as a gift to his girl. Although, at that time he was just a small fry in his company, his future doesn't seemed too bright, they were very happy together. Until one day, his girl told him she was going to Paris and will never come back. She also told him that she couldn't visualize any future for the both of them, so let's go their own ways there and then ...Heartbroken, the guy agreed. But when he regains his confidence, he worked hard day and night, slogging his body and mind just to make something out of him.

Finally with all these hard work and the help of friends, this guy had set up his own company. You never fail until you stop trying one rainy day, while this guy was driving; he saw an elderly couple sharing an umbrella the rain walking to some destination. Even with the umbrella, they were still drenched. It didn't take him long to realize those were his girl's parents. With a heart in getting back at them, he drove slowly beside the couple, wanting them to spot him in his luxury sedan. He wanted them to know that he wasn't the same anymore; he had his own company, car, comfort etc. He made it! Before the guy can realize, the couple was walking towards a cemetery, and he got out of his car and followed.... and he saw his girl, a photograph of her smiling sweetly as ever at him from her tombstone... and he saw his paper cranes beside her. Find time to realize that there is one person who means so much to you; for you might wake up one morning losing that person who you thought meant nothing to you. Her parents saw him. He asks them why this had happened. They explained that she did not leave for France at all. She was ill with cancer. She had believed that he will make it someday, but she did not want to be his obstacle ... therefore she had chosen to leave him...

She had wanted her parents to put his paper cranes beside her, because, if the day comes when fate brings him to her again he can take some of those back with him...

Just because someone doesn't love you the way you want them to, doesn't mean they don't love you with all they have.

Ears

"Can I see my baby?" the happy new mother asked. When the bundle was nestled in her arms and she moved the fold of cloth to look upon his tiny face, she gasped. The doctor turned quickly and looked out the tall hospital window. The baby had been born without ears. Time proved that the baby's hearing was perfect. It was only his appearance that was marred.

When he rushed home from school one day and flung himself into his mother's arms, she sighed, knowing that his life was to be a succession of heartbreaks.

He blurted out the tragedy. "A boy, a big boy ... called me a freak."

He grew up, handsome for his misfortune. A favourite with his fellow students, he might have been class president, but for that. He developed a gift, a talent for literature and music. "But you might mingle with other young people," his mother reproved him, but felt a kindness in her heart.

The boy's father had a session with the family physician. Could nothing be done? "I believe I could graft on a pair of outer ears, if they could be procured," the doctor decided.

Then the search began for a person who would make such a sacrifice for a young man. Two years went by. Then, "You are going to the hospital, Son. Mother and I have someone who will donate the ears you need. But it's a secret," said the father.

The operation was a brilliant success, and a new person emerged. His talents blossomed into genius, and school and college became a series of triumphs. Later he married and entered the diplomatic service. "But I must know!" He urged his father, "Who gave so much for me? I could never do enough for him." "I do not believe you could," said the father, "but the agreement was that you are not to know, not yet."

The years kept their profound secret, but the day did come ... one of the darkest days that a son must endure. He stood with his father over his mother's casket. Slowly, tenderly, the father stretched forth a hand and raised the thick, reddish-brown hair to reveal that the mother -- had no outer ears.

"Mother said she was glad she never let her hair be cut," he

whispered gently, "and nobody ever thought Mother less beautiful, did they?" Real beauty lies not in the physical appearance, but in the heart. Real treasure lies not in what that can be seen; but what, that cannot be seen.

Real love lies not in what is done and known, but in what that is done but not known.

Case Study in Emotional Intelligence

Sometimes we spend time asking who is responsible or whom to blame, whether in a relationship, in a job or with the people we know. We miss out some warmth in human relationship to give each other support. Treasure what you have.

A boy was born to a couple after eleven years of marriage. They were a loving couple and the boy was the apple of their eyes. When the boy was around two years old, one morning the husband saw a medicine bottle open. He was late for work so he asked the wife to cap the bottle and keep it in the cupboard. The mother, preoccupied in the kitchen totally forgot the matter. The boy playfully went to the medicine bottle and, fascinated with its colour, drank it all. It happened to be a poisonous medicine meant for adults in small dosages. When the child showed signs of poisoning the mother took him to the hospital, where he died. The mother was stunned. She was terrified how to face her husband. When the distraught father came to the hospital and saw the dead child, he looked at his wife and uttered just four words.

QUESTIONS:

1. What were the four words?
2. What is the implication of this story?

Check with the answers only after you have tried to come up with your own.

Please read below: -

**

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ANSWER:

The husband just said “I Love You Darling”. The husband's totally unexpected reaction is proactive behaviour. He is indeed a genius in human relationships. The child is dead. He can never be brought back to life. There is no point in finding fault with the mother.

She had also lost her only child. What she needed at that moment was consolation and sympathy from the husband. That is what he gave her. If everyone can look at life with this kind of perspective, there would be much fewer problems in the world.

Existence of God

A woman received a phone call that her daughter was very sick with fever. She left work and stopped by the pharmacy for some medication for her daughter. When returning to her car to find she had locked her keys inside.

She had to get home to her sick daughter, and didn't know what to do. She called her home to talk to the baby sitter, and was told her daughter was getting worse. The sitter said, "You might find a coat hanger and use that to open the door."

The woman found an old rusty coat hanger on the ground, as if someone else had locked their keys in their car. Then she looked at the hanger and said, "I don't know how to use this."

She bowed her head and asked God for help. An old rusty car pulled up, driven by a dirty, greasy, bearded man with a biker skull rag on his head. The woman thought, "Great God. This is what you sent to help me???" But she was desperate, and thankful.

The man got out of his car and asked if he could help. She said, "Yes, my daughter is very sick. I must get home to her.

Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?

He said, "SURE." He walked over to the car and in seconds the car was opened.

She hugged the man and through her tears she said, "THANK YOU SO MUCH...You are a very nice man."

The man replied, "Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison for car theft." The woman hugged the man again and cried out loud.... "THANK YOU GOD FOR SENDING ME A PROFESSIONAL!" "GOD I love you and I need you. Thank you for living in my heart.

Dr. Tony Campolo in his book, "Carpe Diem"

When I was a kid growing up, I knew a man who loomed bigger than life to me. His name was Edwin E. Bailey, and he ran the astronomical observatory at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. I would go to the Franklin Institute most Saturdays just to spend time with him. His encyclopaedic mind fascinated me. He seemed to know something about everything.

I was a friend with Ed Bailey right up until he died several years ago. When he was in the hospital, after a serious stroke, I went to visit him. In an effort to make small talk, I told about all the places I had been to speak and how I had come to his bedside straight from the airport.

He heard me out and then said with a slightly sarcastic manner, "You go all over the world to people who, ten years from now, won't remember your name. But you haven't left time for the people who really care about you."

That simple sentence hit me hard and changed my life. I have decided not to let my time be used up by people to whom I make no difference, while I neglect those for whom I am irreplaceable.

A friend of mine recently got a call from the White House asking him to consult with the President of the United States. He said no because it was to be on a day he had promised to spend with his granddaughter at the seashore. The nation survived without him, the President didn't miss him, and his granddaughter had some precious time with her "Pop-Pop."

First things ought to be put first.

Flowers on the Bus

We were a very motley crowd of people who took the bus every day that summer 33 years ago. During the early morning ride from the suburb, we sat drowsily with our collars up to our ears, a cheerless and taciturn bunch.

One of the passengers was a small grey man who took the bus to the centre for senior citizens every morning. He walked with a stoop and a sad look on his face when he, with some difficulty, boarded the bus and sat down alone behind the driver. No one ever paid very much attention to him.

Then one July morning he said good morning to the driver and smiled short-sightedly down through the bus before he sat down. The driver nodded guardedly. The rest of us were silent.

The next day, the old man boarded the bus energetically, smiled and said in a loud voice: "And a very good morning to you all!" Some of us looked up, amazed, and murmured "Good morning," in reply.

The following weeks we were more alert. Our friend was now dressed in a nice old suit and a wide out-of-date tie. The thin hair had been carefully combed. He said good morning to us every day and we gradually began to nod and talk to each other.

One morning he had a bunch of wild flowers in his hand. They were already dangling a little because of the heat. The driver turned around smilingly and asked: "Have you got yourself a girlfriend, Charlie?" We never got to know if his name really was "Charlie", but he nodded shyly and said yes.

The other passengers whistled and clapped at him. Charlie bowed and waved the flowers before he sat down on his seat.

Every morning after that Charlie always brought a flower. Some of the regular passengers began bringing him flowers for his bouquet, gently nudged him and said shyly: "Here." Everyone smiled. The men started to jest about it, talk to each other, and share the newspaper.

The summer went by, and autumn was closing in, when one morning Charlie wasn't waiting at his usual stop. When he wasn't there the next day and the day after that, we started wondering if he was sick or -- hopefully -- on holiday somewhere.

When we came nearer to the centre for senior citizens, one of the

passengers asked the driver to wait. We all held our breaths when she went to the door.

Yes, the staff said, they knew whom we were talking about. The elderly gentleman was fine, but he hadn't been coming to the centre that week. One of his very close friends had died at the weekend. They expected him back on Monday. How silent we were the rest of the way to work.

The next Monday Charlie was waiting at the stop, stooping a bit more, a little bit more grey, and without a tie. He seemed to have shrunk again. Inside the bus was a silence akin to that in a church. Even though no one had talked about it, all those of us, who he had made such an impression on that summer, sat with our eyes filled with tears and a bunch of wild flowers in our hands.

Flying First Class

On a flight from Johannesburg, a middle-aged, well-off white South African Lady has found herself sitting next to a black man. She called the cabin crew attendant over to complain about her seating.

"What seems to be the problem Madam?" asked the attendant.

"Can't you see?" she said, "You've sat me next to a black. I can't possibly sit next to this disgusting human. Find me another seat!"

"Please calm down, Madam." the stewardess replied. "The flight is very full today, but I'll tell you what I'll do - I'll go and check to see if we have any seats available in club or first class."

The woman cocks a snooty look at the outraged black man beside her (not to mention many of the surrounding passengers).

A few minutes later the stewardess returns with the good news, which she delivers to the lady, who cannot help but look at the people around her with a smug and self-satisfied grin:

"Madam, unfortunately, as I suspected, economy is full. I've spoken to the cabin services director, and club is also full. However, we do have one seat in first class."

Before the lady has a chance to answer, the stewardess continues...

"It is most extraordinary to make this kind of upgrade, however, and I have had to get special permission from the captain. But, given the circumstances, the captain felt that it was outrageous that someone should be forced to sit next such an obnoxious person."

Having said that, the stewardess turned to the black man sitting next to the lady, and said:

"So if you'd like to get your things, sir, I have your seat ready for you..."

At which point, apparently the surrounding passengers stood and gave a standing ovation while the black man walked up to the front of the plane...

Flying

Once upon a time there was a little boy who was raised in an orphanage. The little boy had always wished that he could fly like a bird. It was very difficult for him to understand why he could not fly. There were birds at the zoo that were much bigger than he, and they could fly "Why can't I?" he thought. "Is there something wrong with me?" he wondered.

There was another little boy who was crippled. He had always wished that he could walk and run like other little boys and girls.

"Why can't I be like them?" he thought.

One day the little orphan boy who had wanted to fly like a bird ran away from the orphanage. He came upon a park where he saw the little boy who could not walk or run playing in the sandbox. He ran over to the little boy and asked him if he had ever wanted to fly like a bird.

"No," said the little boy who could not walk or run. "But I have wondered what it would be like to walk and run like other boys and girls."

"That is very sad", said the little boy who wanted to fly. "Do you think we could be friends?" he said to the little boy in the sandbox.

"Sure." said the little boy.

The two little boys played for hours. They made sand castles and made really funny sounds with their mouths. Sounds, which made them laugh, real hard. Then the little boy's father came with a wheelchair to pick up his son. The little boy who had always wanted to fly ran over to the boy's father and whispered something into his ear.

"That would be OK," said the man.

The little boy who had always wanted to fly like a bird ran over to his new friend and said, "You are my only friend and I wish that there was something that I could do to make you walk and run like other little boys and girls. But I can't. But there is something that I can do for you."

The little orphan boy turned around and told his new friend to slide up

onto his back. He then began to run across the grass. Faster and faster he ran, carrying the little crippled boy on his back. Faster and harder he ran across the park. Harder and harder he made his legs travel. Soon the wind just whistled across the two little boys' faces.

The little boy's father began to cry as he watched his beautiful little crippled son flapping his arms up and down in the wind, all the while yelling at the top of his voice, "I'M FLYING, DADDY. I'M FLYING!"

For Daddy

Some time ago a man punished his 5-year-old daughter for wasting a roll of expensive gold wrapping paper. Money was tight and he became even more upset when the child pasted the gold paper so as to decorate a box to put under the Christmas tree. Nevertheless, the little girl brought the gift box to her father the next morning and said, "This is for you, Daddy."

The father was embarrassed by his earlier overreaction, but his anger flared again when he found the box was empty. He spoke to her in a harsh manner, "Don't you know, young lady, when you give someone a present there's supposed to be something inside the package?"

The little girl looked up at him with tears in her eyes and said, "Oh, Daddy, it's not empty - I blew kisses into it until it was full." The father was crushed. He fell to his knees and put his arms around his little girl, and he begged her to forgive him for his unnecessary anger.

An accident took the life of this child only a short time later and it is told that the father kept that gold box by his bed for all the years of his life. And whenever he was discouraged or faced difficult problems he would open the box and take out an imaginary kiss and remember the love of the child who had put it there.

In a very real sense, each of us as human beings have been given a golden box filled with unconditional love and kisses from our children, family, friends and God. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold.

Gold and Diamond

Long times ago, in Egypt lived a famous mystical person name Zun-Nun. A young man came to visit him and asked "Teacher, I do not understand why people like you dress in such a way and very simple, isn't in this era was necessary to dress neatly, not only for performance but also for other reasons?"

The mystical only smiled and took his ring from one of his fingers, and said "Young friend, I will answer your question, but first do one thing for me, take this ring and go to the market across this street, can you sell this for one chip of gold?"

Having looked at Zun-Nun's dirty ring, the young man became doubtful. "One chip of gold, I am not sure this ring could be sold at that price."

"Try first, young man, who knows you did it." The Young man went to the market quickly. He offered the ring to the textile, vegetable, meat, fish traders, and the others. The fact was that no body was willing to pay for a chip of Gold. He went back to Zun-Nun residence and reported "Teacher, no body was brave to offer more than one chip of silver."

With a wise smile Zun-Nun said, "Now go to the Gold Shop at the back of this street. Show this to the owner or to the gold trader. Don't give your price just listen how much he will pay for this ring."

The Young man went to the shop mentioned and returned with a different expression from his face. He then reported "Teacher, the traders in the market really do not know the value of this ring, the gold trader offer this ring for one thousand of gold, And the value of this ring was one thousands times from what the traders in the market offer. Zun-Nun just smiled subtly and spoke softly, "That was the answer of your questions my friend, "Someone cannot be valued only from his dress "The traders in the market" give value like that. But not for "The gold trader"

The gold and Diamond inside someone only could be seen and valued if you could look at the inner soul. It needs heart to see, and it needs a process. We cannot see it from the words or attitude that only seen for a while. Many time what we think is a gold, is only a brass but a brass is a gold.

How to Stop Gossip, Rumour and Backbiting

In ancient Greece, Socrates was reputed to hold knowledge in high esteem. One day an acquaintance met the great philosopher and said, "Do you know what I just heard about your friend?"

"Hold on a minute," Socrates replied. "Before telling me anything I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the Triple Filter Test."

"Triple filter?"

"That's right," Socrates continued. "Before you talk to me about my friend, it might be a good idea to take a moment and filter what you're going to say. That's why I call it the triple filter test. The first filter is Truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"

"No," the man said, "actually I just heard about it and."

"All right," said Socrates. "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now let's try the second filter, the filter of goodness. Is what you are about to tell me about my friend something good?"

"No, on the contrary..."

"So," Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something bad about him, but you're not certain it's true. You may still pass the test though, because there's one filter left: the filter of usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about my friend going to be useful to me?"

"No not really ..."

"Well," concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither true nor good nor even useful, why tell it to me at all?"

This is why Socrates was a great philosopher & held in such high esteem.

Grandpa's Table

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law, and four-year old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, and his step faltered. The family ate together at the table. But the elderly grandfather's shaky hands and failing sight made eating difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon onto the floor. When he grasped, the glass, milk spilled on the tablecloth. The son and daughter-in-law became irritated with the mess. "We must do something about Grandfather," said the son. "I've had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating, and food on the floor." So the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There, Grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner. Since Grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl. When the family glanced in Grandfather's direction, sometimes he had a tear in his eye as he sat alone. Still, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a fork or spilled food. The four-year-old watched it all in silence. One evening before supper, the father noticed his son playing with wood scraps on the floor. He asked the child sweetly, "What are you making?" Just as sweetly, the boy responded, "Oh, I am making a little bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in when I grow up." The four-year-old smiled and went back to work. The words so struck the parents that they were speechless. Then tears started to stream down their cheeks. Though no word was spoken, both knew what must be done. That evening the husband took Grandfather's hand and gently led him back to the family table. For the remainder of his days he ate every meal with the family. And for some reason, neither husband nor wife seemed to care any longer when a fork was dropped, milk spilled, or the tablecloth soiled.

Children are remarkably perceptive. Their eyes ever observe, their ears ever listen, and their minds ever process the messages they absorb. If they see us patiently provide a happy home atmosphere for family members, they will imitate that attitude for the rest of their lives. The wise parent realizes that every day the building blocks are being laid for the child's future. Let's be wise builders and role models.

"Life is about people connecting with people, and making a positive difference" "Take care of yourself and those you love, today and everyday!"

Growing Good Corn

James Bender, in his book "How to Talk Well" relates the story of a farmer who grew award winning corn. Each year he entered his corn in the state fair where it won a blue ribbon. One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it.

The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbours. "How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbours when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?" the reporter asked. "Why sir," said the farmer, "didn't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbours grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbours grow good corn." He is very much aware of the connectedness of life. His corn cannot improve unless his neighbour's corn also improves.

So it is in other dimensions. Those who choose to be at peace must help their neighbours to be at peace. Those who choose to live well must help others to live well, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. And those who choose to be happy must help others to find happiness, for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all.

The lesson for each of us is this: if we are to grow good corn, we must help our neighbours grow good corn.

Having To Pick One Only

A company was hiring new staff. One question in the written exam was:

You are driving your car in a wild stormy night. You pass by a bus station, and you see three people waiting for the bus: -

An old lady who looks as if she is about to die,

A doctor who had once saved your life,

A man/woman you have been dreaming to be with.

You can only take one passenger in your car. Which one will you choose?

Please explain your answer.

Think about it before you continue reading.

This must be some kind of personality test. Every answer has its reasoning.

You could pick up the old lady. She is going to die, and thus you should save her first. You could take the doctor, because he once saved your life. This will be the perfect chance to pay him back. However, you could always pay the doctor back in the future, but you may never be able to find the perfect lover once you pass this chance.

The candidate who was eventually hired (out of 200 applicants) did not have to explain his answer. WHAT DID HE SAY?

He simply answered: "Give the car key to the doctor. Let him take the old lady to the hospital. I will stay and wait for the bus with the man/woman of my dreams."

Sometimes, we would gain more if we were able to give up our stubborn limitations.

He Needed Me

A nurse escorted a tired, anxious young man to the bedside of an elderly man. "Your son is here," she whispered to the patient. She had to repeat the words several times before the patient's eyes opened. He was heavily sedated because of the pain of his heart attack and he dimly saw the young man standing outside the oxygen tent.

He reached out his hand and the young man tightly wrapped his fingers around it, squeezing a message of encouragement. The nurse brought a chair next to the bedside. All through the night the young man sat holding the old mans hand, and offering gentle words of hope. The dying man said nothing as he held tightly to his son.

As dawn approached, the patient died. The young man placed on the bed the lifeless hand he had been holding, and then he went to notify the nurse. While the nurse did what was necessary, the young man waited. When she had finished her task, the nurse began to say words of sympathy to the young man.

But he interrupted her. "Who was that man?" He asked.

The startled nurse replied, "I thought he was your father."

"No, he was not my father," he answered. "I never saw him before in my life."

"Then why didn't you say something when I took you to him?" asked the nurse.

He replied, "I also knew he needed his son, and his son just wasn't here. When I realized he was too sick to tell whether or not I was his son, I knew how much he needed me..."

Help

In the rain one night, at 11:30 PM, an older black woman was standing on the side of an Alabama highway trying to endure a lashing rainstorm. Her car had broken down and she desperately needed a ride. Soaking wet, she decided to flag down the next car. A young white man stopped to help her, generally unheard of in the conflict-filled 60's. The man took her to safety, helped her get assistance and put her into a taxicab. She seemed to be in a big hurry, but wrote down his address and thanked him.

Seven days went by and a knock came on the man's door. To his surprise, a giant console colour TV was delivered to his home. A special note was attached. It read: -

"Thank you so much for assisting me on the highway the other night. The rain drenched not only my clothes, but also my spirits. Then you came along. Because of you, I was able to make it to my dying husband's bedside just before he passed away. God bless you for helping me and unselfishly serving others.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Nat King Cole.”

How Great Love Is

Once upon a time, there was an island where all the feelings lived: Happiness, Sadness, and all of the others, including Love.

One day it was announced to the feelings that the island would sink, so all repaired their boats and left. Love was the only one who stayed. Love wanted to persevere until the last possible moment when the island was almost sinking, Love decided to ask for help.

Richness was passing by Love in a grand boat. Love said, "Richness, can you take me with you?" Richness answered, "No I can't. There is a lot of gold and silver in my boat. There is no place for you here."

Love decided to ask Vanity who was also passing by in a beautiful vessel, "Vanity, please help me!" "I can't help you Love. You are all wet and might damage my boat," Vanity answered.

Sadness was close by so Love asked for help, "Sadness let me go with you." "Oh...Love, I am so sad that I need to be by myself!" Happiness passed by Love too, but she was so happy that she did not even hear when Love called her!

Suddenly, there was a voice, "Come Love, I will take you." It was an elder. Love felt so blessed and overjoyed that he even forgot to ask the elder her name.

When they arrived at dry land, the elder went her own way. Love realizing how much he owed the elder, asked Knowledge, another elder, "Who helped me?"

"It was Time", Knowledge answered. "Time?" asked Love. "But why did Time help me?" Knowledge smiled with deep wisdom and answered, **"Because only Time is capable of understanding how real Love is."**

Is Your Hut Burning?

The only survivor of a shipwreck was washed up on a small, uninhabited island. He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him, and every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed forthcoming.

Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect him from the elements, and to store his few possessions.

But then one day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, the smoke rolling up to the sky. The worst had happened: Everything was lost. He was stunned with grief and anger. "God, how could you do this to me?" he cried.

Early next morning, however, he was awakened by the sound of a ship that was approaching the island. It had come to rescue him. "How did you know I was here?" asked the weary man of his rescuers. "We saw your smoke signal," they replied.

It is easy to get discouraged when things are going bad. But we shouldn't lose heart, because God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of pain and suffering. Remember, next time your little hut is burning to the ground--it just may be a smoke signal that summons the grace of God.

Just a Little Smile

Mark was walking home from school one day when he noticed the boy ahead of him had tripped and dropped all of the books he was carrying, along with two sweaters, a baseball bat, a glove and a small tape recorder. Mark knelt down and helped the boy pick up the scattered articles. Since they were going the same way, he helped to carry part of the burden. As they walked Mark discovered the boy's name was Bill, that he loved video games, baseball and history, and that he was having lots of trouble with his other subjects and that he had just broken up with his girlfriend.

They arrived at Bill's home first and Mark was invited in for a Coke and to watch some television. The afternoon passed pleasantly with a few laughs and some shared small talk, then Mark went home. They continued to see each other around school, had lunch together once or twice, and then both graduated from junior high school. They ended up in the same high school where they had brief contacts over the years. Finally the long awaited senior year came and three weeks before graduation, Bill asked Mark if they could talk.

Bill reminded him of the day years ago when they had first met. "Did you ever wonder why I was carrying so many things home that day?" asked Bill. "You see, I cleaned out my locker because I didn't want to leave a mess for anyone else. I had stored away some of my mother's sleeping pills and I was going home to commit suicide. But after we spent some time together talking and laughing, I realized that if I had killed myself, I would have missed that time and so many others that might follow. So you see, Mark, when you picked up those books that day, you did a lot more. You saved my life."

Keep Your Eyes Open

It was a very cold winter night! A sparrow had spent two nights out with only the meagre shelter of a tree. He decided that he couldn't survive a third night, so he left the tree to find a better shelter.

As he flew he got colder and colder, until his little wings froze solid and he fell to the ground.

As he lay there freezing he realised that his end was near and he prayed for death to come quickly.

Suddenly, in his semiconscious state, he had a feeling of being enveloped in a warm covering.

He regained consciousness to find that a friendly cow had dropped a luxurious deposit all over him.

The warmth gave him a new lease of life, and the sparrow's comfort made him feel very happy, so he started to sing. A passing pussycat heard the chirping, located the heap, carefully removed the excrement to reveal the little sparrow, and promptly ate him up.....

There are three morals to this sad story: -

1. If someone shits on you, they are not necessarily your enemy.
2. If someone gets you out of the shit, they are not necessarily your friends.
3. If you are in the shit and happy - keep your mouth shut.

To state the same facts in a polished manner: -

1. If someone harms you unknowingly, they are not necessarily your enemy.
2. If someone tries to help you out, they are not necessarily your friends.
3. Even if you are not in very good condition but you are happy, keep your mouth shut (don't cry that I don't have this and that).

Keep Your Goals in Sight

When she looked ahead, Florence Chadwick saw nothing but a solid wall of fog. Her body was numb. She had been swimming for nearly sixteen hours.

Already she was the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions. Now, at age 34, her goal was to become the first woman to swim from Catalina Island to the California coast.

On that Fourth of July morning in 1952, the sea was like an ice bath and the fog was so dense she could hardly see her support boats. Sharks cruised toward her lone figure, only to be driven away by rifle shots. Against the frigid grip of the sea, she struggled on - hour after hour - while millions watched on national television.

Alongside Florence in one of the boats, her mother and her trainer offered encouragement. They told her it wasn't much farther. But all she could see was fog. They urged her not to quit. She never had . . . until then. With only a half mile to go, she asked to be pulled out.

Still thawing her chilled body several hours later, she told a reporter, "Look, I'm not excusing myself, but if I could have seen land I might have made it." It was not fatigue or even the cold water that defeated her. It was the fog. She was unable to see her goal.

Two months later, she tried again. This time, despite the same dense fog, she swam with her faith intact and her goal clearly pictured in her mind. She knew that somewhere behind that fog were land and this time she made it! Florence Chadwick became the first woman to swim the Catalina Channel, eclipsing the men's record by two hours!

