



MISSION ENRICHMENT

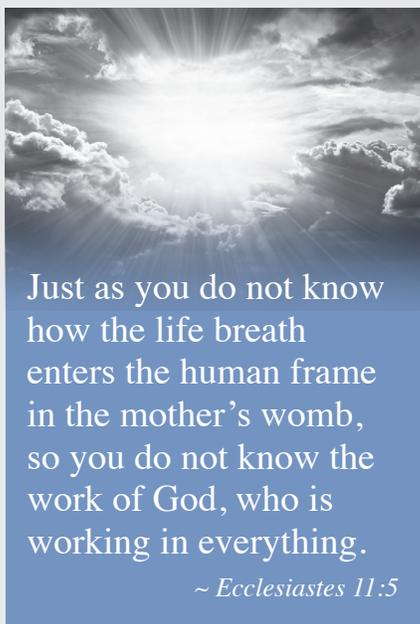
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The Spirit of the Gospel in Service of the Mission

Quote:

The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.

—M. Scott Peck, MD
American Author and Psychiatrist



Just as you do not know how the life breath enters the human frame in the mother's womb, so you do not know the work of God, who is working in everything.

~ Ecclesiastes 11:5

Ideas or comments are welcome.

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THE POWER OF GOD

Dwight Nelson recently told a true story about the pastor of his church. He had a kitten that climbed up a tree in his backyard and then was afraid to come down. The pastor coaxed, offered warm milk, etc. The kitty would not come down. The tree was not sturdy enough to climb, so the pastor decided that if he tied a rope to his car and pulled it until the tree bent down, he could then reach up and get the kitten.

That's what he did, all the while checking his progress in the car. He then figured if he went just a little bit further, the tree would be bent sufficiently for him to reach the kitten. But as he moved the car a little further forward, the rope broke.

The tree went 'boing!' and the kitten instantly sailed through the air - out of sight.

The pastor felt terrible. He walked all over the neighborhood asking people if they'd seen a little kitten. No. Nobody had seen a stray kitten. So he prayed, 'Lord, I just commit this kitten to your keeping,' and went on about his business. A few days later, he was at the grocery store, and met one of his church members. He happened to look into her shopping cart and was amazed to see cat food. This woman was a cat hater and everyone knew it, so he