Let the Light Shine

He was driving home one evening, on a two-lane country road. Work, in this small Midwestern community, was almost as slow as his beat-up Pontiac, but he never quit looking. Ever since the factory closed, he'd been unemployed, and with winter raging on, the chill had finally hit home.

It was a lonely road. Not very many people had a reason to be on it, unless they were leaving. Most of his friends had already left. They had families to feed and dreams to fulfil, but he stayed on. After all, this was where he buried his mother and father. He was born here and knew the country.

He could go down this road blind, and tell you what was on either side, and with his headlights not working, that came in handy. It was starting to get dark and light snow flurries were coming down. He'd better get a move on.

You know, he almost didn't see the old lady, stranded on the side of the road. But even in the dim light of day, he could see she needed help. So he pulled up in front of her Mercedes and got out. His Pontiac was still sputtering when he approached her.

Even with the smile on his face, she was worried. No one had stopped to help for the last hour or so. Was he going to hurt her? He did not look safe; he looked poor and hungry.

He could see that she was frightened, standing out there in the cold. He knew how she felt. It was that chill that only fear could put in you. He said, "I'm here to help you ma'am. Why don't you wait in the car where it's warm? By the way, my name is Joe."

Well, all she had was a flat tire, but for an old lady, that was bad enough. Joe crawled under the car looking for a place to put the jack, skinning his knuckles a time or two. Soon he was able to change the tire, but he had to get dirty and his hands hurt. As he was tightening up the lug nuts, she rolled down her window and began to talk to him. She told him that she was from St. Louis and was only just passing through. She couldn't thank him enough for coming to her aid.

Joe just smiled as he closed her trunk. She asked him how much she owed him. Any amount would have been all right with her. She had already imagined all the awful things that could have happened had he not stopped.

Joe never thought twice about the money. This was not a job to him. This was helping someone in need, and God knows there were plenty who had given him a hand in the past. He had lived his whole life that way, and it never occurred to him to act any other way. He told her that if she really wanted to pay him back, the next time she saw someone who needed help, she could give that person the assistance that they needed, and Joe added "...and think of me".

He waited until she started her car and drove off. It had been a cold and depressing day, but he felt good as he headed for home, disappearing into the twilight. A few miles down the road the lady saw a small cafe. She went in to grab a bite to eat, and take the chill off before she made the last leg of her trip home. It was a dingy looking restaurant. Outside were two old gas pumps. The whole scene was unfamiliar to her. The cash register was like the telephone of an out of work actor-it didn't ring much.

Her waitress came over and brought a clean towel to wipe her wet hair. She had a sweet smile, one that even being on her feet for the whole day couldn't erase. The lady noticed that the waitress was nearly eight months pregnant, but she never let the strain and aches change her attitude. The old lady wondered how someone who had so little could be so giving to a stranger. Then she remembered Joe.

After the lady finished her meal and the waitress went to get her change from a hundred dollar bill, the lady slipped right out the door. She was gone by the time the waitress came back. She wondered where the lady could be, and then she noticed something written on a napkin. There were tears in her eyes, when she read what the lady wrote. It said, "You don't owe me a thing, I've been there too. Someone once helped me out, the way I'm helping you. If you really want to pay me back, here's what you do... Don't let the chain of love end with you."

Well, there were tables to clear, sugar bowls to fill, and people to serve, but the waitress made it through another day. That night when she got home from work and climbed into bed, she was thinking about the money and what the lady had written. How could she have known how much she and her husband needed it? With the baby due next month, it was going to be hard. She knew how worried her husband was, and as he lay sleeping next to her, she gave him a soft kiss and whispered soft and low, "Everything's going to be all right; I love you **Joe**."

Letting Go

There was once a lonely girl who longed desperately for love. One day while she was walking in the woods she found two starving songbirds. She took them home and put them in a small glided cage. She nurtured them with love and the birds grew strong. Every morning they greeted her with a marvellous song. The girl felt great love for the birds. She wanted their singing to last forever.

One day the girl left the door to the cage open. The larger and stronger of the two birds flew from the cage. The girl watched anxiously as he circled high above her. She was so frightened that he would fly away and she would never see him again that as he flew close, she grasped at him wildly. She caught him in her fist. She clutched him tightly within her hand. Her heart gladdened at her success in capturing him. Suddenly she felt the bird go limp. She opened her hand stared in horror at the dead bird. Her desperate clutching love had killed him.

She noticed the other bird teetering on the edge of the cage. She could feel his great need for freedom, his need to soar into the clear blue sky. She lifted him from the cage and tossed him softly into the air. The bird circled once, twice, three times.

The girl watched delighted at the bird's enjoyment. Her heart was no longer concerned with her loss. She wanted the bird to be happy. Suddenly the bird flew closer and landed softly on her shoulder. It sang the sweetest melody, she had ever heard.

The fastest way to lose love is to hold on too tight, the best way to keep love is to give it -- WINGS!

Live or Work

Father was a hardworking man who delivered bread as a living to support his wife and three children. He spent all his evenings after work attending classes, hoping to improve himself so that he could one day find a better paying job. Except for Sundays, Father hardly ate a meal together with his family. He worked and studied very hard because he wanted to provide his family with the best money could buy.

Whenever the family complained that he was not spending enough time with them, he reasoned that he was doing all this for them. But he often yearned to spend more time with his family.

The day came when the examination results were announced. To his joy, Father passed, and with distinctions too! Soon after, he was offered a good job as a senior supervisor, which paid handsomely.

Like a dream come true, Father could now afford to provide his family with life's little luxuries like nice clothing, fine food and vacation abroad.

However, the family still did not get to see father for most of the week. He continued to work very hard, hoping to be promoted to the position of manager. In fact, to make himself a worthy candidate for the promotion, he enrolled for another course in the Open University.

Again, whenever the family complained that he was not spending enough time with them, he reasoned that he was doing all this for them. But he often yearned to spend more time with his family.

Father's hard work paid off and he was promoted. Jubilantly, he decided to hire a maid to relieve his wife from her domestic tasks. He also felt that their three-room flat was no longer big enough; it would be nice for his family to be able to enjoy the facilities and comfort of a condominium. Having experienced the rewards of his hard work many times before, Father resolved to further his studies and work at being promoted again. The family still did not get to see much of him. In fact, sometimes father had to work on Sundays entertaining clients. Again, whenever the family complained that he was not spending enough time with them, he reasoned that he was doing all this for them. But he often yearned to spend more time with his family.

As expected, Father's hard work paid off again and he bought a beautiful condominium, overlooking the coast of Singapore. On the first Sunday evening at their new home, father declared to his family that he decided not to take any more courses or pursue any more promotions. From then on he was going to devote more time to his family.

Father did not wake up the next day.

Looks Can Be Deceiving

John Blanchard stood up from the bench, straightened his Army uniform, and studied the crowd of people making their way through Grand Central Station. He looked for the girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he didn't, the girl with the rose. His interest in her had begun thirteen months before in a Florida library.

Taking a book off the shelf he found himself intrigued, not with the words of the book, but with the notes pencilled in the margin. The soft handwriting reflected a thoughtful soul and insightful mind. In the front of the book, he discovered the previous owner's name, Miss Hollis Maynell.

With time and effort he located her address. She lived in New York City. He wrote her a letter introducing him and inviting her to correspond. The next day he was shipped overseas for service in World War II.

During the next year and one month the two grew to know each other through the mail. Each letter was a seed falling on a fertile heart. A romance was budding. Blanchard requested a photograph, but she refused. She felt that if he really cared, it wouldn't matter what she looked like. When the day finally came for him to return from Europe, they scheduled their first meeting - 7:00 PM at the Grand Central Station in New York.

"You'll recognize me," she wrote, "by the red rose I'll be wearing on my lapel." So at 7:00 he was in the station looking for a girl whose heart he loved, but whose face he'd never seen.

I'll let Mr. Blanchard tell you what happened:

A young woman was coming toward me, her figure long and slim. Her blonde hair lay back in curls from her delicate ears; her eyes were blue as flowers. Her lips and chin had a gentle firmness, and in her pale green suit she was like springtime come alive. I started toward her, entirely forgetting to notice that she was not wearing a rose.

As I moved, a small, provocative smile curved her lips. "Going my way, sailor?" she murmured. Almost uncontrollably I made one step closer to her, and then I saw Hollis Maynell. She was standing almost directly behind the girl. A woman well past 40, she had greying hair tucked under a worn hat. She was more than plump, her thick-ankle feet thrust into low-heeled shoes. The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away.

I felt as though I was split in two, so keen was my desire to follow her, and yet so deep was my longing for the woman whose spirit had truly companioned me and upheld my own. And there she stood. Her pale, plump face was gentle and sensible; her grey eyes had a warm and kindly twinkle. I did not hesitate. My fingers gripped the small worn blue leather copy of the book that was to identify me to her.

This would not be love, but it would be something precious, something perhaps even better than love, a friendship for which I had been and must ever be grateful. I squared my shoulders and saluted and held out the book to the woman, even though while I spoke I felt choked by the bitterness of my disappointment.

"I'm Lieutenant John Blanchard, and you must be Miss Maynell. I am so glad you could meet me; may I take you to dinner?"

The woman's face broadened into a tolerant smile. "I don't know what this is about, son," she answered, "but the young lady in the green suit who just went by, she begged me to wear this rose on my coat. And she said if you were to ask me out to dinner, I should go and tell you that she is waiting for you in the big restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of test!"

It's not difficult to understand and admire Miss Maynell's wisdom. ***The true nature of a heart is seen in its response to the unattractive.***

Nails in the Fence

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His Father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the fence. The first day the boy had to drive 15 nails into the fence.

Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there."

A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one. Friends are very rare jewels, indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear, they share words of praise and they always want to open their hearts to us.

Never Lose Your Value

A well-known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?" Hands started going up.

He said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you but first, let me do this."

He proceeded to crumple the dollar bill up. He then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air.

"Well," he replied, "What if I do this?" And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now all crumpled and dirty.

"Now who still wants it?" Still the hands went into the air.

"My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth \$20.

Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value. You are special - Don't ever forget it.

Obstacles and Opportunities

In ancient times, a King had a boulder placed on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, but none did anything about getting the stone out of the way.

Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. After the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the king indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway. The peasant learned what many of us never understand. Every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve our condition.

One Friendly Act

One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, “Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd. “I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friends tomorrow afternoon), so shrugged my shoulders and went on. As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him. He looked up and I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So, I jogged over to him and as he crawled around looking for his glasses and I saw a tear in his eye. As I handed him his glasses, I said, “Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives.” He looked at me and said, “Hey thanks!” There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude. I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. I would have never hung out with a private school kid before. We talked all the way home, and I carried his books for him. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play football on Saturday with my friends and me. He said yes. We hung all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him, and my friends thought the same of him. Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, “Boy, you’re going to really build serious muscles with this pile of books everyday!” He just laughed and handed me half the books. Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown, and I was going to duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor, and I was going for business on a football scholarship. Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn’t me having to get up there and speak. On graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found him during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses. He had more dates than me and all the girls loved him. Boy, sometimes I was jealous. Today was one of those days. I could see that he was nervous about his speech. So, I smacked him on the back and said, “Hey, big guy, you’ll be great!” He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. Thanks,” he said. As he started his speech, he cleared his

throat, and began. "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years; your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach but mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give him or her. I am going to tell you a story." I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. "Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable." I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment.

I saw his mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize its depth.

Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life, for better or worse. God puts us all in each other's lives to impact one another in some way.

Our Parents

A long time ago, there was a huge apple tree. A little boy loved to come and play around it everyday. He climbed the tree top, ate the apples, and took a nap under the shadow... He loved the tree and the tree loved to play with him. Time went by... the little boy had grown up and he no longer played around the tree everyday.

One day, the boy came back to the tree and he looked sad." Come and play with me," the tree asked the boy." I am no longer a kid; I don't play around trees anymore." The boy replied, "I want toys. I need money to buy them."

The tree said, "Sorry, but I don't have money... but you can pick all my apples and sell them. So, you will have money." The boy was so excited. He grabbed all the apples on the tree and left happily. The boy never came back after he picked the apples. The tree was sad.

One day, the boy returned and the tree was so excited." Come and play with me," the tree said. The boy said, "I don't have time to play. I have to work for my family. We need a house for shelter. Can you help me?" "Sorry, but I don't have a house. But you can chop off my branches to build your house." So the boy cut all the branches of the tree and left happily. The tree was glad to see him happy but the boy never came back since then. The tree was again lonely and sad.

One hot summer day, the boy returned and the tree was delighted." Come and play with me!" the tree said. "I am sad and getting old. I want to go sailing to relax myself. Can you give me a boat?" said the boy. "Use my trunk to build your boat. You can sail far away and be happy." So the boy cut the tree trunk to make a boat. He went sailing and never showed up for a long time.

Finally, the boy returned after he left for so many years. "Sorry, my boy, but I don't have anything for you anymore. No more apples for you..." The tree said." I don't have teeth to bite" the boy replied. "No more trunk for you to climb on" "I am too old for that now" the boy said. "I really can't give you anything ... the only thing left is my dying roots" the tree said with tears. "I don't need much now, just a place to rest. I am tired after all these years." The boy replied. "Good! Old tree roots are the best place to lean on and rest. Come, Come sit down with me and rest." The boy sat down and the tree was glad and smiled with tears...

This is a story of everyone. The tree is our parent. When we were

young, we loved to play with Mom and Dad... When we grew up, we left them... only came to them when we needed something or when we were in trouble. No matter what, parents will always be there and give everything they could to make you happy. You may think the boy is cruel to the tree but that's how all of us are treating our parent.

Remember Parents give children their ALL, all children can give them in turn is LOVE. Go home and tell your parents how thankful you are.

Rat Trap

A rat looked through a crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife opening a package. What food might it contain? He was aghast to discover that it was a rattrap. Retreating to the farmyard the rat proclaimed the warning; "There is a rat trap in the house, a rat trap in the house!"

The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Rat, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it."

The rat turned to the goat and told him, "There is a rat trap in the house". "A rat trap in the house? I am so very sorry Mr. Rat"; sympathized the goat," but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured that you are in my prayers."

The rat turned to the cow. She said, "Like wow, Mr. Rat, a rat trap. I am in grave danger. Duh! "So the rat returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's rattrap alone. That very night a sound was heard throughout the house, like the sound of a rattrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see that it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer's wife.

The farmer rushed her to the hospital. She returned home with a fever. Now everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient. His wife's sickness continued so that friends and neighbours came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them the farmer butchered the goat. The farmer's wife did not get well. She died, and so many people came for her funeral that the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide meat for all of them to eat.

So the next time you hear that someone is facing a problem and think that it does not concern you, remember that when there is a rattrap in the house, the whole farmyard is at risk.

Read It Carefully, Very Important

A man came home from work late, tired and irritated, to find his 5 years old son waiting for him at the door.

Son: - "Daddy, May I ask you a question?"

Daddy: - "Yeah sure, what it is?"

Son: - "Dad, how much do u make an hour?"

Daddy: - "That's none of your business. Why you ask such a thing?" that man said angrily

Son: -" I just want to know. Please tell me, how much do you make an hour?"

Daddy: -" If you must know, I make Rs.500 an hour." "Oh," the little boy replied, with his head down, looking up, he said, "Dad, may I please borrow Rs 300?"

The father was furious," If the only reason u asked that is so u can borrow some money to buy a silly toy or other nonsense, then march yourself to your room and go to bed, Think why u are being so selfish. I work hard everyday for such this childish behaviour."

The little boy quietly went to his room and shut the door. The man sat down and started to get even angrier about the little boy's questions. How dare he ask such questions only to get some money?

After about an hour or so, the man had calmed down, and started to think "May be there was something he really needed to buy with that Rs. 300 and he really didn't ask for money very often! " The man went to the door of little boy's room and opened the door." Are u asleep, son?" He asked. No daddy, I'm awake," replied the boy.

I've been thinking, may be I was too hard on you earlier," said the man, it's been a long day and I took out my aggravation on you. Here's the Rs. 300 you asked for."

The little boy sat straight up, smiling. "Oh thank you dad!" He yelled. Then, reaching under his pillow he pulled some crumpled up bills. The man seeing that the boy already had money, started to get angry again.

The little boy slowly counted out his money, then looked up at his father.” Why do you want money if you already have some?” the father grumbled.” Because I didn't have enough, but now I do,” the little boy replied.

“Daddy, I have Rs. 500 now. Can I buy an hour of your time? Please come home early tomorrow. I would like to have dinner with you”.

THE MORAL OF THIS STORY: - It's just a short reminder to all of you working so hard in life. We should not let time slip through our fingers without having spent some time with those who really matter to us, those close to our hearts.

If we die tomorrow, the company that we are working for could easily replace us in a matter of days. But the family & friends we leave behind will feel the loss for the rest of their lives. And come to think of it, we pour ourselves more into work than to our family. An unwise investment indeed!!!

Refusing to Accept Failure

Sir Edmund Hillary was the first man to climb Mount Everest. On May 29, 1953 he scaled the highest mountain then known to man-29, 000 feet straight up. He was knighted for his efforts. He even made American Express card commercials because of it! However, until we read his book, *High Adventure*, we don't understand that Hillary had to grow into this success. You see, in 1952 he attempted to climb Mount Everest, but failed. A few weeks later a group in England asked him to address its members. Hillary walked on stage to a thunderous applause. The audience was recognizing an attempt at greatness, but Edmund Hillary saw himself as a failure. He moved away from the microphone and walked to the edge of the platform. He made a fist and pointed at a picture of the mountain. He said in a loud voice, "Mount Everest, you beat me the first time, but I'll beat you the next time because you've grown all you are going to grow... but I'm still growing!"

Rest Smart

Once there were a group of man - a young hot-blooded guy and a big number of old folks, doing timber job in a jungle (i.e. chopping down trees).

This young chap is very hard working. He always continues to work through his break time and complains that those old folks were wasting time, having to break few times a day to drink and chat.

As times goes by, this young guy noticed that even though he worked thru' break time and hardly took a rest... those old folks are chopping the same amount of trees as he did and sometimes did more than he did. It was as if those old folks work thru' the break time as he did. So he decided to work harder the next day...unfortunately the results were even worse.

One day, one of the old folk invited him for a drink during their break time. That young guy refused and said he has no extra time to spend! Then the old man smiled to him and said "It was just a waste of effort to keep chopping trees without re-sharpening your knife. Sooner or later you will give up or be so exhausted as you have spent too much energy." Suddenly the young man realised that actually during break times while those old folks were having a chat, they were also re-sharpening their knife at the same time! And that's how they can chop faster than him and yet spending lesser time! The old man said "What we need is efficiency by making use of our skill and ability intelligently. Only then can we have more times to do other things. Otherwise you will always keep saying ... I have no time!"

The morale of the story: -

By taking a short break during work, it would make you feel fresher, think well and work better after the break! (Or am I just finding excuse to take a break?)

But by taking a break, it is not to stop work but to rest and re-think our strategy to go about it from another angle.

Think smart, work smart and rest smart.

Rocking With Me

There was once an elderly, despondent woman in a nursing home. She wouldn't speak to anyone or request anything. She merely existed - rocking in her creaky old rocking chair.

The old woman didn't have many visitors. But every couple mornings, a concerned and wise young nurse would go into her room. She didn't try to speak or ask questions of the old lady. She simply pulled up another rocking chair beside the old woman and rocked with her.

Weeks or months later, the old woman finally spoke. 'Thank you,' she said. 'Thank you for rocking with me.'

Run Through the Rain

She had been shopping with her Mom in Wal-Mart. She must have been 6 years old, this beautiful brown haired, freckle-faced image of innocence. It was pouring outside. The kind of rain that gushes over the top of rain gutters, so much in a hurry to hit the Earth it has no time to flow down the spout.

We all stood there under the awning and just inside the door of the Wal-Mart. We waited, some patiently, others irritated because nature messed up their hurried day. I am always mesmerized by rainfall. I get lost in the sound and sight of the heavens washing away the dirt and dust of the world. Memories of running, splashing so carefree as a child come pouring in as a welcome reprieve from the worries of my day.

Her voice was so sweet as it broke the hypnotic trance we were all caught in. “Mom, let's run through the rain,” she said.

What?" Mom asked.

“Let’s run through the rain!” She repeated.

"No honey. We'll wait until it slows down a bit," Mom replied.

This young child waited about another minute and repeated: "Mom, let's run through the rain."

"We'll get soaked if we do," Mom said.

"No, we won't, Mom. That's not what you said this morning," the young girl said as she tugged at her Mom's arm.

“This morning when did I say we could run through the rain and not get wet?"

"Don't you remember? When you were talking to Daddy about his cancer, you said, 'If God can get us through this, he can get us through anything!'”

The entire crowd stopped dead silent. I swear you couldn't hear anything but the rain. We all stood silently. No one came or left in the next few minutes. Mom paused and thought for a moment about what she would say.

Now some would laugh it off and scold her for being silly. Some might even ignore what was said. But this was a moment of affirmation in a young child's life. Time, when innocent trust can be nurtured and bloom into faith. "Honey, you are absolutely right. Let's run through the rain. If God let's us get wet, well maybe we just needed washing," Mom said. Then off they ran.

We all stood watching, smiling and laughing as they darted past the cars and, yes, through the puddles. They held their shopping bags over their heads just in case. They got soaked. But they were followed by a few who screamed and laughed like children all the way to their cars. And yes, I did. I ran. I got wet. I needed washing. Circumstances or people can take away your material possessions, they can take away your money, and they can take away your health. But no one can ever take away your precious memories. So, don't forget to make time and take the opportunities to make memories every day!

To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven. I hope you still take the time to run through the rain.

Sand Writing

A story tells that two friends were walking through the desert. In a specific point of the journey, they had an argument, and one friend slapped the other one in the face.

The one, who got slapped, was hurt, but without anything to say, he wrote in the sand: "TODAY, MY BEST FRIEND SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE".

They kept on walking, until they found an oasis, where they decided to take a bath. The one who got slapped and hurt started drowning, and the other friend saved him. When he recovered from the fright, he wrote on a stone: "TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SAVED MY LIFE".

The friend who saved and slapped his best friend, asked him, "Why, after I hurt you, you wrote in the sand, and now you write on a stone?" The other friend, smiling, replied: "When a friend hurts us, we should write it down in the sand, where the winds of forgiveness get in charge of erasing it away, and when something great happens, we should engrave it in the stone of the memory of the heart, where no wind can erase it"

Learn to write in the sand.

Scars

Some years ago on a hot summer day in south Florida a little boy decided to go for a swim in the old swimming hole behind his house. In a hurry to dive into the cool water, he ran out the back door, leaving behind shoes, socks, and shirt as he went. He flew into the water, not realizing that as he swam toward the middle of the lake, an alligator was swimming toward the shore. His mother, in the house was looking out the window; saw the two as they got closer and closer together. In utter fear, she ran toward the water, yelling to her son as loudly as she could. Hearing her voice, the little boy became alarmed and made a U-turn to swim to his mother. It was too late. Just as he reached her, the alligator reached him. From the dock, the mother grabbed her little boy by the arms just as the alligator snatched his legs. That began an incredible tug-of-war between the two. The alligator was much stronger than the mother, but the mother was much too passionate to let go. A farmer happened to drive by, heard her screams, raced from his truck, took aim and shot the alligator. Remarkably, after weeks and weeks in the hospital, the little boy survived. His legs were extremely scarred by the vicious attack of the animal. And, on his arms, were deep scratches where his mother's fingernails dug into his flesh in her effort to hang on to the son she loved.

The newspaper reporter, who interviewed the boy after the trauma, asked if he would show him his scars. The boy lifted his pant legs. And then, with obvious pride, he said to the reporter, "But look at my arms. I have great scars on my arms too. I have them because my mom wouldn't let go." You and I can identify with that little boy. We have scars too, no, not from an alligator or anything quite so dramatic but the scars of a painful past. Some of those scars are unsightly and have caused us deep regret. But, some wounds, my friend, are because God has refused to let go. In the midst of your struggle, He's been there holding on to you. God loves you. He wants to protect you and provide for you in every way. But sometimes we foolishly wade into dangerous situations. The swimming hole of life is filled with peril - and we forget that the enemy is waiting to attack. That's when the tug-of-war begins, and if you have the scars of His love on your arms, then be very, very grateful. He did not - and will not - let you go.

Seven Wonders of the World

A group of students was asked to list what they thought were the present Seven Wonders of the World. Though there was some disagreement, the following got the most votes:

1. Egypt's Great Pyramids.
2. Taj Mahal.
3. Grand Canyon.
4. Panama Canal.
5. Empire State Building.
6. St. Peter's Basilica.
7. China's Great Wall.

While gathering the votes, the teacher noted that one quiet student hadn't turned in her paper yet. So she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list.

The girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many."

The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help." The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the Seven Wonders of the World are: -

1. To touch.
2. To taste.
3. To see.
4. To hear.

She hesitated a little, and then added: -

5. To feel.
6. To laugh.
7. And to love.

The room was so full of silence you could have heard a pin drop. Those things we overlook as simple and "ordinary" are truly wondrous.

A gentle reminder that the most precious things are before you: your family, your faith, your love, your good health and your friends.

Sleeping Through the Storm

A young man applied for a job as a farmhand. When the farmer asked for his qualifications, he said, "I can sleep when the wind blows." This puzzled the farmer. But he liked the young man, and hired him.

A few days later, the farmer and his wife were awakened in the night by a violent storm. They quickly began to check things out to see if all was secure. They found that the shutters of the farmhouse had been securely fastened. A good supply of logs had been set next to the fireplace.

The young man slept soundly.

The farmer and his wife then inspected their property. They found that the farm tools had been placed in the storage shed, safe from the elements.

The tractor had been moved into the garage. The barn was properly locked. Even the animals were calm. All was well.

The farmer then understood the meaning of the young man's words, "I can sleep when the wind blows."

Because the farmhand did his work loyally and faithfully when the skies were clear, he was prepared for the storm when it broke. So when the wind blew, he was not afraid. He could sleep in peace.

Slow Down

About ten years ago, a young and very successful executive named Josh was travelling down a Chicago neighbourhood street. He was going a bit too fast in his sleek, black, 12 cylinders Jaguar XKE, which was only two months old. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something.

As his car passed, no child darted out, but a brick sailed out and -- WHUMP! -- It smashed into the Jag's shiny black side door! SCREECH! Brakes slammed! Gears ground into reverse, and tires madly spun the Jaguar back to the spot from where the brick had been thrown. Josh jumped out of the car, grabbed the kid and pushed him up against a parked car.

He shouted at the kid, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing?" Building up a head of steam, he went on. "That's my new Jag; that brick you threw is going to cost you a lot of money. Why did you throw it?"

"Please, mister, please...I'm sorry! I didn't know what else to do!" pleaded the youngster. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop!" Tears were dripping down the boy's chin as he pointed around the parked car. "It's my brother, mister," he said. "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up." Sobbing, the boy asked the executive, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me."

Moved beyond words, the young executive tried desperately to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. Straining, he lifted the young man back into the Wheelchair and took out his handkerchief and wiped the scrapes and cuts, checking to see that everything was going to be OK. He then watched the younger brother push him down the sidewalk toward their home.

It was a long walk back to the sleek, black, shining, 12 cylinders Jaguar XKE -- a long and slow walk. Now, Josh never did fix the side door of his Jaguar. He kept the dent to remind him not to go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at him to get his attention.

Small Things That Make a Big Difference

There was a man taking a morning walk at the beach. He saw that along with the morning tide came hundreds of starfish and when the tide receded, they were left behind and with the morning sun they would die. The tide was fresh and the starfish were alive. The man took a few steps, picked one and threw it into the water. He went to the next and did the same and so on. One after the other he kept throwing them back into the water.

Right behind him there was another person who couldn't understand what this man was doing. He caught up with him and asked, “What are you doing? There are hundreds of starfish. How many can you help? What difference does it make?” This man did not reply, took two more steps, picked up another one, threw it into the water, and said, “It makes a difference to this one.”

What difference are we making? Big or small, it does not matter. If everyone made a small difference, we'd end up with a big difference, wouldn't we?

Special Olympics

The incident took place a few years ago at the Seattle Special Olympics. The Special Olympics is a competition, which is open to mentally retarded and mentally disabled children. In this competition, youngsters, each with some form of disability, compete against each other. Everyone was tense. The race was getting ready to start. Nine children, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash.

As the starter fired the shot that started the race, all the children in the race started to run. Well, not exactly in a dash like other children might have started to run. They all started with a relish and determination to run the race to the finish and win. They wanted so much to be like other children. Their proud parents sat in the stands.

All the youngsters started out in that race except one little fellow who was so determined to win that he accidentally slipped and stumbled on the asphalt. Because he had built up such a tremendous thrust, he tumbled over and over and rolled uncontrollably on the ground. When he finally came to a halt, he began to cry.

The other eight children in the competition, who were well ahead of the one who fell, heard the boy cry. They looked back, and when they saw what had happened, they not only slowed down, they began to walk back to the child who had fallen.

One little girl with Down's syndrome, who was slightly older than the others, ran over to the youngster who had fallen and she held his bruised knee. She bent over and kissed the knee, adding, "This will make it all better." The others helped him up. Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line.

Everyone in the stadium stood up! The cheering went on for several minutes as tears filled the eyes of those who saw the incident.

People who were in the stands are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down every one of us knows that what really matters in this life is more than simply winning for ourselves... What matters is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.

Special Orders

Horror gripped the heart of the World War I soldier as he saw his lifelong friend fall in battle. Caught in a trench with continuous gunfire whizzing over his head, the soldier asked his lieutenant if he might go out into the "No Man's Land" between the trenches to bring his fallen comrade back.

"You can go," said the Lieutenant, "but I don't think it will be worth it. Your friend is probably dead and you may throw your own life away." The Lieutenant's words didn't matter, and the soldier went anyway.

Miraculously he managed to reach his friend, hoist him onto his shoulder, and bring him back to their company's trench. As the two of them tumbled in together to the bottom of the trench, the officer checked the wounded soldier, and then looked kindly at his friend. "I told you it wouldn't be worth it," he said. "Your friend is dead, and you are mortally wounded."

"It was worth it, though, sir," the soldier said.

"How do you mean, 'worth it?'" responded the Lieutenant, "Your friend is dead!"

"Yes sir," the soldier answered. "But it was worth it because when I got to him, he was still alive, and I had the satisfaction of hearing him say, **'FRIEND, I knew you'd come.'** "

Stone Soup Story

Many years ago three soldiers, hungry and weary of battle, came upon a small village. The villagers, suffering a meagre harvest and the many years of war, quickly hid what little they had to eat and met the three at the village square, wringing their hands and bemoaning the lack of anything to eat.

The soldiers spoke quietly among themselves and the first soldier then turned to the village elders. "Your tired fields have left you nothing to share, so we will share what little we have: the secret of how to make soup from stones."

Naturally the villagers were intrigued and soon a fire was put to the town's greatest kettle as the soldiers dropped in three smooth stones. "Now this will be a fine soup", said the second soldier; "but a pinch of salt and some parsley would make it wonderful!" Up jumped a villager, crying, "What luck! I've just remembered where some has been left!" And off she ran, returning with an apron full of parsley and a turnip. As the kettle boiled on, the memory of the village improved: soon barley, carrots, beef and cream had found their way into the great pot, and a cask of wine was rolled into the square as all sat down to feast.

They ate and danced and sang well into the night, refreshed by the feast and their newfound friends. In the morning the three soldiers awoke to find the entire village standing before them. At their feet lay a satchel of the village's best breads and cheese. "You have given us the greatest of gifts: the secret of how to make soup from stones", said an elder, "and we shall never forget." The third soldier turned to the crowd, and said: "There is no secret, but this is certain: it is only by sharing that we may make a feast", and off the soldiers wandered, down the road.

Struggle

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared; he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no farther.

Then the man decided to help the butterfly, so he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shrivelled wings.

The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time.

Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shrivelled wings. It never was able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were nature's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If nature allowed us to go through our life without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. And we could never fly...

The Builder

An elderly carpenter was ready to retire. He told his employer-contractor of his plans to leave the house building business and live a more leisurely life with his wife enjoying his extended family. He would miss the pay cheque, but he needed to retire. They could get by.

The contractor was sorry to see his good worker go and asked if he could build just one more house as a personal favour. The carpenter said yes, but in time it was easy to see that his heart was not in his work. He resorted to shoddy workmanship and used inferior materials. It was an unfortunate way to end his career.

When the carpenter finished his work and the builder came to inspect the house, the contractor handed the front-door key to the carpenter. "This is your house," he said, "my gift to you."

What a shock! What a shame! If he had only known he was building his own house, he would have done it all so differently. Now he had to live in the home he had built none too well.

So it is with us. We build our lives in a distracted way, reacting rather than acting, willing to put up less than the best. At important points we do not give the job our best effort. Then with a shock we look at the situation we have created and find that we are now living in the house we have built. If we had realized, we would have done it differently. Think of yourself as the carpenter. Think about your house. Each day you hammer a nail, place a board, or erect a wall. Build wisely. It is the only life you will ever build. Even if you live it for only one day more, that day deserves to be lived graciously and with dignity. The plaque on the wall says, "Life is a do-it-yourself project." ***Who could say it more clearly? Your life today is the result of your attitudes and choices in the past. Your life tomorrow will be the result of your attitudes and the choices you make today.***

The Cherry Tree

When George Washington was about six years old, he was made the wealthy master of a hatchet of which, like most little boys, he was extremely fond. He went about chopping everything that came his way.

One day, as he wandered about the garden amusing him by hacking his mother's pea-sticks; he found a beautiful, young English cherry tree, of which his father was most proud. He tried the edge of his hatchet on the trunk of the tree and barked it so that it died.

Some time after this, his father discovered what had happened to his favourite tree. He came into the house in great anger and demanded to know whom the mischievous person was who had cut away the bark. Nobody could tell him anything about it.

Just then George, with his little hatchet, came into the room.

"George," said his father, "do you know who has killed my beautiful little cherry tree yonder in the garden? I would not have taken five guineas for it!"

This was a hard question to answer, and for a moment George was staggered by it, but quickly recovering himself he cried: --

"I cannot tell a lie, father, you know I cannot tell a lie! I did cut it with my little hatchet."

The anger died out of his father's face, and taking the boy tenderly in his arms, he said: --

"My son, that you should not be afraid to tell the truth is more to me than a thousand trees! Yes, though they were blossomed with silver and had leaves of the purest gold!"

The Chicken

Once upon a time, there was a large mountainside, where an eagle's nest rested. The eagle's nest contained four large eagle eggs. One day an earthquake rocked the mountain causing one of the eggs to roll down the mountain, to a chicken farm, located in the valley below. The chickens knew that they must protect and care for the eagle's egg, so an old hen volunteered to nature and raise the large egg. One day, the egg hatched and a beautiful eagle was born. Sadly, however, the eagle was raised to be a chicken. Soon, the eagle believed he was nothing more than a chicken. The eagle loved his home and family, but his spirit cried out for more. While playing a game, on the farm one day, the eagle looked to the skies above and noticed a group of mighty eagles soaring in the skies. "Oh", the eagle cried, "I wish I could soar like those birds". The chickens roared with laughter, "You can not soar with those birds! You are a chicken and chickens do not soar". The eagle continued staring, at his real family up above, dreaming that he could be with them. Each time, the eagle would let his dreams be known, he was told it couldn't be done and that is what the eagle learned to believe. The eagle, after time, stopped dreaming and continued to live his life like a chicken. Finally, after a long life as a chicken, the eagle passed away.

You become what you believe you are, so if you ever dream to become an eagle follow your dreams not the words of a chicken.

The Circus

Once when I was a teenager, my father and I were standing in line to buy tickets for the circus. Finally, there was only one family between the ticket counter and us. This family made a big impression on me. There were eight children, all probably under the age of 12. You could tell they didn't have a lot of money. Their clothes were not expensive, but they were clean. The children were well behaved, all of them standing in line, two-by-two behind their parents, holding hands. They were excitedly jabbering about the clowns, elephants and other acts they would see that night. One could sense they had never been to the circus before. It promised to be a highlight of their young lives. The father and mother were at the head of the pack standing proud as could be. The mother was holding her husband's hand, looking up at him as if to say, "You're my knight in shining armour." He was smiling and basking in pride, looking at her as if to reply, "You got that right."

The ticket lady asked the father how many tickets he wanted. He proudly responded, "Please let me buy eight children's tickets and two adult tickets so I can take my family to the circus."

The ticket lady quoted the price.

The man's wife let go of his hand, her head dropped; the man's lip began to quiver. The father leaned a little closer and asked, "How much did you say?"

The ticket lady again quoted the price.

The man didn't have enough money. How was he supposed to turn and tell his eight kids that he didn't have enough money to take them to the circus?

Seeing what was going on, my dad put his hand into his pocket, pulled out a \$20 bill and dropped it on the ground. (We were not wealthy in any sense of the word!) My father reached down, picked up the bill, tapped the man on the shoulder and said, "Excuse me sir, this fell out of your pocket."

The man knew what was going on. He wasn't begging for a handout but certainly appreciated the help in a desperate, heartbreaking, embarrassing situation. He looked straight into my dad's eyes, took my dad's hand in both of his, squeezed tightly onto the \$20 bill, and with his lip quivering and a tear streaming down his cheek, he replied, "Thank you, thank you, sir. This really means a lot to me and my family."

My father and I went back to our car and drove home. We didn't go to the circus that night, but we didn't go without.

The Cookies

A woman was waiting at an airport one night, with several long hours before her flight. She hunted for a book in an airport shop, bought a bag of cookies and found a place to drop. She was engrossed in her book but happened to see that the man sitting beside her, as bold as could be. He grabbed a cookie or two from the bag in between, which she tried to ignore to avoid a scene. So she munched the cookies and watched the clock, as the gutsy cookie thief diminished her stock. She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by, thinking, "If I wasn't so nice, I would blacken his eye." With each cookie she took, he took one too. When only one was left, she wondered what he would do. With a smile on his face, and a nervous laugh, he took the last cookie and broke it in half. He offered her half, as he ate the other. She snatched it from him and thought... ooh, brother! This guy has some nerve and he's also rude. Why he didn't even show any gratitude! She had never known when she had been so galled and sighed with relief when her flight was called. She gathered her belongings and headed to the gate, refusing to look back at the thieving ingrate.

She boarded the plane and sank in her seat, and then she sought her book, which was almost complete. As she reached in her baggage, she gasped with surprise, there was her bag of cookies in front of her eyes. If mine are here, she moaned in despair, the others were his, and he tried to share.

Too late to apologize, she realized with grief that she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief.

How many times in our lives, have we absolutely known that something was a certain way, only to discover later that what we believed to be true ... was not?

The Devoted Son

Years ago, there was a very wealthy man who, with his devoted young son, shared a passion for art collecting. Together they travelled around the world, adding only the finest art treasures to their collection. Priceless works by Picasso, Van Gogh, Monet, and many others adorned the walls of their family estate. The widowed elderly man looked on with satisfaction as his only child became an experienced art collector. The son's trained eye and sharp business mind caused his father to beam with pride as they dealt with art collectors around the world.

As winter approached, war engulfed their nation, and the young man left to serve his country. After only a few short weeks, the elderly man received a telegram that his beloved son was missing in action. The art collector anxiously awaited more news, fearing he would never see his son again. Within days his fears were confirmed. The young man had died while rushing a fellow soldier to a medic. Distraught and lonely, the old man faced the upcoming Christmas holidays with anguish and sadness. The joys of the season-a season that he and his son had so looked forward to in the past-would visit his house no longer. On Christmas morning, a knock on the door awakened the depressed old man. As he walked to the door, the masterpieces of art on the walls only reminded him that his son was not coming home. He opened the door and was greeted by a soldier with a large package in his hand.

The soldier introduced himself to the old man by saying, "I was a friend of your son. I was the one he was rescuing when he died. May I come in for a few moments? I have something to show you." As the two began to talk, the soldier told of how the man's son had told every one of his-and his father's-love of fine art work. "I'm also an artist," said the soldier, "and I want to give you this." As the old man began to un-wrap the package, paper gave way to reveal a portrait of the man's son. Though the world would never consider it a work of genius, the painting featured the young man's face in striking detail.

Overcome with emotion, the old man thanked the soldier, promising to hang the portrait above the fireplace. A few hours later, after the soldier had departed, the old man set about his task. True to his word, the painting went above the fireplace, pushing aside thousands of dollars worth of paintings. And then the old man sat in his chair and spent Christmas gazing at the gift he had been given. During the days and weeks that followed, the man learned that his son had rescued dozens of wounded soldiers before a bullet stilled his caring heart. As the

stories of his son's gallantry continued to reach him, fatherly pride and satisfaction began to ease his grief, as he realized that, although his son was no longer with him, the boy's life would live on because of those he had touched. The painting of his son soon became his most prized possession, far eclipsing any interest in the priceless pieces for which museums around the world clamoured. He told his neighbours it was the greatest gift he had ever received. The following spring, the old man became ill and passed away. The art world was in anticipation, since, with the old man's passing, and his only son dead; those paintings would be sold at an auction. According to the will of the old man, all of the art works would be auctioned on Christmas Day, the way he had received his greatest gift.

The day finally arrived and art collectors from around the world gathered to bid on some of the world's most spectacular paintings. Dreams could be fulfilled this day; greatness could be achieved as some could say, "I have the greatest collection." The auction began with a painting that was not on any museum list... It was the painting of the old man's son. The auctioneer asked for an opening bid, but the room was silent.

"Who will open the bidding with \$100?" he asked. Moments passed as no one spoke. From the back of the room came, "Who cares about that painting? It's just a picture of his son. Let's forget it and get on to the good ones." More voices echoed in agreement. "No, we have to sell this one-first," replied the auctioneer. "Now who will take the son?" Finally, a friend of the old man spoke. "Will you take \$10 for the painting? That's all I have. "Will anyone go higher?" called the auctioneer. After more silence he said, "Going once, going twice... Gone" The gavel fell. Cheers filled the room and someone shouted; "Now we can get on with it and bid on these treasures!"

The auctioneer looked at the audience and announced that the auction was over. Stunned disbelief quieted the room. Then someone spoke up and asked, "What do you mean it's over? We didn't come here for a portrait of some old man's son! What about all of the other paintings?"

There is millions of dollars worth of artwork here. We demand an explanation!" The auctioneer replied, "It's very simple. According to the will of the father, whoever takes the son...gets it all."

Just as the art collectors discovered on that day...The message is still the same...the love of the Father.... a Father whose son gave his life for others...And because of that Father's love...Whoever takes the Son gets it all.

The Disabled Bus Driver

It was a stormy winter's day in New York City when Mrs Spodek left the downtown Manhattan hospital with her wheelchair bound son in tow. The blistery wind swept across the face of the buildings sending drifts of snow into people's path. The 20 feet from the building to the bus stop took almost every ounce of Mrs Spodek's strength. Finally they reached the bus stop.

And they waited. A bus came by but it did not have the handicapped leaning capability, which makes it easier for wheelchairs to board and ride the buses. Despite the ravaging cold, Mrs Spodek decided to wait a little longer.

Finally ten minutes later another bus comes by and this bus as well, was not properly equipped with a lift for the wheelchair. Looking down and the ice forming a ledge on her son's face, Mrs Spodek realized that her son could not wait any longer. It was simply too cold.

The bus pulled up and Mrs Spodek reached down and began to lift up the wheelchair all by herself.

"Hey lady, " called out the driver, "this bus does not have lift for that wheelchair. You are going to have to wait for the next bus".

"Excuse me", responded Mrs Spodek as she struggled under the weight of the wheelchair, anticipating the slippery sidewalk, "but if I wait any longer my son here is going to freeze. You have no choice but to take us on this bus".

Two passengers jumped down to help mother and son makes it onto the bus. They awkwardly manoeuvred their way trying to keep the little boy as comfortable as is possible in the narrow walkway. Meanwhile, the bus driver continued grumbling and mumbling about "the nerve of that lady pushing her way onto the bus".

As they settled into their seats, a voice could be heard from the back of the bus, "Hey lady, you should not worry one bit. Your son is not the one with the handicap. Your son is just fine if you ask me" came the loud baritone voice from the Yankee cap and shirt sitting in the back of the bus. "I will tell you who is handicapped lady, "continued the man pausing then for effect. Then in a booming voice that could have been heard half way across Manhattan he hit his final statement home, "It is the bus driver who has the handicap lady. His mind is handicapped".

Tears rolled down Mrs Spodek's frozen cheeks as she nodded her head in agreement.

Thirty minutes later when Mrs Spodek rang the bell to step off the bus, the driver pulled all the way over to the side of the road, unbuckled his seat belt and joined in helping mother and son disembark.

Just before the driver turned to go back to the bus he coughed and cleared his throat and said, "Sorry lady. I was wrong".

Mrs Spodek responded with "Thank you for saying so".

Then looking at the boy in the wheelchair, the big burly New York bus driver bent down and said, "You are lucky to have such a nice Mom".

With a twinkle sparkling in the corner of his eye, the little Spodek looked back into the driver's eyes and said, "We were lucky to have a nice driver".

The driver turned to go back on the bus but not before the Spodek's heard him start to cry. "What a kid. What a kid".

The Grocery List

Louise Redden, a poorly dressed lady with a look of defeat on her face, walked into a grocery store. She approached the owner of the store in a most humble manner and asked if he would let her charge a few groceries. She softly explained that her husband was very ill and unable to work, they had seven children and they needed food.

John Longhouse, the grocer, scoffed at her and requested that she leave his store. Visualizing the family needs, she said: 'Please, sir! I will bring you the money just as soon as I can.' John told her he could not give her credit, as she did not have a charge account at his store. Standing beside the counter was a customer who overheard the conversation between the two. The customer walked forward and told the grocer man that he would stand good for whatever she needed for her family. The grocer man said in a very reluctant voice, "Do you have a grocery list? Louise replied, "Yes sir!"

"O.K." he said: "Put your grocery list on the scales and whatever your grocery list weighs, I will give you that amount in groceries."

Louise, hesitated a moment with a bowed head, then she reached into her purse and took out a piece of paper and scribbled something on it. She then laid the piece of paper on the scale carefully with her head still bowed.

The eyes of the grocer man and the customer showed amazement when they saw the scales went down and stayed down. The grocer man staring at the scales turned slowly to the customer and said begrudgingly, "I can't believe it." The customer smiled and the grocer man started putting the groceries on the other side of the scales. The scale did not balance so he continued to put more and more groceries on them until the scales would hold no more.

The grocer man stood there in utter disgust. Finally, he grabbed the piece of paper from the scales and looked at it with greater amazement. It was not a grocery list; it was a prayer, which said: "Dear Lord, you know my needs and I am leaving this in your hands."

The grocer man gave her the groceries that he had gathered and placed on the scales and stood in stunned silence. Louise thanked him and left the store. The customer handed a fifty-dollar bill to John as he said, "It was worth every penny of it."

It was sometime later that John Longhouse discovered the scales were broken, therefore only God knows how much a prayer weighs!

The House of 1000 Mirrors

Long ago in a small, far away village, there was a place known as the House of 1000 Mirrors. A small, happy little dog learned of this place and decided to visit. When he arrived, he bounced happily up the stairs to the doorway of the house. He looked through the doorway with his ears lifted high and his tail wagging as fast as it could. To his great surprise, he found himself staring at 1000 other happy little dogs with their tails wagging just as fast as his. He smiled a great smile, and was answered with 1000 great smiles just as warm and friendly. As he left the House, he thought to himself, "This is a wonderful place. I will come back and visit it often."

In this same village, another little dog, who was not quite as happy as the first one, decided to visit the house. He slowly climbed the stairs and hung his head low as he looked into the door. When he saw the 1000 unfriendly looking dogs staring back at him, he growled at them and was horrified to see 1000 little dogs growling back at him. As he left, he thought to himself, "That is a horrible place, and I will never go back there again."

All the faces in the world are mirrors. What kind of reflections do you see in the faces of the people you meet?

The King's Highway

Once upon a time, a king had a great highway built for the people who lived in his kingdom. After it was completed, but before it was opened to the public, the king decided to have a contest. He invited as many of his subjects as desired to participate. The challenge was to see who could travel the highway the best, and the winner was to receive a box of gold.

On the day of the contest, all the people came. Some of them had fine chariots; some had fine clothing and fancy food to make the trip a luxurious journey. Some wore their sturdiest shoes and ran along the highway on their feet to show their skill. All day they travelled the highway, and each one, when he arrived at the end, complained to the king about a large pile of rocks and debris that had been left almost blocking the road at one point, and that got in their way and hindered their travel.

At the end of the day, a lone traveller crossed the finish line warily and walked over to the king. He was tired and dirty, but he addressed the king with great respect and handed him a small chest of gold. He said, "I stopped along the way to clear a pile of rocks and debris that was blocking the road. This chest of gold was under it all. Please have it returned to its rightful owner."

The king replied, "You are the rightful owner." "Oh no," said the traveller, "This is not mine. I've never known such money."

"Oh yes," said the king, "you've earned this gold, for you won my contest. He who travels the road best is he who makes the road better for those who will follow."

Remember those words of wisdom as you travel the road of life!

The Little Boy Asks the Meaning of Life

An eight-year-old boy approached an old man in front of a wishing well, looked up into his eyes, and asked:

"I understand you're a very wise man. I'd like to know the secret of life."

The old man looked down at the youngster and replied:

"I've thought a lot in my lifetime, and the secret can be summed up in four words

The first is to “**think**”. Think about the values you wish to live your life by.

The second is to “**believe**”. Believe in yourself based on the thinking you've done about the values you're going to live your life by.

The third is to “**dream**”. Dream about the things that can be, based on your belief in yourself and the values you're going to live by.

The last is to “**dare**”. Dare to make your dreams become reality, based on your belief in yourself and your values. "

And with that, Walter E. Disney said to the little boy, “**Think, Believe, Dream, and Dare**”.

The Most Caring Child

Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child. The winner was a four-year-old child, whose next-door neighbour was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap and just sat there. When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbour, the little boy said, "Nothing, I just helped him cry."

The Mountain Story

A son and his father were walking on the mountains. Suddenly, his son falls, hurts himself and screams: "AAAhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

To his surprise, he hears the voice repeating, somewhere in the mountain:

"AAAhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

Curious, he yells: "Who are you?"

He receives the answer: "Who are you?"

Angered at the response, he screams: "Coward!"

He receives the answer: "Coward!"

He looks to his father and asks: "What's going on?"

The father smiles and says: "My son, pay attention."

And then he screams to the mountain: "I admire you!"

The voice answers: "I admire you!"

Again the man screams: "You are a champion!"

The voice answers: "You are a champion!"

The boy is surprised, but does not understand.

Then the father explains: "People call this ECHO, but really this is LIFE. It gives you back everything you say or do. Our life is simply a reflection of our actions. If you want more love in the world, create more love in your heart. If you want more competence in your team, improve your competence. This relationship applies to everything, in all aspects of life; Life will give you back everything you have given to it."

Your life is not a coincidence; it's a reflection of you!

The Mountain

There were two warring tribes in the Andes, one that lived in the lowlands and the other high in the mountains. The mountain people invaded the lowlanders one day, and as part of their plundering of the people, they kidnapped a baby of one of the lowlander families and took the infant with them back up into the mountains.

The lowlanders didn't know how to climb the mountain. They didn't know any of the trails that the mountain people used, and they didn't know where to find the mountain people or how to track them in the steep terrain.

Even so, they sent out their best party of fighting men to climb the mountain and bring the baby home.

The men tried first one method of climbing and then another. They tried one trail and then another. After several days of effort, however, they had climbed only several hundred feet.

Feeling hopeless and helpless, the lowlander men decided that the cause was lost, and they prepared to return to their village below.

As they were packing their gear for the descent, they saw the baby's mother walking toward them. They realized that she was coming down the mountain that they hadn't figured out how to climb.

And then they saw that she had the baby strapped to her back. *How could that be?*

One man greeted her and said, "We couldn't climb this mountain. How did you do this when we, the strongest and most able men in the village, couldn't do it?"

She shrugged her shoulders and said, ***"It wasn't your baby."***

The power of words

A group of frogs were travelling through the woods, and two of them fell into a deep pit. All the other frogs gathered around the pit. When they saw how deep the pit was, they told the two frogs that they were as good as dead. The two frogs ignored the comments and tried to jump up out of the pit with all of their might. The other frogs kept telling them to stop, that they were as good as dead.

Finally, one of the frogs took heed to what the other frogs were saying and gave up. He fell down and died. The other frog continued to jump as hard as he could. Once again, the crowd of frogs yelled at him to stop the pain and just die. He jumped even harder and finally made it out. You see this frog was deaf, unable to hear the others plea. He thought they were encouraging him the entire time.

This story teaches two lessons.

There is power of life and death in the tongue. An encouraging word to someone who is down can lift them up and help them make it through the day. A destructive word to someone who is down can be what it takes to kill him/her. Be careful of what you say.

Speak life to those who cross your path. The power of words... it is sometimes hard to understand that an encouraging word can go such a long way. So from this day forward, think before you speak.

The Red Light Special

Two men were in a car when they had to stop at a red signal light. The man at the wheel did not say anything.

The other man by his side, fretting and fuming, said, "The time we waste at these red lights - why, a man could write a book!"

The driver still said nothing.

Finally the man beside him said, "Didn't you hear what I said?"

"No."

"How come you did not hear? I was talking".

"Whom were you talking to?"

"I was talking to God," he said. "I've been making it a practice every time I get to a red light to pray for one of my friends. It is wonderful how many folks I have on my prayer list and how many I have time to pray for in this way."

The Smile

About ten years ago when I was an undergraduate in college, I was working as an intern at my University's Museum of Natural History. One day while working at the cash register in the gift shop, I saw an elderly couple come in with a little girl in a wheelchair.

As I looked closer at this girl, I saw that she was kind of perched on her chair. I then realized she had no arms or legs, just a head, neck and torso. She was wearing a little white dress with red polka dots.

As the couple wheeled her up to me I was looking down at the register. I turned my head toward the girl and gave her a wink. As I took the money from her grandparents, I looked back at the girl, who was giving me the cutest, largest smile I have ever seen. All of a sudden her handicap was gone and all I saw was this beautiful girl, whose smile just melted me and almost instantly gave me a completely new sense of what life is all about. She took me from a poor, unhappy college student and brought me into her world, a world of smiles, love and warmth.

That was ten years ago. I'm a successful businessperson now and whenever I get down and think about the troubles of the world, I think about that little girl and the remarkable lesson about life that she taught me.

The Scorpion & the Turtle

A scorpion, being a very poor swimmer, asked a turtle to carry him on his back across a river. "Are you mad?" exclaimed the turtle. "You'll sting me while I'm swimming and I'll drown."

"My dear turtle," laughed the scorpion, "if I were to sting you, you would drown and I would go down with you. Now where is the logic in that?"

"You're right?" cried the turtle. "Hop on!" The scorpion climbed aboard and halfway across the river gave the turtle a mighty sting. As they both sank to the bottom, the turtle resignedly said:

"Do you mind if I ask you something? You said there'd be no logic in your stinging me. Why did you do it?"

"It has nothing to do with logic," the drowning scorpion sadly replied. "It's just in my nature."

In the last trembling moments of the turtle's existence, its life starts to play back like a movie in fast-forward. As the movie reaches its last frame, it freezes on the old adage "to try is to fail - not to try is to surrender" as the river swallows both of them in an inevitable act of nature and the soul of the turtle rejoins its creator.

Comments: - *This story reflects the destructive behaviour of living beings and illustrates how certain qualities can be very hard to change, if not impossible. Thus, if we are to succeed in life, we firstly must get to know ourselves - and be honest about our inclinations, preferences, and limitations. And, secondly, in working towards our goals should be considerate not hinder others in theirs.*

The Story of a Clown

A certain man made an appointment to see a psychologist. He arrived at the psychologist's office and said to him, "Doctor, I always feel depressed. No matter what I do I still feel depressed. I just don't know what to do."

The psychologist looked at him and said, "Come with me to the window."

The man followed and then the psychologist pointed outside and said, "Do you see that tent over there in the distance? Well, there is a circus in town and it is really good. There are lots of acts to watch; especially the clown acts. And there is one clown in particular who is extremely funny. He will make you rock with laughter over and over again. Go and see that clown and I guarantee that you will not have reason to be depressed again!"

The man turned to the psychologist with sad eyes and said, "Doctor, I am that clown!"

The Teacher

Jean Thompson stood in front of her fifth-grade class on the very first day of school in the fall and told the children a lie. Like most teachers, she looked at her pupils and said that she loved them all the same, that she would treat them all alike. And that was impossible because there in front of her, slumped in his seat on the third row, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard.

Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were un-kept and that he constantly needed a bath. And Teddy was unpleasant.

It got to the point during the first few months that she would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then marking the F at the top of the paper biggest of all. Because Teddy was a sullen little boy, no one else seemed to enjoy him, either.

At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's records and put Teddy's off until last. When she opened his file, she was in for a surprise. His first-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright, inquisitive child with a ready laugh." "He does his work neatly and has good manners...he is a joy to be around."

His second-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student well-liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle."

His third-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy continues to work hard but his mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken."

Teddy's fourth-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and sometimes sleeps in class. He is tardy and could become a problem."

By now Mrs. Thompson realized the problem, but Christmas was coming fast. It was all she could do, with the school play and all, until the day before the holidays began and she was suddenly forced to focus on Teddy Stoddard.

Her children brought her presents, all in beautiful ribbon and bright paper, except for Teddy's, which was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper of a scissor grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents.

Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one-quarter full of cologne. She stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume behind the other wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed behind just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my mom used to."

After the children left she cried for at least an hour. On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing, and speaking. Instead, she began to teach children. Jean Thompson paid particular attention to the one, they all called "Teddy."

As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. On days where there would be an important test, Mrs. Thompson would remember that cologne. By the end of the year he had become one of the smartest children in the class and, well, he had also become the "pet" of the teacher who had once vowed to love all of her children exactly the same.

A year later she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that of all the teachers he'd had in elementary school, she was his favourite. Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy.

He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still his favourite teacher of all time.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would graduate from college with the highest of honours. He assured Mrs. Thompson she was still his favourite teacher.

Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still his favourite teacher, but that now his name was a little

longer. The letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, M.D.

The story doesn't end there. You see there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he'd met this girl and was to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering...well, if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit in the pew usually reserved for the mother of the groom. And guess what, she wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. And I bet on that special day, Jean Thompson smelled just like...well, just like the way Teddy remembered his mother smelling on their last Christmas together.

THE MORAL: You never can tell what type of impact you may make on another's life by your actions or lack of action. Consider this fact in your venture thru life.

The View

Two men, both aged and seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their old jobs, their experiences in World War II, and all kinds of other things.

One man managed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon where he could look out the room's only window, and every time he did, he would describe to his roommate all the things he could see. He told of a park with a lovely lake. Ducks swam on the water while children sailed their model boats. Grand old trees graced the landscape, and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man couldn't hear the band, he could imagine it as the man by the window described it.

Finally, after many weeks, the man by the window died. The other man asked the nurse to be moved next to the window so he could see the view. The nurse was happy to make the switch, but when he was finally able to look out the window, he found that it faced the blank, brick wall of the building across the street!

The man asked the nurse how the man was able to describe such wonderful things outside the window. She said, "Maybe he just wanted to make you happy."

There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Happiness when shared is doubled. Count your blessings. "Today is a gift; that's why it is called the present."

The Wallet

As I walked home one freezing day, I stumbled on a wallet someone had lost in the street. I picked it up and looked inside to find some identification so I could call the owner. But the wallet contained only three dollars and a crumpled letter that looked as if it had been in there for years.

The envelope was worn and the only thing that was legible on it was the return address. I started to open the letter, hoping to find some clue. Then I saw the dateline--1924. The letter had been written almost sixty years ago. It was written in a beautiful feminine handwriting on powder blue stationery with a little flower in the left-hand corner. It was a "Dear John" letter that told the recipient, whose name appeared to be Michael, that the writer could not see him any more because her mother forbade it. Even so, she wrote that she would always love him. It was signed, Hannah. It was a beautiful letter, but there was no way except for the name Michael, that the owner could be identified. Maybe if I called information, the operator could find a phone listing for the address on the envelope.

"Operator," I began, "this is an unusual request. I'm trying to find the owner of a wallet that I found. Is there anyway you can tell me if there is a phone number for an address that was on an envelope in the wallet?"

She suggested I speak with her supervisor, who hesitated for a moment then said, "Well, there is a phone listing at that address, but I can't give you the number." She said, as a courtesy, she would call that number, explain my story and would ask them if they wanted her to connect me. I waited a few minutes and then she was back on the line. "I have a party who will speak with you."

I asked the woman on the other end of the line if she knew anyone by the name of Hannah. She gasped, "Oh! We bought this house from a family who had a daughter named Hannah. But that was 30 years ago!" "Would you know where that family could be located now?" I asked.

"I remember that Hannah had to place her mother in a nursing home some years ago," the woman said. "Maybe if you got in touch with them they might be able to track down the daughter." She gave me the name of the nursing home and I called the number.

They told me the old lady had passed away some years ago but they did have a phone number for where they thought the daughter might

be living. I thanked them and phoned. The woman who answered explained that Hannah herself was now living in a nursing home.

This whole thing was stupid, I thought to myself. Why was I making such a big deal over finding the owner of a wallet that had only three dollars and a letter that was almost 60 years old? Nevertheless, I called the nursing home in which Hannah was supposed to be living and the man who answered the phone told me, "Yes, Hannah is staying with us."

Even though it was already 10 pm, I asked if I could come by to see her. "Well," he said hesitatingly, "if you want to take a chance, she might be in the day room watching television."

I thanked him and drove over to the nursing home. The night nurse and a guard greeted me at the door. We went up to the third floor of the large building. In the day room, the nurse introduced me to Hannah. She was a sweet, silver-haired old timer with a warm smile and a twinkle in her eye. I told her about finding the wallet and showed her the letter.

The second she saw the powder blue envelope with that little flower on the left, she took a deep breath and said, "Young man, this letter was the last contact I ever had with Michael." She looked away for a moment deep in thought and then said softly, "I loved him very much. But I was only 16 at the time and my mother felt I was too young. Oh, he was so handsome. He looked like Sean Connery, the actor."

"Yes," she continued. "Michael Goldstein was a wonderful person. If you should find him, tell him I think of him often. And," she hesitated for a moment, almost biting her lip, "tell him I still love him. You know," she said smiling as tears began to well up in her eyes, "I never did marry. I guess no one ever matched up to Michael..."

I thanked Hannah and said goodbye. I took the elevator to the first floor and as I stood by the door, the guard there asked, "Was the old lady able to help you?" I told him she had given me a lead. "At least I have a last name. But I think I'll let it go for a while. I spent almost the whole day trying to find the owner of this wallet."

I had taken out the wallet, which was a simple brown leather case with red lacing on the side. When the guard saw it, he said, "Hey, wait a minute! That's Mr. Goldstein's wallet. I'd know it anywhere with that bright red lacing. He's always losing that wallet. I must have found it in the halls at least three times."

"Who's Mr. Goldstein?" I asked as my hand began to shake.

"He's one of the old timers on the 8th floor. That's Mike Goldstein's wallet for sure. He must have lost it on one of his walks." I thanked the guard and quickly ran back to the nurse's office. I told her what the guard had said. We went back to the elevator and got on.

I prayed that Mr. Goldstein would be up. On the eighth floor, the floor nurse said, "I think he's still in the day room. He likes to read at night. He's a darling old man."

We went to the only room that had any lights on and there was a man reading a book. The nurse went over to him and asked if he had lost his wallet. Mr. Goldstein looked up with surprise, put his hand in his back pocket and said, "Oh, it is missing!"

This kind gentleman found a wallet and we wondered if it could be yours?" I handed Mr. Goldstein the wallet and the second he saw it, he smiled with relief and said, "Yes, that's it! It must have dropped out of my pocket this afternoon. I want to give you a reward."

"No, thank you," I said. "But I have to tell you something. I read the letter in the hope of finding out who owned the wallet." The smile on his face suddenly disappeared. "You read that letter?"

"Not only did I read it, I think I know where Hannah is." He suddenly grew pale. "Hannah? You know where she is? How is she? Is she still as pretty as she was? Please, please tell me," he begged.

"She's fine...just as pretty as when you knew her." I said softly. The old man smiled with anticipation and asked, "Could you tell me where she is? I want to call her tomorrow." He grabbed my hand and said, "You know something, mister, I was so in love with that girl that when that letter came, my life literally ended. I never married. I guess I've always loved her. "

"Mr. Goldstein," I said, "Come with me." We took the elevator down to the third floor. The hallways were darkened and only one or two little night-lights lit our way to the day room where Hannah was sitting alone watching the television. The nurse walked over to her.

"Hannah," she said softly, pointing to Michael, who was waiting with me in the doorway. "Do you know this man?" She adjusted her glasses, looked for a moment, but didn't say a word. Michael said softly, almost in a whisper, "Hannah, its Michael. Do you remember me?"

She gasped, "Michael! I don't believe it! Michael! It's you! My Michael!" He walked slowly towards her and they embraced. The nurse and I left with tears streaming down our faces. "See," I said. "See how the Good Lord works! If it's meant to be, it will be."

About three weeks later I got a call at my office from the nursing home. "Can you break away on Sunday to attend a wedding? Michael and Hannah are going to tie the knot!" It was a beautiful wedding with all the people at the nursing home dressed up to join in the celebration. Hannah wore a light beige dress and looked beautiful. Michael wore a dark blue suit and stood tall. They made me their best man. The hospital gave them their own room and if you ever wanted to see a 76-year-old bride and a 79-year-old groom acting like two teenagers, you had to see this couple. That was a perfect ending of a love affair that had lasted nearly 60 years.

The Wolves Within

An old Grandfather, whose grandson came to him with anger at a schoolmate who had done him an injustice, said, "Let me tell you a story. I too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times."

He continued, "It is as if there are two wolves inside me; one is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offence when no offence was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way."

"But the other wolf, ah! He is full of anger. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominant my spirit."

The boy looked intently into his Grandfather's eye and asked, "Which one wins, Grandfather?"

The Grandfather solemnly said, "The one I feed."

Three Powerful Words

A funny story is told about General George Patton from his World War II days. He once accepted an invitation to dine at a press camp in Africa. Wine was served in canteen cups but, obviously thinking he was served coffee, Patton poured cream into his cup. As he stirred in sugar, Patton was warned that his cup contained red wine and not coffee.

Now, General Patton could never, never be wrong. Without hesitating he replied, "I know. I like my wine this way." And he drank it!

I relate this story because I see something of myself, and perhaps most of us, here. It is difficult to admit mistakes. It is hard to admit when we are wrong. Three of life's most difficult words to say are, "I was wrong."

But they are also three of the most powerful words we can utter. "I was wrong" breaks down barriers between people. It brings estranged people together. And it creates a climate where intimacy and love may flourish. You may be surprised at how positively many people respond to the words, "I was wrong"!

Naturally, it is a risk. But to admit when you are wrong is not to confess that you are a "bad" person. Simply an honest one and true friends will appreciate you for it.

Whole and happy lives are built by people who have learned the power of intimacy, in part, through the use of the words "I was wrong."

Unconditional Love

A story is told about a soldier who was finally coming home after having fought in Vietnam. He called his parents from San Francisco.

"Mom and Dad, I'm coming home, but I've a favour to ask. I have a friend I'd like to bring home with me."

"Sure," they replied, "We would love to meet him."

"There's something you should know the son continued, "he was hurt pretty badly in the fighting. He stepped on a land mine and lost an arm and a leg. He has nowhere else to go, and I want him to come live with us."

"I'm sorry to hear that, son. Maybe we can help him find somewhere to live."

"No, Mom and Dad, I want him to live with us."

"Son," said the father, "you don't know what you're asking. Someone with such a handicap would be a terrible burden on us. We have our own lives to live, and we can't let something like this interfere with our lives. I think you should just come home and forget about this guy. He'll find a way to live on his own."

At that point, the son hung up the phone. The parents heard nothing more from him. A few days later, however, they received a call from the San Francisco police. Their son had died after falling from a building, they were told. The police believed it was suicide. The grief-stricken parents flew to San Francisco and were taken to the city morgue to identify the body of their son. They recognized him, but to their horror they also discovered something they didn't know, their son had only one arm and one leg.

The parents in this story are like many of us. We find it easy to love those who are good-looking or fun to have around, but we don't like people who inconvenience us or make us feel uncomfortable. We would rather stay away from people who aren't as healthy, beautiful, or smart as we are. Thankfully, there's someone who won't treat us that way. Someone who loves us with an unconditional love that welcomes us into the forever family, regardless of how messed up we are.

Understanding and Attitude

A little girl named Liz who was suffering from a rare and serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her 5-year old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness. The doctor explained the situation to her little brother, and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. I saw him hesitate for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, "Yes, I'll do it if it will save her."

As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister and smiled, as we all did, seeing the colour returning to her cheeks. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "How long until I die?" Being young, the little boy had misunderstood the doctor; he thought he was going to have to give his sister all of his blood in order to save her. You see understanding and attitude, after all, is everything.

Weakness or Strength

Sometimes your biggest weakness can become your biggest strength. Take, for example, the story of one 10-year-old boy who decided to study judo despite the fact that he had lost his left arm in a devastating car accident.

The boy began lessons with an old Japanese judo master. The boy was doing well, so he couldn't understand why, after three months of training the master had taught him only one move.

"Sensei," the boy finally said, "Shouldn't I be learning more moves?"

"This is the only move you know, but this is the only move you'll ever need to know," the sensei replied.

Not quite understanding, but believing in his teacher, the boy kept training.

Several months later, the sensei took the boy to his first tournament. Surprising himself, the boy easily won his first two matches. The third match proved to be more difficult, but after some time, his opponent became impatient and charged; the boy deftly used his one move to win the match. Still amazed by his success, the boy was now in the finals.

This time, his opponent was bigger, stronger, and more experienced. For a while, the boy appeared to be overmatched. Concerned that the boy might get hurt, the referee called a time-out. He was about to stop the match when the sensei intervened.

"No," the sensei insisted, "Let him continue."

Soon after the match resumed, his opponent made a critical mistake: he dropped his guard. Instantly, the boy used his move to pin him. The boy had won the match and the tournament. He was the champion.

On the way home, the boy and sensei reviewed every move in each and every match. Then the boy summoned the courage to ask what was really on his mind.

"Sensei, how did I win the tournament with only one move?"

"You won for two reasons," the sensei answered. "First, you've almost mastered one of the most difficult throws in all of judo. And second, the only known defence for that move is for your opponent to grip your left arm."

The boy's biggest weakness had become his biggest strength.

Mother

An article in National Geographic several years ago provided a penetrating picture of God's wings. After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage. One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze had arrived and the heat had singed her small body, the mother had remained steadfast. Because she had been willing to die, those under the cover of her wings would live.

Reward

One day a fisherman was lying on a beautiful beach, with his fishing pole propped up in the sand and his solitary line cast out into the sparkling blue surf. He was enjoying the warmth of the afternoon sun and the prospect of catching a fish.

About that time, a businessman came walking down the beach, trying to relieve some of the stress of his workday. He noticed the fisherman sitting on the beach and decided to find out why this fisherman was fishing instead of working harder to make a living for himself and his family. "You aren't going to catch many fish that way," said the businessman to the fisherman. "You should be working rather than lying on the beach!"

The fisherman looked up at the businessman, smiled and replied, "And what will my reward be?" "Well, you can get bigger nets and catch more fish!" was the businessman's answer. "And then what will my reward be?" asked the fisherman, still smiling. The businessman replied, "You will make money and you'll be able to buy a boat, which will then result in larger catches of fish!" "And then what will my reward be?" asked the fisherman again. The businessman was beginning to get a little irritated with the fisherman's questions. "You can buy a bigger boat, and hire some people to work for you!" he said.

"And then what will my reward be?" repeated the fisherman. The businessman was getting angry. "Don't you understand? You can build up a fleet of fishing boats, sail all over the world, and let all your employees catch fish for you!" Once again the fisherman asked, "And then what will my reward be?" The businessman was red with rage and shouted at the fisherman, "Don't you understand that you can become so rich that you will never have to work for your living again! You can spend all the rest of your days sitting on this beach, looking at the sunset. You won't have a care in the world!"

The fisherman, still smiling, looked up and said, "And what do you think I'm doing right now?"

God's Perfection

In Brooklyn, New York, Chush is a school that caters to learning disabled children. Some children remain in Chush for their entire school career, while others can be mainstreamed into conventional schools.

At a Chush fund-raising dinner, the father of a Chush child delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended.

After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he cried out, "Where is the perfection in my son Shaya? Everything God does is done with perfection. But my child cannot understand things as other children do. My child cannot remember facts and figures as other children do. Where is God's perfection?"

The audience was shocked by the question, pained by the father's anguish, stilled by the piercing query.

"I believe," the father answered, "that when God brings a child like this into the world, the perfection that he seeks is in the way people react to this child." He then told the following story about his son Shaya: -

"One afternoon Shaya and his father walked past a park where some boys Shaya knew were playing baseball.

Shaya asked, "Do you think they will let me play?"

Shaya's father knew that his son was not at all athletic and that most boys would not want him on their team. But Shaya's father understood that if his son were chosen to play it would give him a comfortable sense of belonging.

Shaya's father approached one of the boys in the field and asked if Shaya could play. The boy looked around for guidance from his teammates. Getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We are losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him up to bat in the ninth inning." Shaya's father was ecstatic as Shaya smiled broadly. Shaya was told to put on a glove and go out to play short centre field. In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shaya's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shaya's team scored again and now with two outs and the bases loaded with the potential winning run on base, Shaya was scheduled

to be up. Would the team actually let Shaya bat at this juncture and give away their chance to win the game? Surprisingly, Shaya was given the bat.

Everyone knew that it was all but impossible because Shaya didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, let alone hit with it. However as Shaya stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shaya should at least be able to make contact.

The first pitch came in and Shaya swung clumsily and missed. One of Shaya's teammates came up to Shaya and together they held the bat and faced the pitcher waiting for the next pitch. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly toward Shaya. As the pitch came in, Shaya and his teammate swung at the bat and together they hit a slow ground ball to the pitcher. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could easily have thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shaya would have been out and that would have ended the game. Instead, the pitcher took the ball and threw it on a high arc to right field, far beyond reach of the first baseman. Everyone started yelling, "Shaya, run to first. Run to first." Never in his life had Shaya run to first. He scampered down the baseline wide-eyed and startled. By the time he reached first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second baseman that would tag out Shaya, who was still running. But the right fielder understood what the pitcher's intentions were, so he threw the ball high and far over the third baseman's head. Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second." Shaya ran towards second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases towards home. As Shaya reached second base, the opposing shortstop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base and shouted, "Run to third." As Shaya rounded third, the boys from both teams ran behind him screaming, "Shaya run home."

Shaya ran home, stepped on home plate and all 18 boys lifted him on their shoulders and made him the hero, as he had just hit a "grand slam" and won the game for his team."

"That day," said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, "those 18 boys reached their level of God's perfection."

Who Packed Your Parachute?

Sometimes in the daily challenges that life gives us, we miss what is really important. We may fail to say hello, please, or thank you, congratulate someone on something wonderful that has happened to them, give a compliment, or just do something nice for no reason.

Charles Plumb, a US Naval Academy graduate, was a jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy lands. He was captured and spent 6 years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from that experience. One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!" "How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb. "I packed your parachute," the man replied.

Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, "I guess it worked!" Plumb assured him, "It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb says, "I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform: A white hat, a bib in the back, and bell bottom trousers. I wonder how many times I might have seen him and not even said good morning, how are you or anything else, because, you see, I was a fighter pilot, and he was just a sailor." Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know.

Now, Plumb asks his audience, "Who's packing your parachute?"

Everyone has someone who provides what he or she needs to make it through the day. Plumb also points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory - he needed his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute, and his spiritual parachute. He called on all these supports before reaching safety. His experience reminds us all to prepare ourselves to weather whatever storms lie ahead. As you go through this week, this month, this year... recognize people who pack your parachute!

Wise Woman

A wise woman who was travelling in the mountains found a precious stone in a stream. The next day she met another traveller who was hungry, and the wise woman opened her bag to share her food. The hungry traveller saw the precious stone and asked the woman to give it to him. She did so without hesitation. The traveller left, rejoicing his good fortune. He knew the stone was worth enough to give him security for a lifetime.

But, a few days later, he came back to return the stone to the wise woman. "I've been thinking," he said. "I know how valuable this stone is, but I give it back in the hope that you can give me something even more precious. Give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me this stone."

Sometimes it not the wealth you have but what's inside you that others need.

You are Wonderful

The following true story captured our heart. It happened several years ago in the Paris opera house. A famous singer had been contracted to sing, and ticket sales were booming. In fact, the night of the concert found the house packed and every ticket sold. The feeling of anticipation and excitement was in the air as the house manager took the stage and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your enthusiastic support. I am afraid that due to illness, the man whom you've all come to hear will not be performing tonight. However, we have found a suitable substitute we hope will provide you with comparable entertainment." The crowd groaned in disappointment and failed to hear the announcer mention the stand-in's name. The environment turned from excitement to frustration.

The stand-in performer gave the performance everything he had. When he had finished, there was nothing but an uncomfortable silence. No one applauded. Suddenly, from the balcony, a little boy stood up and shouted, "Daddy, I think you are wonderful!" The crowd broke into thunderous applause.

We all need people in our Lives who are willing to stand up once in a while and say, "I think you are wonderful".

The Cracked Water Jar

Once there was a water jar that had a long hairline crack in it. The Jar leaked so badly that, when it was filled to the brim with water and carried back to the house, by the time it got there half the water had leaked out. Nevertheless, the servant of the house used it daily, along with another jar that didn't leak one bit. After several months of constant daily use, the cracked water jar was very depressed at the fact that it had only been able to get half as much water to the house as the other jar. When the servant heard the jar moaning about this, he said, "You have nothing to be ashamed of! You did the best job that you could. And, look – I always carried you on the right side walking back to the house, and the other jar on the left. See the path??? On the right side, there are beautiful flowers all along the path, but on the left, nothing is growing - it has been too dry this summer."

So...when we grow discouraged about not being "productive", remember, the cracked water jar, which was doing a job it didn't even know it was doing at all...that the whole water jar couldn't have done.

Shake It Off

One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally he decided the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway; it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey. He invited all his neighbours to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer's neighbours continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off!

Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping-stone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up!

Shake it off and take a step up!

Think for Others

Try to think hard before u go down for the answer.

Once there was loving couple travelling in a bus in a mountainous area. They decided to get down at some place. The couple disembarked and the bus moved on. As it moved on, a humongous rock fell on the bus from the mountain and crushed the bus to crumbs. Everybody on board was killed. The couple upon seeing that, said, "We wish we were on that bus".

What do you think, why they said so?

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Answer!!!!

If they had remained on the bus instead of deciding to get down, the resulting time delay could have been avoided and the rock would have fallen after the bus had passed...

Think positive in life always and look for opportunities when u can help others.

“We'll see...”

Once upon a time, there was a farmer in the central region of China. He didn't have a lot of money and, instead of a tractor he used an old horse to plough his field.

One afternoon, while working in the field, the horse dropped dead. Everyone in the village said, "Oh, what a horrible thing to happen." The farmer said simply, "We'll see." He was so at peace and so calm, that everyone in the village got together and, admiring his attitude, gave him a new horse as a gift.

Everyone's reaction now was, "What a lucky man." And the farmer said, "We'll see."

A couple days later, the new horse jumped a fence and ran away. Everyone in the village shook their heads and said, "What a poor fellow!"

The farmer smiled and said, "We'll see."

Eventually, the horse found his way home, and everyone again said, "What a fortunate man."

The farmer said, "We'll see."

Later in the year, the farmer's young boy went out riding on the horse and fell and broke his leg. Everyone in the village said, "What a shame for the poor boy."

The farmer said, "We'll see."

Two days later, the army came into the village to draft new recruits. When they saw that the farmer's son had a broken leg, they decided not to recruit him.

Everyone said, "What a fortunate young man."

The farmer smiled again - and said, "We'll see."

Moral of the story: There's no use in overreacting to the events and circumstances of our everyday lives. Many times what looks like a setback, may actually be a gift in disguise. And when our hearts are in the right place, all events and circumstances are gifts that we can learn valuable lessons from. As Fra Giovanni once said: "Everything we call a trial, a sorrow, or a duty, believe me... the gift is there and the wonder of an overshadowing presence."

Playing a Violin with Three Strings

On Nov. 18, 1995, Itzhak Perlman, the violinist, came on stage to give a concert. Getting on stage is no small achievement for him. He was stricken with polio as a child, and so he has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of two crutches. To see him walk across the stage one step at a time, painfully and slowly, is an awesome sight. He walks painfully, yet majestically, until he reaches his chair. Then he sits down, slowly, puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the clasps on his legs, tucks one foot back and extends the other foot forward. Then he bends down and picks up the violin, puts it under his chin, nods to the conductor and proceeds to play.

By now, the audience is used to this ritual. They sit quietly while he makes his way across the stage to his chair. They remain reverently silent while he undoes the clasps on his legs. They wait until he is ready to play.

But this time, something went wrong. Just as he finished the first few bars, one of the strings on his violin broke. Everyone could hear it snap - it went off like gunfire across the room. There was no mistaking what that sound meant. There was no mistaking what he had to do.

Audiences figured that he would have to get up, put on the clasps again, pick up the crutches and limp his way off stage - to either find another violin or else find another string for this one. But he didn't. Instead, he waited a moment, closed his eyes and then signalled the conductor to begin again. The orchestra began, and he played from where he had left off. And he played with such passion and such power and such purity, as they had never heard before.

Of course, anyone knows that it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings, but that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that. Everyone could see him modulating, changing, and re-composing the piece in his head. At one point, it sounded like he was de-tuning the strings to get new sounds from them that they had never made before.

When he finished, there was an awesome silence in the room. And then people rose and cheered. There was an extraordinary outburst of applause from every corner of the auditorium. All were all on their feet, screaming and cheering; doing everything they could to show how much they appreciated what he had done.

He smiled, wiped the sweat from his brow, raised his bow to quiet us, and then he said - not boastfully, but in a quiet, pensive, reverent tone - "You know, sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."

What a powerful line that is. It must have stayed many minds ever since they heard it. And who knows? Perhaps that is the definition of life - not just for artists but also for all of us.

Here is a man who has prepared all his life to make music on a violin of four strings, who, all of a sudden, in the middle of a concert, finds himself with only three strings; so he makes music with three strings, and the music he made that night with just three strings was more beautiful, more sacred, more memorable, than any that he had ever made before, when he had four strings.

So, perhaps our task in this shaky, fast-changing, bewildering world in which we live is to make music, at first with all that we have, and then, when that is no longer possible, to make music with what we have left.

“Can You See God?”

A small boy once approached his slightly older sister with a question about God. "Susie, can anybody ever really see God?" he asked. Busy with other things, Susie curtly replied: "No, of course not silly. God is so far up in heaven that nobody can see him."

Time passed, but his question still lingered so he approached his mom: "Mom, can anybody ever really see God?" "No, not really," she gently said. "God is a spirit and he dwells in our hearts, but we can never really see Him."

Somewhat satisfied but still wondering, the youngster went on his way. Not long afterwards, his saintly old grandfather took the little boy on a fishing trip. They were having a great time together. The sun was beginning to set with unusual splendour and the grandfather stared silently at the exquisite beauty unfolding before them. On seeing the face of his grandfather reflecting such deep peace and contentment, the little boy thought for a moment and finally spoke hesitatingly:

"Granddad, I--I-- wasn't going to ask anybody else, but I wonder if you can tell me the answer to something I've been wondering about a long time. Can anybody--can anybody ever really see God?"

The old man did not even turn his head. A long moment slipped by before he finally answered. "Son," he quietly said. "It's getting so I can't see anything else."

The Real Meaning of Peace

"There once was a king who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The king looked at all the pictures. But there were only two he really liked, and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror for peaceful towering mountains all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains, too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky, from which rain fell and in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all. But when the king looked closely, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest - in perfect peace.

Which picture do you think won the prize? The king chose the second picture. Do you know why?

"Because," explained the king, "***peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace.***"

Live Free

The 92 year old, petite, well-poised and proud lady, who is fully dressed each morning by eight o'clock, with her hair fashionably coifed and makeup perfectly applied, even though she is legally blind, moved to a nursing home. Her husband of 70 years recently passed away, making the move necessary. After many hours of waiting patiently in the lobby of the nursing home, she smiled sweetly when told her room was ready. As she manoeuvred her walker to the elevator, she was provided a visual description of her tiny room by the accompanying attendant, including the eyelet sheets that had been hung on her window.

"I love it," she stated with the enthusiasm of an eight year old having just been presented with a new puppy.

"Mrs Jones, you haven't seen the room.... Just wait."

"That doesn't have anything to do with it," she replied. "Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged... it's how I arrange my mind. I already decided to love it ... It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice; I can spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do. Each day is a gift, and as long as my eyes open I'll focus on the new day and all the happy memories I've stored away ... just for this time in my life.

Old age is like a bank account ... you withdraw from what you've put in. So, my advice to you would be to deposit a lot of happiness in the bank account of memories. Thank you for your part in filling my Memory bank. I am still depositing.

Remember the five simple rules to be happy: -

1. Free your heart from hatred.
2. Free your mind from worries.
3. Live simply.
4. Give more.
5. Expect less.

A Stranger at My Home

A very weird thing has happened. A strange old man has moved into my house. I have no idea who he is, where he came from, or how he got in. I certainly did not invite him. All I know is that one-day he wasn't there, and the next day he was!

He is a clever old man and manages to keep out of sight for the most part, but whenever I pass a mirror, I catch a glimpse of him. And, whenever I look in the mirror to check my appearance, there he is hogging the whole thing, completely obliterating my gorgeous face and body. This is very rude! I have tried screaming at him, but he just screams back.

The least he could do is offer to pay part of the rent, but no. Every once in a while, I find a rupee bill stuck in a coat pocket, or some loose change under a sofa cushion, but it is not nearly enough. I don't want to jump to conclusions, but I think he is stealing money from me. I go to the bank and withdraw 1000.00 bucks, and a few days later, it's all gone! I certainly don't spend money THAT fast, so I can only conclude the old man is pilfering from me. You'd think he would spend some of that money to buy wrinkle cream. And money isn't the only thing I think he is stealing. Food seems to disappear at an alarming rate--especially the good stuff like ice cream, cookies, and candy. He must have a real sweet tooth, but he'd better watch it, because he is really packing on the pounds. I suspect he realizes this, and to make himself feel better, he is tampering with my scale to make me think I am putting on weight, too.

For an old man, he is quite childish. He likes to play nasty games, like going into my closets when I'm not home and altering my clothes so they don't fit. And he messes with my files and papers so I can't find anything. This is particularly annoying since I am extremely neat and organized.

He has found other imaginative ways to annoy me. He gets into my mail, newspapers, and magazines before I do and blurs the print so I can't read it. And he has done something really sinister to the volume controls on my TV, radio, and telephone. Now, all I hear are mumbles and whispers.

He has done other things--like make my stairs steeper, my vacuum heavier and all the knob and faucets harder to turn. He even made my bed higher so that getting into and out of it is a real challenge.

Lately, he has been fooling with my groceries before I put them away, applying glue to the lids, making it almost impossible for me to open the jars. He has taken the fun out of shopping for clothes. When I try something on, he stands in front of the dressing room mirror and monopolizes it. He looks totally ridiculous in some of those outfits, plus, he keeps me from seeing how great they look on me.

Just when I thought he couldn't get any meaner, he proved me wrong. He came along when I went to get my picture taken for my driving license, and just as the camera shutter clicked, he jumped in front of me!

I hope he never finds out where YOU live!

Think About this....

After 21 years of marriage, I discovered a new way of keeping alive the spark of love. A little while ago I had started to go out with another woman. It was really my wife's idea. "I know that you love her," she said one day, taking me by surprise. "But I love YOU," I protested. "I know, but you also love her."

The other woman that my wife wanted me to visit was my mother, who has been a widow for 19 years, but the demands of my work and my three children had made it possible to visit her only occasionally. That night I called to invite her to go out for dinner and a movie. "What's wrong, are you well," she asked?

My mother is the type of woman who suspects that a late night call or a surprise invitation is a sign of bad news. "I thought that it would be pleasant to pass some time with you". I responded "Just the two of us." She thought about it for a moment then said "I would like that very much."

That Friday after work, as I drove over to pick her up I was a bit nervous. When I arrived at her house, I noticed that she, too, seemed to be nervous about our date. She waited in the door with her coat on. She had curled her hair and was wearing the dress that she had worn to celebrate her last wedding anniversary. She smiled from a face that was as radiant as an angel's. "I told my friends that I was going to go out with my son, and they were impressed," she said, as she got into the car. "They can't wait to hear about our meeting".

We went to a restaurant that, although not elegant, was very nice and cosy. My mother took my arm as if she were the First Lady. After we sat down, I had to read the menu. Her eyes could only read large print. Half way through the entree, I lifted my eyes and saw Mom sitting there staring at me. A nostalgic smile was on her lips. "It was I who used to have to read the menu when you were small," she said. "Then it's time that you relax and let me return the favour," I respond. During the dinner we had an agreeable conversation - nothing extraordinary - but catching up on recent events of each other's life. We talked so much that we missed the movie. As we arrived at her house later, she said "I'll go out with you again, but only if you let me invite you". I agreed.

"How was your dinner date?" asked my wife when I got home. "Very nice; much more so than I could have imagined," I answered. A few days later my mother died of a massive heart attack. It

happened so suddenly that I didn't have a chance to do anything for her. Some time later I received an envelope with a copy of a restaurant receipt from the same place mother and I had dined. An attached note said "I paid this bill in advance. I was almost sure that I couldn't be there but, never the less, I paid for two plates - one for you and the other for you wife. You will never know what that night meant for me. I love you."

At that moment I understood the importance of saying in time "Nothing in life is more important than God and your family. Give them the time they deserve, because these things cannot be put off to "some other time".

"If you judge people, you have no time to love them."

- Mother Theresa

Give This a Thought

A group of children are playing near two railway tracks, one still in use while the other disused. Only one child is playing on the disused track, the rest on the operational track. The train comes, and you are just beside the track interchange. You could make the train change its course to the disused track and save most of the kids. However, that would also mean the lone child playing by the disused track would be sacrificed; or would you rather let the train go its way?

Let's take a pause to think what kind of decision we could make.

Most people might choose to divert the course of the train, and sacrifice only one child.

You might think the same way, I guess.

Exactly, I thought the same way initially because to save most of the children at the expense of only one child was rational decision most people would make, morally and emotionally. But, have you ever thought that the child choosing to play on the disused track had in fact made the right decision to play at a safe place?

Nevertheless, he had to be sacrificed because of his ignorant friends who chose to play where the danger was.

This kind of dilemma happens around us everyday. In the office, community, in politics and especially in a democratic society, the minority is often sacrificed for the interest of the majority, no matter how foolish or ignorant the majority are, and how farsighted and knowledgeable the minority are.

The child who chose not to play with the rest on the operational track was sidelined. And in the case he was sacrificed, no one would shed a tear for him.

The friend who forwarded me the story said he would not try to change the course of the train because he believed that the kids playing on the operational track should have known very well that track was still in use, and that they should have run away if they heard the train's sirens. If the train was diverted, that lone child would definitely die because he never thought the train could come over to that track!

While we are all aware that life is full of tough decisions that need to be made, we may not realize that hasty decisions may not always be the right one.

To All Mothers and Children

The young mother set her foot on the path of life. "Is this the long way?" she asked. And the guide said "Yes, the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning." But the young mother was happy, and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years. So she played with her children, gathered flowers for them along the way, bathed them in the clear streams, the sun shone on them, and the young Mother cried, "Nothing will ever be lovelier than this."

Then the night came, and the storm, and the path was dark, and the children shook with fear and cold, and the mother drew them close and covered them with her mantle, and the children said, "Mother, we are not afraid, for you are near, and no harm can come."

And the morning came, and there was a hill ahead, and the children climbed and grew weary, and the mother was weary. But at all times she said to the children, "A little patience and we are there." So the children climbed, and when they reached the top they said, "Mother, we would not have done it without you." And the mother, when she lay down at night looked up at the stars and said, "This is a better day than the last, for my children have learned fortitude in the face of hardness. Yesterday I gave them courage. Today, I have given them strength."

And the next day came strange clouds which, darkened the earth, clouds of war and hate and evil, and the children groped and stumbled, and the mother said: "Look up. Lift your eyes to the light." And the children looked and saw above the clouds an everlasting glory, and it guided them beyond the darkness. And that night the Mother said, "This is the best day of all, for I have shown my children God."

And the days went on, and the weeks and the months and the years, and the mother grew old and she was little and bent. But her children were tall and strong, and walked with courage. And when the way was rough, they lifted her, for she was as light as a feather; and at last they came to a hill, and beyond they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide. And mother said: "I have reached the end of my journey. And now I know the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk alone, and their children after them."

And the children said, "You will always walk with us, Mother, even when you have gone through the gates." And they stood and watched

her as she went on alone, and the gates closed after her. And they said: "We cannot see her, but she is with us still. A Mother like ours is more than a memory. She is a living presence."

Your Mother is always with you. She's the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street, she's the smell of bleach in your freshly laundered socks she's the cool hand on your brow when you're not well. Your Mother lives inside your laughter. And she's crystallized in every teardrop. She's the place you came from, your first home; and she's the map you follow with every step you take. She's your first love and your first heartbreak, and nothing on earth can separate you. Not time, not space...not even death.

A Lesson in Heart

A lesson in "heart" is my little, 10-year-old daughter, Sarah, who was born with a muscle missing in her foot and wears a brace all the time. She came home one beautiful spring day to tell me she had competed in "field day"- that's where they have lots of races and other competitive events. Because of her leg support, my mind raced as I tried to think of encouragement for my Sarah, things I could say to her about not letting this get her down-but before I could get a word out, she said, "Daddy, I won two of the races!" I couldn't believe it! And then Sarah said, "I had an advantage." Ahh. I knew it. I thought she must have been given a head start... some kind of physical advantage. But again, before I could say anything, she said, "Daddy, I didn't get a head start... My advantage was I had to try harder!"

Roles and How We Play Them

Whenever I'm disappointed with my spot in my life, I stop and think about a little Boy. The boy was trying out for a part in a school play. His mother told me that he'd set his heart on being in it, though she feared he would not be chosen. On the day the parts were awarded, his mother went to collect him after school. The boy rushed up to her, eyes shining with pride and excitement. "Guess what Mom," he shouted, and then said those words that will remain a lesson to me: "I've been chosen to clap and cheer."

Catch of a Lifetime

There was once an 11-year-old who went fishing every chance he got from the dock at his family's cabin on an island in the middle of a New Hampshire lake. On the day before bass season opened, he and his father were fishing early in the evening, catching sunfish and perch with worms. Then he tied on a small silver lure and practiced casting. The lure struck the water and caused coloured ripples in the sunset; then silver ripples as the moon rose over the lake.

When his pole doubled over, he knew something huge was on the other end. His father watched with admiration as the boy skilfully worked the fish alongside the dock. Finally he very gingerly lifted the exhausted fish from the water. It was the largest one he had ever seen, but it was a bass.

The boy and his father looked at the handsome fish, gills playing back and forth in the moonlight. The father lit a match and looked at his watch. It was 10 p.m. -- two hours before the season opened. He looked at the fish, then at the boy. "You'll have to put it back, son," he said.

"Dad!" cried the boy. "There will be other fish," said his father. "Not as big as this one," cried the boy. He looked around the lake. No other fishermen or boats were anywhere around in the moonlight. He looked again at his father.

Even though no one had seen them, nor could anyone ever know what time he caught the fish, the boy could tell by the clarity of his father's voice that the decision was not negotiable. He slowly worked the hook out of the lip of the huge bass, and lowered it into the black water.

The creature swished its powerful body and disappeared. The boy suspected that he would never again see such a great fish.

That was 34 years ago. Today the boy is a successful architect in New York City. His father's cabin is still there on the lake. He takes his own son and daughters fishing from the same dock.

And he was right. He has never again caught such a magnificent fish as the one he landed that night long ago. But he does see that same fish...again and again...every time he comes up against a question of ethics. For, as his father taught him, ***ethics are simple matters of right and wrong. It is only the practice of ethics that is difficult.***

The Emperor's Seed

An emperor in the Far East was growing old and knew it was time to choose his successor. Instead of choosing one of his assistants or his children, he decided something different.

He called young people in the kingdom together one day. He said, "It is time for me to step down and choose the next emperor. I have decided to choose one of you."

The children were shocked! But the emperor continued. "I am going to give each one of you a seed today, one very special seed. I want you to plant the seed, water it and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from this one seed. I will then judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next emperor!"

One boy named Ling was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly told his mother the story. She helped him get a pot and planting soil, and he planted the seed and watered it carefully.

Every day he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about 3 weeks, some of the other youths began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow. Ling kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew. 3 weeks, 4 weeks, 5 weeks went by; Still nothing. By now, others were talking about their plants but Ling didn't have a plant, and he felt like a failure. 6 months went by; still nothing in Ling's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing.

Ling didn't say anything to his friends. He just kept waiting for his seed to grow. A year finally went by and all the youths of the kingdom brought their plants to the emperor for inspection.

Ling told his mother that he wasn't going to take an empty pot but his Mother said he must be honest about what happened. Ling felt sick to his stomach, but he knew his Mother was right.

He took his empty pot to the palace. When Ling arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by the other youths. They were beautiful, in all shapes and sizes. Ling put his empty pot on the floor and many of the other kinds laughed at him. A few felt sorry for him and just said, "Hey nice try."

When the emperor arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted the young people. Ling just tried to hide in the back. "My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown," said the emperor. "Today, one of you will be appointed the next emperor!"

All of a sudden, the emperor spotted Ling at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered his guards to bring him to the front.

Ling was terrified. "The emperor knows I'm a failure! Maybe he will have me killed!"

When Ling got to the front, the Emperor asked his name. "My name is Ling," he replied. All the kids were laughing and making fun of him.

The emperor asked everyone to quiet down.

He looked at Ling, and then announced to the crowd, "Behold your new emperor! His name is Ling!" Ling couldn't believe it. Ling couldn't even grow his seed. How could he be the new emperor?

Then the emperor said, "One year ago today, I gave everyone here a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds, which would not grow. All of you, except Ling, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Ling was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new emperor!"

If you plant honesty even from boiled seed, you will reap trust.

Choose a Way to Win the Race

Once upon a time a tortoise and a hare had an argument about who was faster. They decided to settle the argument with a race. They agreed on a route and started off the race.

The hare shot ahead and ran briskly for some time. Then seeing that he was far ahead of the tortoise, he thought he'd sit under a tree for some time and relax before continuing the race. He sat under the tree and soon fell asleep. The tortoise plodding on overtook him and soon finished the race, emerging as the undisputed champ. The hare woke up and realised that he'd lost the race. The moral of the story is that slow and steady wins the race.

This is the version of the story that we've all grown up with. But then recently, someone told me a more interesting version of this story. It continues.

The hare was disappointed at losing the race and he did some Defect Prevention (Root Cause Analysis). He realised that he'd lost the race only because he had been overconfident, careless and lax.

If he had not taken things for granted, there's no way the tortoise could have beaten him. So he challenged the tortoise to another race. The tortoise agreed.

This time, the hare went all out and ran without stopping from start to finish. He won by several miles.

The moral of the story, Fast and Consistent will always beat the slow and steady. If you have two people in your organisation, one slow, methodical and reliable, and the other fast and still reliable at what he does, the fast and reliable chap will consistently climb the organisational ladder faster than the slow, methodical chap. It's good to be slow and steady; but it's better to be fast and reliable.

But the story doesn't end here.

The tortoise did some thinking this time, and realised that there's no way he can beat the hare in a race the way it was currently formatted.

He thought for a while, and then challenged the hare to another race, but on a slightly different route.

The hare agreed. They started off. In keeping with his self-made commitment to be consistently fast, the hare took off and ran at top speed until he came to a broad river.

The finishing line was a couple of kilometres on the other side of the river.

The hare sat there wondering what to do. In the meantime the tortoise trundled along, got into the river, swam to the opposite bank, continued walking and finished the race.

The moral of the story; First identify your core competency and then change the playing field to suit your core competency. In an organisation, if you are a good speaker, make sure you create opportunities to give presentations that enable the senior management to notice you. If your strength is analysis, make sure you do some sort of research, make a report and send it upstairs. Working to your strengths will not only get you noticed but will also create opportunities for growth and advancement.

The story still hasn't ended.

The hare and the tortoise, by this time, had become pretty good friends and they did some thinking together. Both realised that the last race could have been run much better.

So they decided to do the last race again, but to run as a team this time.

They started off, and this time the hare carried the tortoise till the riverbank. There, the tortoise took over and swam across with the hare on his back.

On the opposite bank, the hare again carried the tortoise and they reached the finishing line together. They both felt a greater sense of satisfaction than they'd felt earlier.

The moral of the story; It's good to be individually brilliant and to have strong core competencies; but unless you're able to work in a team and harness each other's core competencies, you'll always perform below par because there will always be situations at which you'll do poorly and someone else does well. Teamwork is mainly about situational leadership, letting the person with the relevant core competency for a situation take leadership.

There are more lessons to be learnt from this story.

Note that neither the hare nor the tortoise gave up after failures. The hare decided to work harder and put in more effort after his failure.

The tortoise changed his strategy because he was already working as hard as he could. In life, when faced with failure, sometimes it is appropriate to work harder and put in more effort.

Sometimes it is appropriate to change strategy and try something different. And sometimes it is appropriate to do both.

The hare and the tortoise also learnt another vital lesson. When we stop competing against a rival and instead start competing against the situation, we perform far better.

When Roberto Goizueta took over as CEO of Coca-Cola in the 1980s, he was faced with intense competition from Pepsi that was eating into Coke's growth.

His executives were Pepsi-focussed and intent on increasing market share 0.1 per cent a time.

Goizueta decided to stop competing against Pepsi and instead compete against the situation of 0.1 per cent growth.

He asked his executives what was the average fluid intake of an American per day? The answer was 14 ounces. What was Coke's share of that? Two ounces, Goizueta said Coke needed a larger share of that market.

The competition wasn't Pepsi. It was the water, tea, coffee, milk and fruit juices that went into the remaining 12 ounces. The public should reach for a Coke whenever they felt like drinking something.

To this end, Coke put up vending machines at every street corner. Sales took a quantum jump and Pepsi has never quite caught up since.

To sum up, the story of the hare and tortoise teaches us many things. Chief among them are that fast and consistent will always beat slow and steady; work to your competencies; pooling resources and working as a team will always beat individual performers; never give up when faced with failure; and finally, compete against the situation. Not against a rival.

Don't We All

I was parked in front of the mall wiping off my car. I had just come from the car wash and was waiting for my wife to get out of work. Coming my way from across the parking lot was what society would consider a bum.

From the looks of him, he had no car, no home, no clean clothes, and no money. There are times when you feel generous but there are other times that you just don't want to be bothered. This was one of those "don't want to be bothered times."

"I hope he doesn't ask me for any money," I thought.

He didn't. He came and sat on the curb in front of the bus stop but he didn't look like he could have enough money to even ride the bus.

After a few minutes he spoke. "That's a very pretty car," he said.

He was ragged but he had an air of dignity around him. His scraggly blond beard kept more than his face warm. I said, "Thanks," and continued wiping off my car.

He sat there quietly as I worked. The expected plea for money never came. As the silence between us widened something inside said, "Ask him if he needs any help." I was sure that he would say "yes" but I held true to the inner voice. "Do you need any help?" I asked.

He answered in three simple but profound words that I shall never forget. **"Don't we all?"** he said.

We often look for wisdom in great men and women. We expect it from those of higher learning and accomplishments. I expected nothing but an outstretched grimy hand. He spoke the three words that shook me. **"Don't we all?"**

I was feeling high and mighty, successful and important, above a bum in the street, until those three words hit me like a twelve gauge shotgun. "Don't we all?"

I needed help. Maybe not for bus fare or a place to sleep, but I needed help. I reached in my wallet and gave him not only enough for bus fare, but enough to get a warm meal and shelter for the day. Those three little words still ring true. No matter how much you have, no matter how much you have accomplished, you need help too. No

matter how little you have, no matter how loaded you are with problems, even without money or a place to sleep, you can give help. Even if it's just a compliment, you can give that.

You never know when you may see someone that appears to have it all. They are waiting on you to give them what they don't have; a different perspective on life, a glimpse at something beautiful, and a respite from daily chaos that only you through a torn world can see.

Maybe the man was just a homeless stranger wandering the streets. Maybe he was more than that. Maybe he was sent by a power that is great and wise, to minister to a soul too comfortable in them. Maybe God looked down, called an Angel, dressed him like a bum, and then said, "go minister to that man cleaning the car, that man needs help."
Don't we all?

Be Patient

A man came out of his home to admire his new truck. To his puzzlement, his three-year-old son was happily hammering dents into the shiny paint of the truck.

The man ran to his son, knocked him away, and hammered the little boy's hands into pulp as punishment.

When the father calmed down, he rushed his son to the hospital. Although the doctor tried desperately to save the crushed bones, he finally had to amputate the fingers from both the boy's hands.

When the boy woke up from the surgery & saw his bandaged stubs, he innocently said, “Daddy, I'm sorry about your truck.” Then he asked, “But when are my fingers going to grow back?”

The father went home & committed suicide.

Think about this story the next time someone steps on your feet or you wish to take revenge. Think first before you lose your patience with someone you love. Trucks can be repaired. Broken bones & hurt feelings often can't.

Too often we fail to recognise the difference between the person and the performance. We forget that forgiveness is greater than revenge.

People make mistakes. We are allowed to make mistakes. But the actions we take while in a rage will haunt us forever.

Pause and ponder. Think before you act. Be patient. Forgive & forget. Love one and all.

Determination

In 1883, a creative engineer named John Roebling was inspired by an idea to build a spectacular bridge connecting New York with the Long Island. However bridge building experts throughout the world thought that this was an impossible feat and told Roebling to forget the idea. It just could not be done. It was not practical. It had never been done before.

Roebling could not ignore the vision he had in his mind of this bridge. He thought about it all the time and he knew deep in his heart that it could be done. He just had to share the dream with someone else. After much discussion and persuasion he managed to convince his son Washington, an up and coming engineer, that the bridge in fact could be built.

Working together for the first time, the father and son developed concepts of how it could be accomplished and how the obstacles could be overcome. With great excitement and inspiration, and the headiness of a wild challenge before them, they hired their crew and began to build their dream bridge.

The project started well, but when it was only a few months underway a tragic accident on the site took the life of John Roebling. Washington was injured and left with a certain amount of brain damage, which resulted in him not being able to walk or talk or even move.

"We told those so “,” Crazy men and their crazy dreams"; "It's foolish to chase wild visions." Everyone had a negative comment to make and felt that the project should be scrapped since the Roeblings were the only ones who knew how the bridge could be built. In spite of his handicap Washington was never discouraged and still had a burning desire to complete the bridge and his mind was still as sharp as ever.

He tried to inspire and pass on his enthusiasm to some of his friends, but they were too daunted by the task. As he lay on his bed in his hospital room, with the sunlight streaming through the windows, a gentle breeze blew the flimsy white curtains apart and he was able to see the sky and the tops of the trees outside for just a moment.

It seemed that there was a message for him not to give up. Suddenly an idea hit him. All he could do was move one finger and he decided to make the best use of it. By moving this, he slowly developed a code of communication with his wife.

He touched his wife's arm with that finger, indicating to her that he wanted her to call the engineers again. Then he used the same method of tapping her arm to tell the engineers what to do. It seemed foolish but the project was under way again.

For 13 years Washington tapped out his instructions with his finger on his wife's arm, until the bridge was finally completed. Today the spectacular Brooklyn Bridge stands in all its glory as a tribute to the triumph of one man's indomitable spirit and his determination not to be defeated by circumstances. It is also a tribute to the engineers and their team work, and to their faith in a man who was considered mad by half the world. It stands too as a tangible monument to the love and devotion of his wife who for 13 long years patiently decoded the messages of her husband and told the engineers what to do.

Perhaps this is one of the best examples of a never-say-die attitude that overcomes a terrible physical handicap and achieves an impossible goal.

Often when we face obstacles in our day-to-day life, our hurdles seem very small in comparison to what many others have to face. The Brooklyn Bridge shows us that dreams that seem impossible can be realised with determination and persistence, no matter what the odds are.

Even the most distant dream can be realized with determination and persistence.

Parable of the Pencil

The Pencil Maker took the pencil aside, just before putting him into the box. "There are 5 things you need to know," he told the pencil, "Before I send you out into the world. Always remember them and never forget, and you will become the best pencil you can be."

"One: You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in someone's hand."

"Two: You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, but you'll need it to become a better pencil."

"Three: You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make."

"Four: The most important part of you will always be what's inside."

"And Five: On every surface you are used on, you must leave your mark. No matter what the condition, you must continue to write."

The pencil understood and promised to remember, and went into the box with purpose in its heart.

Now replacing the place of the pencil with you always remember them and never forget, and you will become the best person you can be.

One: You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in God's hand. And allow other human beings to access you for the many gifts you possess.

Two: You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, by going through various problems in life, but you'll need it to become a stronger person.

Three: You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make.

Four: The most important part of you will always be what's on the inside.

And Five: On every surface you walk through, you must leave your mark. No matter what the situation, you must continue to do your duties.

Allow this parable on the pencil to encourage you to know that you are a special person and only you can fulfil the purpose to which you were born to accomplish. Never allow yourself to get discouraged and think that your life is insignificant and cannot make a change.

The Buzzard, the Bat, and the Bumblebee

If you put a buzzard in a pen six or eight feet square and entirely open at the top, the bird, in spite of his ability to fly, will be an absolute prisoner. The reason is that a buzzard always begins a flight from the ground with a run of ten or twelve feet. Without space to run, as is his habit, he will not even attempt to fly, but will remain a prisoner for life in a small jail with no top.

The ordinary bat that flies around at night, a remarkable nimble creature in the air, cannot take off from a level place. If it is placed on the floor or flat ground, all it can do is shuffle about helplessly and, no doubt, painfully, until it reaches some slight elevation from which it can throw itself into the air. Then, at once, it takes off like a flash.

A Bumblebee if dropped into an open tumbler will be there until it dies, unless it is taken out. It never sees the means of escape at the top, but persists in trying to find some way out through the sides near the bottom. It will seek a way where none exists, until it completely destroys itself.

In many ways, there are lots of people like the buzzard, the bat and the bee. They are struggling about with all their problems and frustrations, not realizing that the answer is right there above them.

A True Story

My husband is an Engineer by profession, I love him for his steady nature, and I love the warm feeling when I lean against his broad shoulders. Three years of courtship and now, two years into marriage, I would have to admit, that I am getting tired of it. The reasons of me loving him before, has now transformed into the cause of all my restlessness. I am a sentimental woman and extremely sensitive when it comes to a relationship and my feelings, I yearn for the romantic moments, like a little girl yearning for candy. My husband is my complete opposite, his lack of sensitivity, and the inability of bringing romantic moments into our marriage has disheartened me about love. One day, I finally decided to tell him my decision, that I wanted a divorce.

"Why?" he asked, shocked.

"I am tired; there are no reasons for every thing in the world!" I answered.

He kept silent the whole night, seems to be in deep thought with a lighted cigarette at all times.

My feeling of disappointment only increased, here was a man who can't even express his predicament, what else can I hope from him?

And finally he asked me:" What can I do to change your mind?"

Somebody said it right, it's hard to change a person's personality, and I guess, I have started losing faith in him.

Looking deep into his eyes I slowly answered : "Here is the question, if you can answer and convince my heart, I will change my mind, Let's say, I want a flower located on the face of a mountain cliff, and we both are sure that picking the flower will cause your death, will you do it for me?"

He said:" I will give you your answer tomorrow...."

My hopes just sank by listening to his response.

I woke up the next morning to find him gone, and saw a piece of paper with his scratchy handwriting, underneath a milk glass, on the dining table near the front door, that goes....

My dear,

"I would not pick that flower for you, but please allow me to explain the reasons further..."

This first line was already breaking my heart. I continued reading.

"When you use the computer you always mess up the Software programs, and you cry in front of the screen, I have to save my fingers so that I can help to restore the programs.

You always leave the house keys behind, thus I have to save my legs to rush home to open the door for you.

You love travelling but always lose your way in a new city; I have to save my eyes to show you the way.

You always have the cramps whenever your "good friend" approaches every month; I have to save my palms so that I can calm the cramps in your tummy.

You like to stay indoors, and I worry that you will be infected by infantile autism. I have to save my mouth to tell you jokes and stories to cure your boredom.

You always stare at the computer, and that will do nothing good for your eyes, I have to save my eyes so that when we grow old, I can help to clip your nails, and help to remove those annoying white hairs.

So I can also hold your hand while strolling down the beach, as you enjoy the sunshine and the beautiful sand... and tell you the colour of flowers, just like the colour of the glow on your young face...

Thus, my dear, unless I am sure that there is someone who loves you more than I do... I could not pick that flower yet, and die... "

My tears fell on the letter, and blurred the ink of his handwriting... and as I continue on reading...

"Now, that you have finished reading my answer, if you are satisfied, please open the front door for I am standing outside bringing your favourite bread and fresh milk...

I rush to pull open the door, and saw his anxious face, clutching tightly with his hands, the milk bottle and loaf of bread....

Now I am very sure that no one will ever love me as much as he does, and I have decided to leave the flower alone...

Change Your Strategy

One day, there was a blind man sitting on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet and a sign that read: "I am blind, please help". A creative publicist was walking by him and stopped to observe he only had a few coins in his hat, he dropped a few more coins in his hat and without asking for his permission took the sign, turned it around, and wrote another announcement. He placed the sign by his feet and left.

That afternoon the creative publicist returned by the blind man and noticed that his hat was full of bills and coins. The blind man recognized his footsteps and asked if it was him who had re-written his sign and he wanted to know what did he write on it? The publicist responded: "Nothing that was not true, I just rewrote your sign differently". He smiled and went on his way.

The blind man never knew but his new sign `read: **"TODAY IS SPRING AND I CANNOT SEE IT"**.

Change your strategy when something does not go your way and you'll see it will probably be for the best. Have faith that every change is best for our lives.

Smile

I am a mother of three (ages 14, 12, 3) and have recently completed my college degree. The last class I had to take was Sociology. The teacher was absolutely inspiring with the qualities that I wish every human being had been graced with. Her last project of the term was called "Smile." The class was asked to go out and smile at three people and document their reactions.

I am a very friendly person and always smile at everyone and say hello anyway, so, I thought this would be a piece of cake, literally. Soon after we were assigned the project, my husband, youngest son, and I went out to McDonald's one crisp March morning. It was just our way of sharing special playtime with our son. We were standing in line, waiting to be served, when all of a sudden everyone around us began to back away, and then even my husband did. I did not move an inch... an overwhelming feeling of panic welled up inside of me as I turned to see why they had moved. As I turned around I smelled a horrible "dirty body" smell, and there standing behind me were two poor homeless men. As I looked down at the short gentleman, close to me, he was "smiling". His beautiful sky blue eyes were full of God's Light as he searched for acceptance. He said, "Good day" as he counted the few coins he had been clutching. The second man fumbled with his hands as he stood behind his friend. I realized the second man was mentally challenged and the blue-eyed gentleman was his salvation. I held my tears as I stood there with them. The young lady at the counter asked him what they wanted. He said, "Coffee is all Miss" because that was all they could afford. (If they wanted to sit in the restaurant and warm up, they had to buy something. He just wanted to be warm). Then I really felt it - the compulsion was so great I almost reached out and embraced the little man with the blue eyes. That is when I noticed all eyes in the restaurant were set on me, judging my every action. I smiled and asked the young lady behind the counter to give me two more breakfast meals on a separate tray. I then walked around the corner to the table that the men had chosen as a resting spot. I put the tray on the table and laid my hand on the blue-eyed gentleman's cold hand. He looked up at me, with tears in his eyes, and said, "Thank you." I leaned over, began to pat his hand and said, "I did not do this for you. God is here working through me to give you hope." I started to cry as I walked away to join my husband and son. When I sat down my husband smiled at me and said, "That is why God gave you to me, Honey, to give me hope." We held hands for a moment and at that time, we knew that only because of the Grace that we had been given were we able to give. We are not church goers, but we are

believers. That day showed me the pure Light of God's sweet love. I returned to college, on the last evening of class, with this story in hand. I turned in "my project" and the instructor read it. Then she looked up at me and said, "Can I share this?" I slowly nodded as she got the attention of the class. She began to read and that is when I knew that we as human beings and being part of God share this need to heal people and to be healed. In my own way I had touched the people at McDonald's, my husband, son, instructor, and every soul that shared the classroom on the last night I spent as a college student.

I graduated with one of the biggest lessons I would ever learn:
UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE.

Learn how to LOVE PEOPLE AND USE THINGS - NOT LOVE THINGS AND USE PEOPLE.

A Little Bit of Joy

Twenty years ago, I drove a cab for a living. It was a cowboy's life, a life for someone who wanted no boss. What I didn't realize was that it was also a ministry. Because I drove the night shift, my cab became a moving confessional. Passengers climbed in, sat behind me in total anonymity, and told me about their lives. I encountered people whose lives amazed me, ennobled me, and made me laugh and weep. But none touched me more than a woman I picked up late one August night.

I responded to a call from a small brick fourplex in a quiet part of town. I assumed I was being sent to pick up some partiers, or someone who had just had a fight with a lover, or a worker heading to an early shift at some factory in the industrial part of town. When I arrived at 2:30 a.m., the building was dark except for a single light in a ground floor window. Under these circumstances, many drivers would just honk once or twice, wait a minute, and then drive away. But I had seen too many poor people who depended on taxis as their only means of transportation. Unless a situation smelled of danger, I always went to the door. This passenger might be someone who needed my assistance, I reasoned to myself. So I walked to the door and knocked.

"Just a minute," answered a frail, elderly voice.

I could hear something being dragged across the floor. After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her 80s stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940's movie. By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, any knick- knacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware.

"Would you carry my bag out to the car?" she said.

I took the suitcase to the cab, and then returned to assist the woman. She took my arm and we walked slowly toward the curb. She kept thanking me for my kindness.

"It's nothing," I told her. "I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother treated."

"Oh, you're such a good boy," she said.

When we got in the cab, she gave me an address, and then asked, "Could you drive through downtown?"

"It's not the shortest way," I answered quickly.

"Oh, I don't mind," she said. "I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice".

I looked in the rear-view mirror. Her eyes were glistening.

"I don't have any family left," she continued. "The doctor says I don't have very long."

I quietly reached over and shut off the meter. "What route would you like me to take?" I asked.

For the next two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. We drove through the neighbourhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl. Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing.

As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, "I'm tired. Let's go now." We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico. Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They were attentive, watching her every move. They must have been expecting her. I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair.

"How much do I owe you?" she asked, reaching into her purse.

"Nothing," I said.

"You have to make a living," she answered.

"There are other passengers," I responded.

Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly.

"You gave an old woman a little moment of joy," she said. "Thank you, dear."

I squeezed her hand, and then walked into the dim morning light. Behind me, a door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life.

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly, lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift? What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away?

On a quick review, I don't think that I have done very many more important things in my life. We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware - beautifully wrapped in what others may consider small ones.

Selflessness

A rich man said to his friend, "Why it is everyone is always criticizing me for being miserly. Everyone knows that I have made provision to leave everything I have to charity when I die?" "Well," said the minister, "let me tell you about a story about the pig and the cow. The pig was complaining to the cow one day about how unpopular he was. "People are always talking about your gentleness and your kindness," said the pig. "You give milk and cream. But I give even more. I give bacon and ham. I give bristles and they even pickle my feet! Still no one likes me; I'm just a pig. Why is this?" The cow thought for a minute, and then said, "Well, maybe it's because I give while I'm still living."

When You Thought I Wasn't Looking *(Written by a former child)*

A message every adult should read, because children are watching you and doing as you do, not as you say.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you hang my first painting on the refrigerator, and I immediately wanted to paint another one.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you feed a stray cat, and I learned that it was good to be kind to animals.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you make my favorite cake for me and I learned that the little things can be the special things in life.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I heard you say a prayer, and I knew there is a God I could always talk to and I learned to trust in God.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you make a meal and take it to a friend who was sick, and I learned that we all have to help take care of each other.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you give of your time and money to help people who had nothing and I learned that those who have something should give to those who don't.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you take care of your house and everyone in it and I learned we have to take care of what we are given.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw how you handled your responsibilities, even when you didn't feel good and I learned that I would have to be responsible when I grow up.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw tears come from your eyes and I learned that sometimes things hurt, but it is alright to cry.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw that you cared and I wanted to be everything that I could be.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I learned most of life's lessons that I need to know to be a good and productive person when I grow up.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I looked at you and wanted to say, “Thanks for all the things I saw when you thought I wasn't looking”.

With a Little Help

I was sitting in a train, waiting for it to start. Across from me sat a small boy, asking questions as children do. He asked his mother, "When will the train start?"

I saw my chance and volunteered to answer. I said, "The train will start when we start pushing."

The child opened his big eyes in surprise, "Really?" "Of course," I said. "Unless we push, it doesn't start."

"Then let's push," he exclaimed.

"Just a minute," I said. "The passengers are not all on. I'll tell you when to push."

I watched for the signal light at the station and heard the station master's shrill whistle. Then I shouted to the boy, "Now! Push for all you're worth."

He and I started to push in the direction of the engine. We pushed and pushed against the back of the seat... and soon a contented smile lit up the boy's face. The train was moving ... very slowly at first, but then gaining speed little by little.

I congratulated the lad on his success. "We DID it! We DID it!"

"Wasn't that great?" he exclaimed. He looked immensely pleased with himself. He was travelling in a train he had helped to start. I did not have the heart to tell him about the monstrous engine chugging up in front. Eventually he would find out for himself...

We usually attribute great success to our little actions, forgetting that behind them all is that almighty unseen power called God, whose power often makes us look powerful.

That's Not My Job

This is a story told about four people named, Somebody, Everybody, Anybody and Nobody. There was one important job to be done.

Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about it because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it. Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

Are you a Carrot, an Egg or Coffee Bean?

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life, and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it, and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as one problem was solved a new one arose.

Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water. In the first pot, she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs and the last she placed ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil without saying a word. In about twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out and placed it in a bowl.

Turning to her daughter, she asked, "Tell me what you see?" "Carrots, eggs, and coffee," she replied. She brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they got soft. She then asked her to take the egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, she asked her to smell and sip the coffee. The daughter smiled, as she smelled and tasted its rich aroma. The daughter then asked, "What's the point, mother?"

Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity- boiling water-but each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior. But, after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water they had changed the water.

"Which are you?" she asked her daughter. "When trials and adversity knock on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?"

Think of this: Which am I?

Am I the carrot that seems strong, but with pain and adversity, do I wilt and become soft and lose my strength?

Am I the egg that starts with a passive heart, but changes with the heat? Did I have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a financial hardship or some other trial, have I become hardened and stiff? Does my shell

look the same, but on the inside, am I bitter and tough with a stiff spirit and a hardened heart?

Or, am I like the coffee bean? The bean actually changes the hot water, the very circumstance that brings the pain. When the water gets hot, it releases the fragrance and flavour. If you are like the bean, when things are at their worst, you become better and change the situation around you.

When the hours are the darkest and trials are their greatest do you elevate to another level?

How do you handle adversity? Like the CARROT, the EGG, OR the COFFEE BEAN?

Dust If You Must

"A house becomes a home when you can write, 'I love you' on the furniture."

I can't tell you how many countless hours that I have spent CLEANING! I used to spend at least 8 hours every weekend making sure things were just perfect - "in case someone came over". Then I realized one day that no one came over; they were all out living life and having fun!

Now, when people visit, I find no need to explain the "condition" of my home. They are more interested in hearing about the things I've been doing while I was away living life and having fun. If you haven't figured this out yet, please heed this advice.

Life is short.

Enjoy it! Dust if you must, but wouldn't it be better to paint a picture or write a letter, bake a cake or plant a seed, ponder the difference between want and need?

Dust if you must, but there's not much time, with rivers to swim and mountains to climb, music to hear and books to read, friends to cherish and life to lead.

Dust if you must, but the world's out there with the sun in your eyes, the wind in your hair, a flutter of snow, and a shower of rain. This day will not come around again.

Dust if you must, but bear in mind, old age will come and it's not kind. And when you go - and go you must - you, yourself will make more dust!

It's not what you gather, but what you scatter that tells what kind of life you have lived.

A Life Worth Saving

A man risked his life by swimming through the treacherous riptide to save a youngster being swept out to sea.

After the child recovered from the harrowing experience, he said to the man, "Thank you for saving my life.

The man looked into the little boy's eyes and said, "That's okay, kid. Just make sure your life was worth saving."

A Simple Gesture

A little boy selling magazines for school walked up to a house that people rarely visited. The house was very old and run down and the owner hardly ever came out. When he did come out he would not say hello to neighbours or passers by but simply just glare at them.

The boy knocked on the door and waited, sweating from fear of the old man. The boy's parents told him to stay away from the house, a lot of the other neighbourhood children were told the same from their parents.

As he was ready to walk away, the door slowly opened. "What do you want?" the old man said. The little boy was very afraid but he had a quota to meet for school with selling the magazines.

"Uh, sir, I uh am selling these magazines and uh I was wondering if you would like to buy one." The old man just stared at the boy. The boy could see inside the old man's house and saw that he had dog figurines on the fireplace mantle. "Do you collect dogs?" the little boy asked. "Yes, I have many collectibles in my house, they are my family here, and they are all I have." The boy then felt sorry for the man, as it seemed that he was a very lonely soul. "Well, I do have a magazine here for collectors, it is perfect for you, and I also have one about dogs since you like dogs so much." The old man was ready to close the door on the boy and said, "No boy, I don't need any magazines of any kind, now goodbye."

The little boy was sad that he was not going to make his quota with the sale. He was also sad for the old man being so alone in the big house that he owned. The boy went home and then had an idea. He had a little dog figure that he got some years ago from an aunt. The figurine did not mean nearly as much to him since he had a real live dog and a large family. The boy headed back down to the old man's house with the figurine. He knocked on the door again and this time the old man came right to the door. "Boy, I thought I told you no magazines."

"No, sir I know that, I wanted to bring you a gift." The boy handed him the figurine and the old man's face lit up. "It is a Golden Retriever, I have one at home, and this one is for you." The old man was simply stunned; no one had ever given him such a gift and shown him so much kindness. "Boy, you have a big heart, why are you doing this?" The boy smiled at the man and said, "Because you like dogs."

From that day on the old man started coming out of the house and acknowledging people. He and the boy became friends; the boy even brought his dog to see the man weekly.

This simple gesture changed both of their lives forever.

IF and WHEN

IF and WHEN were friends. Every week they met and had lunch. Their conversation usually cantered on all the things they were going to achieve. They both had many dreams and they loved to talk about them.

This particular Saturday when they met, WHEN sensed that IF was not in a great mood. As usual they sat at the table reserved for them and ordered their lunch. Once they placed their order, WHEN questioned IF. "IF what is wrong with you? You don't seem your usual cheery self?"

IF looked at WHEN and replied, "I'm not sure; I just don't feel like I am making any progress. This last week I saw a course I wanted to take if only I had the time to take it."

WHEN knew exactly how IF felt. "Yeah," replied WHEN, "I too saw a course and I am going to register when I get enough money together." WHEN then said, "well what about that new job you were going to apply for. You were so excited about it last week, did you apply?"

IF responded, "If my computer didn't break down last week, I would have applied. But, my computer is not working, so I could not type my resume."

"Don't worry about it IF, when you are ready another job will come through. I have been thinking about looking for another job also, but I will wait and when the weather gets nicer I will look then." WHEN then went on to tell IF about his week, hoping that it would cheer him up a bit.

The man at the next table couldn't help overhear WHEN and IF. They both were talking about when this and if that, finally he couldn't take it anymore. "Excuse me gentlemen," the man said. IF and WHEN both looked at the man and wondered what he wanted. The man continued, "I'm sorry, but I couldn't help hearing your conversation. I think I know how you could solve your problems."

IF smiled and thought, how could a complete stranger know how to solve all of their problems? If only he knew. When he realized the challenges they faced there was no way he could solve their problems! Curious, IF asked the gentleman, "How do you think you can solve our problems?"

The gentleman smiled and said, "You only need listen to yourselves. It reminds me of an old proverb: 'If and When were planted, and Nothing grew'."

IF and WHEN looked puzzled. The gentleman smiled and said, "Start counting how many times you use the words 'if' and 'when'. Rather than thinking 'if and when', start doing, take action, stop talking about 'if and when'."

IF and WHEN both looked surprised, and suddenly realized that what the gentleman had said was so true. Both of them were guilty of thinking, acting and living their life for the "ifs and whens". The gentleman left and IF and WHEN's conversation changed. They made a pact that when they met for lunch next week, there would be no "ifs and whens"; they would only talk about what they accomplished!

The Illusion of Reflection

Once there was a king who had presented his daughter, the princess, with a beautiful diamond necklace. The necklace was stolen and his people in the kingdom searched everywhere but could not find it. Some said a bird may have stolen it. The king then asked them all to search for it and put a reward for \$50,000 for anyone who found it.

One day a clerk was walking home along a river next to an industrial area. This river was completely polluted and filthy and smelly. As he was walking, the clerk saw a shimmering in the river and when he looked, he saw the diamond necklace. He decided to try and catch it so that he could get the \$50,000 reward. He put his hand in the filthy, dirty river and grabbed at the necklace, but somehow missed it and didn't catch it. He took his hand out and looked again and the necklace was still there. He tried again, this time he walked in the river and dirtied his pants in the filthy river and put his whole arm in to catch the necklace. But strangely, he still missed the necklace! He came out and started walking away, feeling depressed.

Then again he saw the necklace, right there. This time he was determined to get it, no matter what. He decided to plunge into the river, although it was a disgusting thing to do as the river was polluted, and his whole body would become filthy. He plunged in, and searched everywhere for the necklace and yet he failed. This time he was really bewildered and came out feeling very depressed that he could not get the necklace that would get him \$50,000.

Just then a saint who was walking by, saw him, and asked him what the matter was. The clerk didn't want to share the secret with the saint, thinking the saint might take the necklace for himself, so he refused to tell the saint anything. But the saint could see this man was troubled and being compassionate, again asked the clerk to tell him the problem and promised that he would not tell anyone about it. The clerk mustered some courage and decided to put some faith in the saint. He told the saint about the necklace and how he tried and tried to catch it, but kept failing. The saint then told him that perhaps he should try looking upward, toward the branches of the tree, instead of in the filthy river. The clerk looked up and true enough, the necklace was dangling on the branch of a tree. He had been trying to capture a mere reflection of the real necklace all this time.

Moral of the story:

Material happiness is just like the filthy, polluted river; because it is a mere reflection of the TRUE happiness in the spiritual world.

We can never achieve the happiness we are looking for no matter how hard we endeavour in material life. Instead we should look upwards, toward God, who is the source of real happiness, and stop chasing after the reflection of this happiness in the material world. This spiritual happiness is the only thing that can satisfy us completely.

A winner is NOT one who NEVER FAILS, but one who NEVER QUILTS!

In 1962, four nervous young musicians played their first record audition for the executives of the Decca recording Company. The executives were not impressed. While turning down this group of musicians, one executive said, "We don't like their sound. Groups of guitars are on the way out." ***The group was called The Beatles.***

In 1944, Emmeline Snively, director of the Blue Book Modelling Agency told modelling hopeful Norma Jean Baker, "You'd better learn secretarial work or else get married." ***She went on and became Marilyn Monroe.***

In 1954, Jimmy Denny, manager of the Grand Ole Opry, Fired a singer after one performance. He told him, "You ain't goin' nowhere....son. You ought to go back to drivin' a truck." ***He went on to become Elvis Presley.***

When Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in 1876, it did not ring off the hook with calls from potential backers. After making a demonstration call, President Rutherford Hayes said, "That's an amazing invention, but who would ever want to see one of them?"

When Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, he tried over 2000 experiments before he got it to work. A young reporter asked him how it felt to fail so many times. He said, "I never failed once. I invented the light bulb. It just happened to be a 2000-step process."

In the 1940s, another young inventor named Chester Carlson took his idea to 20 corporations, including some of the biggest in the country. They all turned him down. In 1947, after 7 long years of rejections, he finally got a tiny company in Rochester, NY, the Haloid Company, to purchase the rights to his invention -- an electrostatic paper-copying process. ***Haloid became Xerox Corporation.***

A little girl - the 20th of 22 children, was born prematurely and her survival was doubtful. When she was 4 years old, she contracted double pneumonia and scarlet fever, which left her with a paralysed left leg. At age 9, she removed the metal leg brace she had been dependent on and began to walk without it. By 13 she had developed a rhythmic walk, which doctors said was a miracle. That same year she decided to become a runner. She entered a race and came in last. For the next few years every race she entered, she came in last. Everyone told her to quit, but she kept on running. One

day she actually won a race; and then another. From then on she won every race she entered. ***Eventually this little girl - Wilma Rudolph, went on to win three Olympic gold medals.***

A school teacher scolded a boy for not paying attention to his mathematics and for not being able to solve simple problems. She told him that you would not become anybody in life. ***The boy was Albert Einstein.***

Fear

Once upon a time there was a Woman who lived with Fear. She hadn't planned to live with him, you understand. It just happened that Fear had moved into her house when she was a very little girl, and had lived there ever since. She got used to having him around, even though he was fearsome to behold. He was very big and very strong, and had long fangs with a poison in them that made her heart stop and her muscles grow weak every time he bit her. But, as long as she didn't do anything Fear didn't want her to do, he didn't bite her very often.

One day, the woman decided that she wanted to do something new, all by herself... even though she didn't know if she could do it. Fear was adamantly against the idea, and warned her that if she tried, he would bite her harder than he had ever bitten her before. But the woman's mind was made up, and she said she was going to try anyway. So, Fear bit her, just as he'd said he would. She felt her heart stop, and her muscles grow weak, but she kept struggling to try the new thing. So Fear grabbed her and threw her to the ground and sat on her chest. She struggled against his weight, but he was too strong and big for her. She struggled all day, and when night came she gave up and fell into an exhausted sleep.

The next day, she started once again to try a new thing, and like the day before, Fear grabbed her... but before he could throw her down, she tripped him and *he* fell on the ground. Enraged, he leapt up and they started to fight in earnest. They fought and fought, Fear trying to bite her, and she trying to pin him down so he couldn't bite. But, Fear was a wily fighter, and of course, eventually, he managed to bite her. So, once again, her heart stopped and her muscles grew weak and she stopped fighting, and fell into an exhausted sleep.

The battle started all over the next day, and the next, and the next. It went on for many, many days. Each day she lost the fight, but each day her muscles grew stronger and she learned more and more about Fear's wiles and tricks and weak points. Her body, too, learned the ways of Fear's poison, and began to make medicines to fight it - to make her heart beat even stronger and faster, her muscles even more powerful. Eventually, even when Fear bit her again and again, she did not fall down, and could keep fighting him.

One fine day, when the sky was very blue and the air was very crisp, and they had fought nearly all day, the Woman finally pinned Fear to the ground and put her foot on his back. She leaned over and said

very softly, but very firmly, "I have beaten you. Now go away." And Fear vanished! She was so startled that she lost her balance and fell over. But she got right up again, and spent the rest of the day doing new things and humming a song and just generally enjoying an evening without Fear in her house. As she went to sleep she thought of all the things she would do tomorrow, without having to spend any of her time to fight Fear. She was so excited, she could hardly sleep!

When she woke her first thought was that she had beaten Fear yesterday, and she smiled and got out of bed. But, there, sitting in the corner of her house, was Fear, as big and strong and ugly as ever.

"What are you doing here?" she shouted. "I beat you!"

"Ah, but that was yesterday," Fear replied with a grin. "If you want me to go away today, you have to beat me today."

And with that, he stood up and reached for her, and they began to fight again. But as she fought, it seemed to the Woman that Fear was a little smaller today than he had been yesterday. Yes, she was sure of it. Yesterday he had towered over her; today he was only as tall as she was. After only half a day of fighting, the Woman again pinned Fear to the ground, and said, "I have beaten you. Now go away." And again, Fear vanished. But the Woman was prepared for it this time, and didn't even stumble as Fear disappeared. And she spent the rest of the day doing new things, and fell into a contented sleep that night.

The next day Fear, sitting in his corner chair, simply grinned at her when she walked by. When he stood up to fight her, she noticed that Fear only came to her chin, and she grinned back. She beat him before the sun was halfway up the sky, and enjoyed the rest of the day.

The next day, Fear only came up to her waist. She picked up a basket and said, "I'm going to pick berries on the hill, whether you like it or not." When he came for her, she simply pushed him down, and went out to the hill to pick berries. But a very large, very hungry bear had planned on having lunch at that very berry patch on that very day and became very angry when he saw the woman there, stealing his lunch. He growled and began to chase her. The woman ran, but she knew she couldn't outrun the bear, and she was sure she would die.

But, luckily, the Woman hadn't really beaten Fear that day and she hadn't told him to go away, which is the most important part of the fight, when you fight Fear. So Fear came up behind her and bit her.

Her body released its Fear-poison fighting medicine, her heart beat faster and her muscles grew stronger. Then Fear grabbed her hand, and pulled her along faster than she had ever run before - and she even managed to hold on to the basket of berries. The bear chased her a while, then decided that it was too much trouble, and he was still so very hungry, and there were plenty of berries left. So he went back to the hill to have lunch.

When the Woman and Fear got back to her house, she turned to Fear to thank him for his help. But Fear was very angry with her, and would not listen to her thanks. (In truth, he really did not want to see the Woman hurt, even though he fought her every day.) "What were you thinking! If you had listened to me, you wouldn't have been up on the hill with that bear."

"But I wouldn't have these nice ripe berries either." She retorted. Angry at her response, Fear began to fight with her again. The woman, tired from all the running, let him win quickly and went to sleep that night with her belly full of berry pie, and a contented smile on her face.

The next day, Fear came all the way up to her chin again. When the woman asked him why, he shrugged and said, "When you let me win, I gained strength." So, once again they fought, and the sun was high in the sky before she defeated Fear and told him to go away. The woman decided that she would fight Fear every day until he shrank to nothing and was gone forever.

But, then she remembered how he had helped her with the bear. So, she found a tough, old hide and made a small pouch the size of her hand. She threaded it with a leather thong, and tied it around her waist. When Fear was small enough to fit in the pouch, she would stop fighting him, she decided. Or, to be precise, she would only fight him just enough to keep him small. Then she would carry Fear in the pouch by her side, so that he would always be with her when she needed him. For, as I told you at the very beginning of this tale, the Woman had become accustomed to living with Fear.

The Flower and the Tree

One day there was a tree and a flower that sat close to each other on a large prairie. The sun was shining bright and the air was crisp with the warm summer breeze. The grass flowed freely and bent with the wind. The flower sitting there with its green leaves and brightly coloured flower blazing its scent and colour across the prairie for anyone to see and smell.

The tree stood wide and tall with its branches flowing out; its branches floating free on the gentle breezes of the wind. The branches were full of bright green leaves that glistened in the sun. The tree was majestic but very much humble to what it became.

One day the flower had many visitors to its petals which made it glad. The flower was proud that it was noticed and liked among the insects that visited it. The flower boldly spoke and said with such fact, "I am well noticed for I can spread my scent out to those that want to smell and follow it. I am feeling good about myself for I have brought these things to me and they have pollinated my flower."

The tree looking down in a rather disappointed sort of way spoke his words quietly and softly, "Your flower is bright this I must truly say, but your words are too strong for you notice little of why they have come to this land. They come not for the brightness of your flower or scent but for the food that is all around you in this wide open land. Your words are arrogant considering how small you really are. They come to me as well to feed on these flowers that I bear. They feast in the powder that collects within all flowers. No matter who they are or where they stand."

The flower shot back, "but you just don't get it do you? I am very bright and I am for a reason. I am better than you and this I can prove. I am well known throughout these parts that spread so far and so wide. The truth that I speak will stand long before my eyes."

The tree just sat there in nothing but amazement, for the flower refused to see what was truly being said. The flower sat there so smug in its glory and gleam. It was proud that it had proven that a flower is much greater than a tree. It refused to see that tree was covering its head from the storms that came by. Covering its head from the rains that devoured all else in its way.

The tree just stood there doing just what it does best. Sheltering all,

that needs its protection. Giving life to those that know where to look and using its branches to support all life there.

Later that day a four-legged came along. It smelled the rich scent of that wonderful flower. Its rather strong scent was sweet to its nose. It wanted to find where this scent flowed from. And see where it grows. It came on the flower and there it sat in its glory. Sitting there so brightly and smelling its own glory.

The four-legged smelled that flower like no other it did before. It seemed there was nothing like it that met its grand smell. The four-legged was so impressed it just couldn't wait. It opened its mouth and ate that flower head. The tree sat there in horror at what it just saw. That poor flower had lost its lovely smell and its bright grandeur.

The moral of this story is nothing to seek. When you open your mouth, you better be prepared. For what you seek may not be what you want. The power of words flow strong and flow true. The power of words may one day come back to eat you.

Lion, Rats, Snake & the Honeycomb

Once, a man saw in his dream that a lion was chasing him. The man ran to a tree, climbed on to it and sat on a branch. He looked down and saw that the lion was still there waiting for him.

The man then looked to his side where the branch he was sitting on was attached to the tree and saw that two rats were circling around and eating the branch. One rat was black and the other one was white. The branch would fall on the ground very soon.

The man then looked below again with fear and discovered that a big black snake had come and settled directly under him. The snake opened its mouth right under the man so that he will fall into it.

The man then looked up to see if there was anything that he could hold on to. He saw another branch with a honeycomb. Drops of honey were falling from it. The man wanted to taste one of the drops. So, he put his tongue out and tasted one of the fallen drops of honey. The honey was amazing in taste. So, he wanted to taste another drop. As he did, he got lost into the sweetness of the honey.

Meanwhile, he forgot about the two rats eating his branch away, the lion on the ground and the snake that is sitting right under him.

After a while, he woke up from his sleep.

To get the meaning behind this dream, the man went to a pious scholar. The scholar said "The lion you saw is your death. It always chases you and goes where ever you go. The two rats, one black and one white, are the night and the day. Black one is the night and the white one is the day. They circle around, coming one after another, to eat your time as they take you closer to death. The big black snake with a dark mouth is your grave. It's there, just waiting for you to fall into it.

The honeycomb is this world and the sweet honey is the luxuries of this world. We like to taste a drop of the luxuries of this world but it's very sweet. Then we taste another drop and yet another. Meanwhile, we get lost into it and we forget about our time, we forget about our death and we forget about our graves."

The Rose Within

A certain man planted a rose and watered it faithfully and before it blossomed, he examined it.

He saw the bud that would soon blossom, but noticed thorns upon the stem and he thought, "How can any beautiful flower come from a plant burdened with so many sharp thorns? Saddened by this thought, he neglected to water the rose, and just before it was ready to bloom... it died.

So it is with many people. Within every soul there is a rose. The God-like qualities planted in us at birth, grow amid the thorns of our faults. Many of us look at ourselves and see only the thorns, the defects.

We despair, thinking that nothing good can possibly come from us. We neglect to water the good within us, and eventually it dies. We never realize our potential.

Some people do not see the rose within themselves; someone else must show it to them. One of the greatest gifts a person can possess is to be able to reach past the thorns of another, and find the rose within them.

This is one of the characteristic of love... to look at a person, know their true faults and accepting that person into your life... all the while recognizing the nobility in their soul. Help others to realize they can overcome their faults. If we show them the "rose" within themselves, they will conquer their thorns. Only then will they blossom many times over.

Hatred Than Love

A long time ago in China, a girl named Li-Li got married and went to live with her husband and mother-in-law. In a very short time, Li-Li found that she couldn't get along with her mother-in-law at all. Their personalities were very different, and Li-Li was angered by many of her mother-in-law's habits. In addition, she criticized Li-Li constantly.

Days passed days, and weeks passed weeks. Li-Li and her mother-in-law never stopped arguing and fighting. But what made the situation even worse was that, according to ancient Chinese tradition, Li-Li had to bow to her mother-in-law and obey her every wish. All the anger and unhappiness in the house was causing Li-Li's poor husband great distress.

Finally, Li-Li could not stand her mother-in-law's bad temper and dictatorship any longer, and she decided to do something about it. She went to see her father's good friend, Mr. Huang, who sold herbs. She told him the situation and asked if he would give her some poison, so that she could solve the problem once and for all.

Mr. Huang thought for a while, and finally said, "Li-Li, I will help you solve your problem, but you must listen to me and obey what I tell you."

Li-Li said, "Yes, Mr. Huang, I will do whatever you tell me to do."

Mr. Huang went into the back room, and returned in a few minutes with a package of herbs. He told Li-Li, "You can't use a quick-acting poison to get rid of your mother-in-law, because that would cause people to become suspicious. Therefore, I have given you a number of herbs that will slowly build up poison in her body. Every other day, prepare some delicious meal, and put a little of these herbs in her serving. Now, in order to make sure that nobody suspects you when she dies, you must be very careful to act very friendly toward her. Don't argue with her, obey her every wish, and treat her like a queen."

Li-Li was so happy. She thanked Mr. Huang and hurried home to start her plot of murdering her mother-in-law. Weeks went by, and months went by, and every other day, Li-Li served the specially treated food to her mother-in-law. She remembered what Mr. Huang had said about avoiding suspicion, so she controlled her temper, obeyed her mother-in-law and treated her like her own mother.

After six months had passed, the whole household had changed. Li-Li

had practiced controlling her temper so much that she found that she almost never got mad or upset. She hadn't had an argument with her mother-in-law in six months because she now seemed much kinder and easier to get along with.

The mother-in-law's attitude toward Li-Li changed, and she began to love Li-Li like her own daughter. She kept telling friends and relatives that Li-Li was the best daughter-in-law one could ever find. Li-Li and her mother-in-law were now treating each other like a real mother and daughter. Li-Li's husband was very happy to see what was happening.

One day, Li-Li came to see Mr. Huang and asked for his help again. She said, "Dear Mr. Huang, please help me to keep the poison from killing my mother-in-law! She's changed into such a nice woman, and I love her like my own mother. I do not want her to die because of the poison I gave her."

Mr. Huang smiled and nodded his head. "Li-Li, there's nothing to worry about. I never gave you any poison. The herbs I gave you were vitamins and tonics to improve her health. The real poison was in your mind and your attitude toward her, but that has been all washed away by the love that you gave to her."

MORAL: *have you ever realised that how you treat others is exactly how they will treat you? There is a wise Chinese saying: 'The person who loves others will also be loved in return.' God might be trying to work in another person's life through you.*

The Perfect Heart

One day a young man was standing in the middle of the town proclaiming that he had the most beautiful heart in the whole valley. A large crowd gathered and they all admired his heart for it was perfect. There was not a mark or a flaw in it. Yes, they all agreed it truly was the most beautiful heart they had ever seen. The young man was very proud and boasted more loudly about his beautiful heart. Suddenly, an old man appeared at the front of the crowd and said, "Why your heart is not nearly as beautiful as mine." The crowd and the young man looked at the old man's heart. It was beating strongly, but full of scars, it had places where pieces had been removed and other pieces put in, but they didn't fit quite right and there were several jagged edges. In fact, in some places there were deep gouges where whole pieces were missing. The people stared -- how can he say his heart is more beautiful, they thought?

The young man looked at the old man's heart and saw its state and laughed. "You must be joking," he said. "Compare your heart with mine, mine is perfect and yours is a mess of scars and tears." "Yes," said the old man, "yours is perfect looking but I would never trade with you. You see, every scar represents a person to whom I have given my love - I tear out a piece of my heart and give it to them, and often they give me a piece of their heart which fits into the empty place in my heart, but because the pieces aren't exact, I have some rough edges, which I cherish, because they remind me of the love we shared.

Sometimes I have given pieces of my heart away, and the other person hasn't returned a piece of his heart to me. These are the empty gouges -- giving love is taking a chance. Although these gouges are painful, they stay open, reminding me of the love I have for these people too, and I hope someday they may return and fill the space I have waiting. So now do you see what true beauty is?"

The young man stood silently with tears running down his cheeks. He walked up to the old man, reached into his perfect young and beautiful heart, and ripped a piece out. He offered it to the old man with trembling hands. The old man took his offering, placed it in his heart and then took a piece from his old scarred heart and placed it in the wound in the young man's heart. It fit, but not perfectly, as there were some jagged edges. The young man looked at his heart, not perfect anymore but more beautiful than ever, since love from the old man's heart flowed into his. They embraced and walked away side by side.

Fight Back

A few years ago a Vietnam veteran who had had both of his legs blown off finished one of Americas major marathons in a time of about 3 and a half days, he did so by hopping along with his hands under a Police escort. I can't even remember his name but I will never forget his quote to the press as he crossed the finish line: ***"We all have our Handicaps in life, but the biggest handicap of all is not trying"***.

Lessons from Geese

Fact 1:

As each goose flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the birds that follow. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

Lesson: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are travelling on the thrust of one another.

Fact 2:

When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose, we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others.

Fact 3:

When the lead geese tires, it rotates back into the formation, and another goose flies to the point position.

Lesson: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on each other's skills, capabilities and unique arrangements of gifts, talents or resources.

Fact 4:

The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Lesson: We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, the production is much greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one's heart or core values and encourage the heart and core of others) is the quality of honking we seek.

Fact 5:

When a goose gets sick, wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then, they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.-

Marathon

Following a major marathon race recently, one of the top female participants was interviewed by a sportswriter. He wanted to know, among other things, how she felt about a particular hill for which this race was noted. Her answer was very insightful. She responded that she had run in many races, all with hills and valleys to contend with, and that she really couldn't remember a particular hill during this race. Said she, "Hills and valleys are part of every race. They are just part of getting from the beginning to the end. I focus on the finish, not on the hills and valleys. The course of the race leads to the finish. I focus on that - the finish."

Life is full of hills and valleys, some of which could cause us to want to quit along the way. It is during these times that we need to check our focus and remember that it needs to be on the finish, not the difficulties along the way.

The Illiterate Farmer

A group of learned professors chose to spend a relaxing vacation at a remote farm - far from the madding crowd of the city they lived in. Their host was a simple farmer who had never seen the inside of a school.

The professors were astonished to see the order and discipline the farm functioned. Corn and wheat grew a plenty in the fields; the orchard yielded delicious fruits; healthy cows and calves gazed peacefully on the green meadows. The little farm prospered beautifully.

"How did you manage all this?" they asked the humble farmer.

"I am afraid I am uneducated," he replied. "So I only use my brains."

The Origin of the Moonlight Sonata

She was a blind girl. She had never beheld the marvels of God's good earth - the blue waters of the river, the carpets of luxuriant green grass, the magnificent display of flowers in the garden, the moving clouds in the sky and the silver, shimmering moonlight that everyone seemed to grow ecstatic over!

She mentioned this to Beethoven, the distinguished composer and musician, who was a dear friend.

Beethoven wanted the young girl to feel the beauty of the moonlight, to experience what she could not see. So he created the immortal piece of music which is enjoyed today as the famous "Moonlight Sonata"!

Don't Let Sorrow In!

She was a poor woman - a widow who had braved many a calamity in the course of her life. Misfortune and tragedy had dogged her footsteps. And yet, she always wore a lovely smile on her face. Serenity seemed to envelop her presence; and peace dwelt in her heart.

Everyone who met her marvelled at her courage. How could she remain so calm and serene amidst the turbulence of her life? What was the secret of her inner peace?

To those who asked her these questions, she replied, "All the water in the sea cannot make a ship sink. But if the water gets inside the ship, it soon sinks without a trace. So it is with sorrow. Sorrow cannot drown you unless you allow it to get inside you!"

How true it is that we can float safely on the sea of life as long as we don't allow our sorrows and troubles to get inside us! For, if we do, we will surely drown in the depths of depression.

The Tremendous Power of Attitude

Psychologists have always told us that attitudes can influence results. Two scientists decided to conduct an experiment to find out if attitudes could affect seeds.

Two identical cans were taken. Into each was poured soil and fertilizer of same quality and quantity, and 23 seeds were dropped into each can. They were both placed in a greenhouse so that they could have the same conditions of weather and temperature.

There was only one variable in the experiment, all other things being the same. Everyday, the two scientists came to the greenhouse, and standing before the first can, poured into it all the negativism of which they were capable.

They said to the seeds, "You are good for nothing. Nothing is ever going to come out of you, and even if something comes out, it is not going to last," and so on and so forth.

Then they came and stood in front of the second can and poured into it all the positivism of which they were capable.

"You are so wonderful," they said to the seeds, "and you are going to show wonderful results. It will be a sight to see what is coming out of you," and so on and so forth.

This was repeated thrice a day for three weeks.

At the end of three weeks, the scientists found that while there came forth only two or three shoots of grass, out of the first can, out of the second can, there came forth whole strands of grass, so strong that they could clutch it and lift up the entire can with its soil and fertiliser.

If this is what attitude can do to seeds what can it not do to tender children?

He is Always There to Meet Me!

Two friends met each other after a long interval of time. Both were salesmen, earnestly engaged in building up their careers.

One of them was downcast. "I'm doing very well," he said ruefully. "Whenever I go to meet the top man in any office, he is sure to be out! How can I make my sales prosper? I know this is going to happen to me again and again. I make my appointment, I reach on time - but I am sure I will not meet the person concerned. Invariably, they tell me he has just left! It's hopeless I tell you!"

His friend replied, "Whenever I go to meet someone important, I surely expect to find him there! I'm confident that I can convince him to do business with me, and I always come away with a successful sale!"

Thoughts have power. Thoughts constitute the ink in the pen of our life. We will do well to remember that we are writing our own destiny with our thoughts!

Rockefeller’s Assets

"Who can tell me how much money the great Rockefeller left behind him?" a teacher asked her class.

The children made wild guesses; Ten million? Fifty million? One billion dollars perhaps? After all, they were talking about the fortunes of one of the world's richest men!

Only one child had a different answer to give, "Rockefeller left every penny behind!"

How true it is, that when the call comes, we are forced to leave behind everything that we call our own in this world! Not even our own hands do we take with us. Of what then are we so proud?

The Secret of Success

Henry Ford is an immortal figure in the annals of the twentieth century. The visionary entrepreneur, who introduced the concept of assembly line technology, became the first industrialist who pioneered mass production of Automobiles. He also introduced the first ever low priced car, for it was his dream that every one of his workers should be able to afford to buy the cars they produced.

His other inventions included charcoal briquettes widely used in Barbeque, charcoal grills, fireplaces, etc.

On his 75th birthday, Henry Ford was asked the secret of his successful career. His answer was simple. The secret is a three-fold one:

- 1) I never overeat.
- 2) I never worry too much.
- 3) Whatever I do, I do my best, and I know whatever happens to me, it is for my best. I trust in the Lord.

Garden or Garbage

There was a gardener who loved each tree, each plant, and each little shrub in his garden so dearly that he would not cast away the dead leaves and withered branches. He stored them all in his garden.

Gradually all the space in his small garden was taken up by the dead leaves and dry branches, and the beautiful garden wore the appearance of a garbage heap.

Are we not--so many of us--like the gardener? We go on storing worries and anxieties, failures and frustrations, fears and disappointments, which are better cast away and forgotten. And the beautiful garden of our lives turns into a wasteland!

The Door Without A Handle

There is a beautiful picture by the famous artist, Holman Hunt. In the picture, Christ is seen standing in a garden holding a lantern in one hand and with the other, knocking on a door.

A friend of the artist said to him, "Holman, you have made a mistake. The door you have painted does not have a handle."

"It is not a mistake," answered the artist. "For that is the door of the human heart and it can only be opened from the inside?"

The Elixir of Love

A Physician was once summoned to attend to an unusual case. He found a pale, sad, seventeen-year-old, reclining on a sofa, in an ornate room adorned with rich, silk tapestries. Her eyes were half-closed, her head was bowed, and she was pale like a marble statue. Several doctors had been called to examine her and, unable to diagnose her condition had concluded that her problem was psychosomatic.

At a glance the doctor realised what was wrong with her. She languished in her gilded cage, a self-absorbed prisoner, for she did not know what it was to go out and give happiness to those in need. The doctor asked her to get ready to go out with him.

"With you; Where?" asked the girl.

In an undertone, the doctor said to her, "That is a secret. I can only tell you that it is for your own good."

The girl got ready and the doctor took her to a quarter where poor people lived. They carried with them many gifts in cash and kind.

At the first house which they visited, the doctor had to help her to keep her balance, as she walked.

At the second, she went ahead of the doctor.

At the third, she almost ran. When the children kissed her hand and the poor women thanked her, she cried with joy.

The outing seemed too short to her. From then onwards, everyday she searched for those whom she could make happy.

She was restored to good health; she found the joy and happiness, which did not dwell in her palatial home but in the broken cottages of the poor to whom she gave the love of her generous heart.

The happiness we give to others comes back to us.

End Out Your Best!

A little boy lived near a canyon. He was fascinated by the echo which reverberated from the other side of the canyon. He imagined that another little boy like him dwelled on the other side of the canyon and was making fun of him.

"I hate you!" he would cry out.

"I hate you!" the echo would come back every time he yelled.

"He is a nasty boy, I hate him" the little one complained to his mother.

"Just for once, why don't you try yelling him 'I love you'?" suggested his mother one day.

Reluctantly, the little boy agreed. Overcoming his hostility he screamed his heart out across the canyon, "I LOVE YOU!"

Back came the reply, "I LOVE YOU! I LOVE YOU!"

The boy rushed back to his mother to announce ecstatically, "Mom, I have a friend on the other side!"

Whatever goes out of us comes back to us! Every thought we think, every word we utter, every action we perform is echoed back into our lives.

Thank You God

There was a woman whose husband fell seriously ill. The doctors who treated him soon began to despair of his condition. "Your husband will not live longer than six months," they informed the woman.

She was a lady with tremendous faith. From that day, she began the practice of thanking the Lord a thousand times every day. "Thank you Lord! Thank you Lord!" She prayed again and again. "Thank you God for taking care of my husband. Thank you, God, for healing him and making him whole again. Thank you, God, for being my support and stay!"

She continued to offer these prayers even though there was no sign of improvement in her ailing husband.

Strangely enough, a few months later, when her husband went for a check-up, the doctors were amazed at his miraculous recovery. "A power above and beyond ours has been at work!" they exclaimed.

Whatever be the condition in which we find ourselves, whatever be the suffering through which we pass, let us thank the Lord all the time! When we do so, our hearts expand, and we become receptive to the helpful and healing forces of God.

You Are Rich

A dervish was walking along a crowded road, when his eyes fell on a child begging by the wayside.

To each and every passer-by, the child cried out, "Give me something in the name of Allah! Give me some bread! Give me a little money! Alas, my parents are blind! Help me feed them, in the Name of God!"

The dervish said to the child, "Why do you need to beg, my boy? You are rich!" The beggar boy was taken aback. "Alas sir, I am poor! My parents are blind, and we live on the alms I get."

The saint smiled, He said to the boy, "I shall give you ten thousand rupees - five thousand for each of your hands. Will you cut them and give them to me?"

"How can I do that?" the boy cried in horror.

"What about your feet then? I'll give you five thousand for each"

The boy shook his head, speechless with shock.

"All right then, give me your eyes. I'll give you ten thousand rupees for each."

"How cruel you are!" the boy burst out. "Will you have me disfigured, deformed and maimed for the rest of my life?"

"My dear boy," the saint replied, "God has given you such precious healthy limbs, and you are not making use of them! You are begging, when you can work hard and earn your daily bread and live with self-respect. You are wasting the wealth that God has blessed you with!"

The boy was so touched with the words of the dervish that he fell at his feet. He threw away the money he had begged and vowed to turn over a new leaf!

The Smart Thing To Do

Here is story about Sultan Mahmud of Afghanistan and his servant, Ayyaz. Sultan Mahmud would respect Ayyaz for his wisdom even though he was a servant. This made the ministers and other people of high positions very jealous of Ayyaz. They talked wrong against him and started a rumour that Ayyaz was nothing but a fool. The king came to know of this and he decided to prove to them who were the real fools. An announcement was made to all the people that the King will distribute his belongings on a particular date. Whatever a person touches will become his on that day. When the day came, many people appeared by the king's palace. The king made his announcement again that a person can have whatever he touches. The door was opened and everyone ran to touch whatever was of value in the palace. Some touched jewellery of gold while others touched fancy furniture, etc. But Ayyaz was just standing by the king and was not touching anything. People thought that Ayyaz was crazy as he wasn't taking advantage of this great event. Now, Ayyaz asked the king if the announcement he made was certain. The king said "Yes, whatever you touch is yours." Immediately, Ayyaz placed his right hand on the king's head and the left hand on his shoulder. He then shouted, "Listen everyone; I was waiting for this moment to acquire the most expensive thing. All of you took whatever the king possessed, but you forgot about the owner of all these, which is the king himself. I hereby declare that my hands are on the king, so the king is mine. You cannot remove one thing from this palace because I am the owner of all these now." After hearing this from Ayyaz, everyone realized that actually, Ayyaz is the only smart one and everyone else was in error.

Today people are only running after the creations but, very few are running towards the Creator Himself. If Allah, the King of all kings, becomes our Friend then what else do we need?

Unfolding A Rose

A young, new teacher was walking with an older, more seasoned teacher in the garden one day. Feeling a bit insecure about what Allah had for him to do, he was asking the older teacher for some advice. The older teacher walked up to a rosebush and handed the young teacher a rosebud and told him to open it without tearing off any petals. The young teacher looked in disbelief at the older teacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the will of Allah for his life and ministry.

But because of his great respect for the older teacher, he proceeded to try to unfold the rose, while keeping every petal intact... It wasn't long before he realized how impossible this was to do. Noticing the younger teacher's inability to unfold the rosebud without tearing it, the older teacher began to recite the following poem...

It is only a tiny rosebud,
A flower of Allah's design;
But I cannot unfold the petals
With these clumsy hands of mine.

The secret of unfolding flowers
Is not known to such as I.
ALLAH opens this flower so sweetly,
Then in my hands they die.

If I cannot unfold a rosebud,
This flower of Allah's design,
Then how can I have the wisdom
To unfold this life of mine?

So I'll trust in Allah for leading
Each moment of my day.
I will look to Allah for His guidance
Each step of the way.

The pathway that lies before me,
Only Allah knows.
I'll trust Him to unfold the moments,
Just as He unfolds the rose.

A Lesson from Disabled People

Once, a visitor was being shown around a leper colony. The colony was built to provide a shelter for those people who were poor and had various physical disabilities. At noon a gong (a metal disk that produces a sound when hit with a hammer) sounded to gather the inhabitants for the midday meal. People came from all parts of the compound to the dining hall. Suddenly, everyone started laughing at seeing two young men; one riding on the other's back, pretending to be a horse and a rider. They were having lots of fun. As the visitor watched, he was told that the man who carried his friend was blind, and the man being carried was lame (who couldn't walk). The one who couldn't see used his feet; the one who couldn't walk used his eyes. Together they helped each other and reached their destination.

Let us use each other's strengths to make up for the weaknesses of others. Our strength is in unity, not in division.

The Boy and the Dog

Once Abdullah Bin Jafar (ra) was passing through a forest when he went by an orchard where an Abyssinian (Ethiopian) slave was working. Someone brought him his food and, at the same time a stray dog came into the garden, and stood by the slave, who threw a loaf of bread to the dog, which ate it but did not go away. The slave-boy threw it a second loaf and a third one, thus letting it eat the whole of his daily provision of food, keeping nothing back for himself. Abdullah bin Jafar, who had been watching this, said to the boy, "How much bread do you get as your daily ration of food?" The boy said, "I get three loaves everyday, as you have just seen." Ibn Jafar asked, "Then, why did you prefer a dog to yourself and feed it all the three loaves?" The boy said, "There are no dogs living round here. The poor creature must have travelled a long distance to reach here and it must be feeling very hungry. So, I felt ashamed to send it away, without serving it any food." Ibn Jafar said, "What will you have for food today?" The boy said, "I shall go without food for a day, which I don't mind." Ibn Jafar said to himself, "People criticise you for spending too liberally, but this slave-boy is far more generous than you." After this he came back to the town and, after purchasing the slave-boy, the garden and all the other effects therein from the owner, he set free the slave-boy and gave him the garden as a gift.

Attitude

Jerry is the manager of a restaurant in America. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would always reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!"

Many of the waiters at his restaurant quit their jobs when he changed jobs, so they could follow him around from restaurant to restaurant. The reason the waiters followed Jerry was because of his attitude.

He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Jerry was always there, telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation.

Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Jerry and asked him, "I don't get it! No one can be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?" Jerry replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, I have two choices today. I can choose to be in a good mood or I can choose to be in a bad mood. I always choose to be in a good mood.

Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I always choose to learn from it.

Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I always choose the positive side of life."

"But it's not always that easy," I protested. "Yes, it is," Jerry said "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. It's your choice how you live your life."

Several years later, I heard that Jerry accidentally did something you are never supposed to do in the restaurant business: left the back door of his restaurant open one morning and was robbed by three armed men. While trying to open the safe, his hand, shaking from nervousness slipped off the combination. The robbers panicked and shot him. Luckily, Jerry was found quickly and rushed to the hospital. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with fragments of the bullets still in his body.

I saw Jerry about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Want to see my scars?" I declined to see his wounds, but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the robbery took place. "The first thing that went through my mind was that I should have locked the back door," Jerry replied. "Then, after they shot me, as I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or choose to die. I chose to live."

"Weren't you scared?" I asked. Jerry continued, "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me. I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the Emergency Room and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read 'He's a dead man.' I knew I need to take action."

"What did you do?" I asked. "Well, there was a big nurse shouting questions at me," said Jerry. "She asked if I was allergic to anything." 'Yes,' I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Bullets!'

Over their laughter, I told them, 'I am choosing to live. Please operate on me as if I am alive, not dead!.'

Jerry lived thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day you have the choice to either enjoy your life or to hate it.

The only thing that is truly yours that no one can control or take from you-is your attitude, so if you can take care of that, everything else in life becomes much easier.

The Woodcutter

Once upon a time a very strong woodcutter asks for a job in a timber merchant, and he got it. The paid was really good and so were the work conditions. For that reason, the woodcutter was determined to do his best. His boss gave him an axe and showed him the area where he was supposed to work. The first day, the woodcutter brought 18 trees" Congratulations," the boss said. "Go on that way!" Very motivated for the boss words, the woodcutter try harder the next day, but he only could bring 15 trees. The third day he try even harder, but he only could bring 10 trees. Day after day he was bringing less and less trees." I must be losing my strength", the woodcutter thought. He went to the boss and apologized, saying that he could not understand what was going on." When was the last time you sharpened your axe?" the boss asked." Sharpen? I had no time to sharpen my axe. I have been very busy trying to cut trees..."

No Problem

Don't worry if you have problems! Which is easy to say until you are in the midst of a really big one, I know. But the only people I am aware of who don't have troubles are gathered in little neighbourhoods. Most cities and villages have at least one. We call them cemeteries. If you're breathing, you have difficulties. It's the way of life. And believe it or not, most of your problems may actually be good for you! Let me explain.

Maybe you have seen the Great Barrier Reef, stretching some 1,800 miles from New Guinea to Australia. Tour guides regularly take visitors to view the reef. On one tour, the guide was asked an interesting question. "I notice that the lagoon side of the reef looks pale and lifeless, while the ocean side is vibrant and colourful," a traveller observed. "Why is this?"

The guide gave an interesting answer: "The coral around the lagoon side is in still water, with no challenge for its survival. It dies early. The coral on the ocean side is constantly being tested by wind, waves, and storms -- surges of power. It has to fight for survival every day of its life. As it is challenged and tested it changes and adapts. It grows healthy. It grows strong. And it reproduces." Then he added this telling note: "That's the way it is with every living organism."

That's how it is with people. Challenged and tested, we come alive! Like coral pounded by the sea, we grow. Physical demands can cause us to grow stronger. Mental and emotional stress can produce tough-mindedness and resiliency. Spiritual testing can produce strength of character and faithfulness.

So, you have problems -- no problem! Just tell yourself, "There I grow again; stronger and powerful!"

Life

A lecturer was giving a lecture to his student on stress management. He raised a glass of water and asked the audience, "How heavy do you think this glass of water is?"

The students' answers ranged from 20 to 500 gm.

"It does not matter on the absolute weight. It depends on how long you hold it.

If I hold it for a minute, it is OK.

If I hold it for an hour, I will have an ache in my right arm.

If I hold it for a day, you will have to call an ambulance.

It is the exact same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

"If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, we will not be able to carry on, the burden becoming increasingly heavier."

"What you have to do is to put the glass down, rest for a while before holding it up again."

We have to put down the burden periodically, so that we can be refreshed and are able to carry on.

So, before you return home from work tonight, put the burden of work down. Don't carry it back home. You can pick it up tomorrow.

Whatever burdens you are having now on your shoulders, let it down for a moment if you can. Pick it up again later when you have rested.....

Rest and relax.

Life is short, enjoy it!!

Wisdom: In the end what matters most is, how well did you live, love, and learn to let go.

Love

Once upon a time there were two cart-horses. They worked together for many years, pulling the cart of a peasant. Over the years, they often argued with each other, complaining that the other was not keeping to its side, or was going just a little too quickly or just a little too slow.

One day, one of the two horses suddenly died.

The remaining horse was very upset about this.

It realized that in all the time that they had worked together, it had not once told the other horse how much it valued its company and its faithful help in pulling the cart. Now the chance was gone forever...

The horse also reflected on all the squabbles they had had. It suddenly understood that it need not have taken offence as easily as it had done, that it need not have borne as many grudges, that it could have been less arrogant, in short, it realized that it had wasted all the energy that had been available for friendship and kindness on unworthy and unnecessary thoughts and emotions.

The horse was ashamed and resolved to lead a different life in future. Whoever its new partner was going to be, things were going to be different.

But time passed, and the horse forgot. One day, it caught itself in exactly the same kind of behaviour that it had sworn never to engage in again. The horse could not understand why it had returned to its old ways.

That evening, in the stable, the horse decided to seek out the peasant's donkey, which had a reputation for wisdom among the animals.

The donkey listened to the horse's story. Eventually, it replied. "It is good that you have noticed what has happened. If you truly want to change, this is possible; but it will, for a long time, cost you your peace of mind. Are you prepared to accept this?"

The horse replied that it definitely did not want to return to its old ways. Anything was better than that.

So the donkey continued, "There is one very simple, and at the same time very hard thing that you have to do. Remember every day that one day, perhaps today, perhaps many years from now, you will die. Remember every day that the horse next to you will die. Remember every day that every other creature you will see will one day die. Remember that all animals alive today are part of a wave, which will soon break and be lost on the beach forever, to be followed by a new wave, and another, and another. No wave is permanent. The only thing that is permanent is the ocean."

There were tears in the horse's eyes.

The donkey continued, "Only if you remember death will you become strong-willed and alert enough not to postpone love. This is my advice to you, and in following it, perhaps one day you may come to know that which is deathless."

Hat Seller – Modern Story

There was once a hat-seller who passed by a forest on his way back from the market. The weather was very hot and so he decided to take a nap under one of the trees, so he left his whole basket of hats by the side. A few hours later, he woke up by some sounds. The next thing he realized was that all his hats was gone. He heard some monkeys on the tree and so he looked up. To his surprise, the tree was full of monkeys and they had taken all his hats. The hat-seller sits down and think of how he can get the hats down. He think and think and start scratching his head. The next moment, he realized that the monkeys were doing the same action. Next, he took down his own hat and saw the monkeys do exactly the same. An idea came to him, he took his hat and throw it on the floor and the monkeys do that too. So he finally managed to get all his hats back.

If you think you have read this before....., read on!!!

Fifty years later, his grandson, Jack, also became a hat-seller and had heard this monkey story from his grandfather. One day, just like his grandfather, he passed by the same forest, it was very hot, and he took a nap under the same tree and left the hats on the floor. He woke up and realized that all his hats were gone. He looked up and realized that the monkeys had taken all the hats. He remembered his grand father's words, started scratching his head and the monkeys follows. He took down his hat and fanned himself and again the monkeys followed. Now, very convinced of his grandfather's idea, JACK threw his hat on the floor but to his surprise, the monkeys still hold on to all the hats. Then one monkey climbed down the tree, grabbed the hat on the floor, gave him a slap and said "***You think only you have a grandfather***".

If I Live Again

When the late Nadine Stair of Louisville, Kentucky, was 85 years old, she was asked what she would do if she had her life to live over again. “I’d make more mistakes next time,” she said. “I’d relax. I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have been on this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and fewer beans. I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I’d have fewer imaginary ones. You see, I’m one of those people who live sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I’ve had my moments, and if I had to do it over again, I’d have more of them. In fact, I’d try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day, If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds and I would pick more daisies”.

Thought

Don't short-cut God when you experience adversity. Ask him, “God, what do you want to teach me?” Use it as an opportunity to grow. Do as Charles Darrow and his wife did who themselves suffered tremendous adversity. They accepted adversity as part of life and refused to allow it to steal their joy. They worked through it, and God helped them. They learned through this situation, and they kept laughing.

Back in 1932 was out of a job and broke, and his wife was expecting a baby. Although he was a heating engineer, there were no jobs available and Darrow and his wife were just barely subsisting on the few odd jobs he could get as a handyman. Things were bleak. Fate didn't reckon with the courage of this man and his wife, however. They laughed at it, literally. In the evenings, to take their minds off their troubles, they made a little game in which they could pretend they were millionaires, recalling pleasant vacations in nearby Atlantic City. They reconstructed the area adjoining the boardwalk. Darrow carved hotels and houses out of small pieces of wood, and they called the game Monopoly. Three years later, in 1935 the game was marketed by Parker Brothers, and Darrow and his wife became millionaires because they allowed adversity to make them instead of break them.

When you face adversity, are you going to allow it to break you or make you? It's your choice.

Perspective

Most of us can afford to take a lesson from the oyster. The most extraordinary thing about the oyster is this: Irritations get into his shell. He does not like them; he tries to get rid of them. But when he cannot get rid of them, he settles down to make of them one of the most beautiful things in the world. He uses the irritation to do the loveliest thing that an oyster ever has a chance to do. If there are irritations in your lives today, there is only one prescription: Make a pearl. It may have to be a pearl of patience, but anyhow, make a pearl. All it takes is love and faith to do it.

Happiness Follows

Once there was an old alley cat walking down the street looking for his supper. As he walked along he came upon a beautiful young cat who was running around in circles chasing her tail. Around and around she went trying as hard as she could to catch her tail. The old alley cat stopped and asked her, "What are you doing?" The young cat slowed down and replied that she had been taught that joy, happiness, success and luck were all in the tip of her tail. "All that I have to do is catch the end of my tail, and I will have the happy life," she said. The old alley cat replied, "I've been around for a long time, and I know that joy, happiness, success and luck are in the tip of my tail; but, you know if I don't chase it and work my very hardest and don't worry about it, the happy life follows me wherever I go. My tail follows me everywhere, so I don't need to chase it." Happiness isn't a place, a time, or a possession. You have to make it happen. The way to make it happen is to stop worrying about everything and just go about your business, and do your very best. Then, if you really work hard, your happiness will follow you just like the alley cat's tail.

The Star Thrower

The Star Thrower tells of a man, in his prime, who observes the shell collectors at the beach in the height of tourist season, particularly after a storm, engaged in a kind of greedy madness to out-collect his less aggressive neighbours. He watches them scrambling along the beach at dawn with bundles of gathered starfish, hermit crabs, sea urchins, and other living shells. Arguing, toppling over each other, overburdened, they rush in a kind of frenzy to outdo each other for these fine specimens. The shell collectors then boil the shell "houses," occupants included, in outdoor kettles provided by the resort hotels as a service to guests who will show off their proud collections to envious relatives and friends back home. There are many people with the collectors' morality. They are not unique to the seashore. They are people who are trying to collect things in life in search of happiness. They are the consumers who think you may purchase happiness. The man noticed a solitary human figure standing near the water's edge in the centre of a rainbow caused by the sun-filled spray. The figure stooped over, then stood up to fling an object out to sea beyond the breaking surf. The spectator finally reached the older figure and asked him what he was doing. The old man with the bronzed, worn face answered softly, "I'm a star thrower." Expecting to see a sand dollar or perhaps a flat rock -- like the ones he used to skim across the water for fun -- the younger man came closer for a better look. The old man, with a quick yet gentle movement, picked up another starfish and spun it gracefully far out into the sea. "It may live," he said, "if the offshore pull is strong enough." Here was a human being who was not a collector. He said he had decided to be part of life and had dedicated himself to helping give another day, another week, another year, and another opportunity for living. The younger man silently reached down and skipped a still-living starfish across the water toward freedom. He felt like a gardener sowing the seeds of life. He looked back over his shoulder. Against the rainbow, the old Star Thrower stooped and flung once more. He understood the secret. Life cannot be collected. Happiness cannot be travelled to, owned, earned, worn, or consumed. Happiness is the natural experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude. The gift of life is not a treasure hunt like on the beach, you cannot look for success.

The treasure is not in what you own, what you wear, how you look or your worldly accomplishments. The treasure is within you. It only needs to be uncovered and discovered. The secret is to turn a life of collection into the life of a Star Thrower.

Soap Case Study

One of the most memorable case studies on Japanese management was the case of the empty soap box, which happened in one of Japan's biggest cosmetics companies. The company received a complaint that a consumer had bought a soap box that was empty.

Immediately the authorities isolated the problem to the assembly line, which transported all the packaged boxes of soap to the delivery department. For some reason, one soap box went through the assembly line empty.

Management asked its engineers to solve the problem. Post-haste, the engineers worked hard to devise an X-ray machine with high-resolution monitors manned by two people to watch all the soap boxes that passed through the line to make sure they were not empty.

No doubt, they worked hard and they worked fast but they spent whoopee amount to do so.

But when a workman was posed with the same problem, did not get into complications of X-rays, etc but instead came out with another solution.

He bought a strong industrial electric fan and pointed it at the assembly line. He switched the fan on, and as each soap box passed the fan, it simply blew the empty boxes out of the line.

Moral of the story: Always look for simple solutions. Devise the simplest possible solution that solves the problem. So, learn to focus on solutions not on problems. "If you look at what you do not have in life, you don't have anything; if you look at what you have in life, you have everything"

Struggle

Let me share someone's life history with you:

This was a man who failed in business at the age of 21;

Was defeated in a legislative race at age 22;

Failed again in business at age 24;

Overcame the death of his sweetheart at age 26;

Had a nervous breakdown at age 27;

Lost a congressional race at age 34;

Lost a senatorial race at age 45;

Failed in an effort to become vice-president at age 47;

Lost a senatorial race at age 49;

And he was elected president of the United States at age 52.

This man was ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Every success story is also a story of great failure.

Very True!!!!!!!

Arthur Ashe, the legendary Wimbledon player was dying of AIDS. From world over, he received letters from his fans, one of which conveyed: "Why does GOD have to select you for such a bad disease"?

To this Arthur Ashe replied:

The world over :-

5 crore children start playing tennis,
50 lakh learn to play tennis,
5 lakh learn professional tennis,
50,000 come to the circuit,
5000 reach the grand slam,
50 reach Wimbledon,
4 to semi final,
2 to the finals,

When I was holding a cup I never asked GOD "Why me; and today in pain I should not be asking GOD "Why me?"

Be thankful to GOD for 98% of good things in life.

Fresh Fish

The Japanese have always loved fresh fish. But the waters close to Japan have not held many fish for decades. So to feed the Japanese population, fishing boats got bigger and went farther than ever. The farther the fishermen went, the longer it took to bring in the fish. If the return trip took more than a few days, the fish were not fresh. The Japanese did not like the taste.

To solve this problem, fishing companies installed freezers on their boats. They would catch the fish and freeze them at sea. Freezers allowed the boats to go farther and stay longer. However, the Japanese could taste the difference between fresh and frozen and they did not like frozen fish.

The frozen fish brought a lower price. So fishing companies installed fish tanks. They would catch the fish and stuff them in the tanks, fin to fin. After a little thrashing around, the fish stopped moving. They were tired and dull, but alive. Unfortunately, the Japanese could still taste the difference. Because the fish did not move for days, they lost their fresh-fish taste. The Japanese preferred the lively taste of fresh fish, not sluggish fish.

So how did Japanese fishing companies solve this problem? How do they get fresh-tasting fish to Japan?

If you were consulting the fish industry, what would you recommend?

How Japanese Fish Stay Fresh:

To keep the fish tasting fresh, the Japanese fishing companies still put the fish in the tanks. But now they add a small shark to each tank. The shark eats a few fish, but most of the fish arrive in a very lively state. The fish are challenged.

Have you realized that some of us are also living in a pond but most of the time tired & dull, so we need a Shark in our life to keep us awake and moving? Basically in our lives Sharks are new challenges to keep us active and taste better.....

The more intelligent, persistent and competent you are, the more you enjoy a challenge. If your challenges are the correct size, and if you are steadily conquering those challenges, you are Conqueror. You think of your challenges and get energized. You are excited to try new solutions. You have fun. You are alive!

Recommendations:

1. Instead of avoiding challenges, jump into them. Beat the heck out of them. Enjoy the game. If your challenges are too large or too numerous, do not give up. Failing makes you tired. Instead, reorganize. Find more determination, more knowledge, more help.
2. God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, sun without rain, but he did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears and light for the way.
3. Disappointments are like road bumps, they slow you down a bit but you enjoy the smooth road afterwards. Don't stay on the bumps too long. Move on!
4. When you feel down because you didn't get what you want, just sit tight and be happy, because God has thought of something better to give you. When something happens to you, good or bad, consider what it means. There's a purpose to life's events, to teach you how to laugh more or not to cry too hard.
5. No one can go back and make a brand new start. Anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.

Learning To Get Back Up

Bringing a giraffe into the world is a tall order. A baby giraffe falls 10 feet from its mother’s womb and usually lands on its back. Within seconds it rolls over and tucks its legs under its body. From this position it considers the world for the first time and shakes off the last vestiges of the birthing fluid from its eyes and ears. Then the mother giraffe rudely introduces its offspring to the reality of life.

In his book, *A View from the Zoo*, Gary Richmond describes how a newborn giraffe learns its first lesson:-

The mother giraffe lowers her head long enough to take a quick look. Then she positions herself directly over her calf. She waits for about a minute, and then she does the most unreasonable thing. She swings her long, pendulous leg outward and kicks her baby, so that it is sent sprawling head over heels.

When it doesn’t get up, the violent process is repeated over and over again. The struggle to rise is momentous. As the baby calf grows tired, the mother kicks it again to stimulate its efforts. Finally, the calf stands for the first time on its wobbly legs.

Then the mother giraffe does the most remarkable thing. She kicks it off its feet again. Why? She wants it to remember how it got up. In the wild, baby giraffes must be able to get up as quickly as possible to stay with the herd, where there is safety. Lions, hyenas, leopards, and wild hunting dogs all enjoy young giraffes, and they’d get it too, if the mother didn’t teach her calf to get up quickly and get with it.

The late Irving Stone understood this. He spent a lifetime studying greatness, writing novelized biographies of such men as Michelangelo, Vincent van Gogh, Sigmund Freud, and Charles Darwin.

Stone was once asked if he had found a thread that runs through the lives of all these exceptional people. He said, “I write about people who sometime in their life have a vision or dream of something that should be accomplished and they go to work. **“They are beaten over the head, knocked down, vilified, and for years they get nowhere. But every time they’re knocked down they stand up. You cannot destroy these people. And at the end of their lives they’ve accomplished some modest part of what they set out to do.”**”

Commitment

I will never forget what my old headmaster told taught me. Normally when you are only 15 years of age you do not remember most of the things that are preached by your teachers. But, this particular story is one such lesson that I will never forget. Every time I drift off course, I get reminded of this story.

It was a normal Monday morning at an assembly, and he was addressing the students on important things in life and about committing ourselves to what is important to us. This is how the story went:

An old man lived in a certain part of London, and he would wake up every morning and go to the subway. He would get the train right to Central London, and then sit at the street corner and beg. He would do this every single day of his life. He sat at the same street corner and begged for almost 20 years.

His house was filthy, and a stench came out of the house and it smelled horribly. The neighbours could not stand the smell anymore, so they summoned the police officers to clear the place. The officers knocked down the door and cleaned the house. There were small bags of money all over the house that he had collected over the years.

The police counted the money, and they soon realized that the old man was a millionaire. They waited outside his house in anticipation to share the good news with him. When he arrived home that evening, he was met by one the officers who told him that there was no need for him to beg any more as he was a rich man now, a millionaire.

He said nothing at all; he went into his house and locked the door. The next morning he woke up as usual, went to the subway, got into the train, and sat at the street corner and continued to beg.

Obviously, this old man had no great plans, dreams or anything significant for his life. We learn nothing from this story other than staying focused on the things we enjoy doing, commitment. We should remain true to our course; which may mean committing yourselves to things that people around you would normally disapprove. Let nothing distract us from being happy, let nothing else determine our fate, but ourselves. What makes us happy is what matters in the end, not what we acquire.

Four Words

A king called all of his wise men and counsellors together for a meeting. He addressed them and said: "I want you to go and think, read, and research. Consult the wisest and most learned men in the land. Spare no expense. I want you to find the ONE statement that will get me through all situations in life. Whether I am on top of the world or in the pits, find that statement. I don't want to learn long and complicated philosophies. I want one simple statement. Find it or write it; I don't care, just bring me the statement."

The men left and consulted for months. They finally returned and handed the King a scroll. The King unrolled the scroll. On it was written four words: "THIS TOO SHALL PASS"

That was it. The wise men explained. When you are on top of the world, that is but a fleeting moment, things change, always remember, this too shall pass. When you are in the pits, all nights are followed by day, at your lowest moments remember also, this too shall pass. All external circumstances and material things change. No matter what your circumstances, remember, THIS TOO SHALL PASS!

The wise men reminded the great King that this would get him through his earthly things but the truly wise knew there were things beyond this earth and life. Things those were eternal. True wisdom they reminded the King was in the ability to recognize the fleeting temporal things of the material world from the truly eternal things. O Great King they said, "Most of the things that you worry or gloat about are temporary and our four words apply."

Dear Readers, for most of your situations. . . THIS TOO SHALL PASS!

I wish you:-

Enough sun, to keep your attitude bright;

Enough rain, to appreciate the sun more;

Enough happiness, to keep your spirit alive;

Enough pain, so that the smallest joys in life appear much bigger;

Enough gain, to satisfy your wanting;

Enough loss, to appreciate all that you possess;

Enough "Hellos", to get you through the final "Good-bye".

Regards, Shahid Riaz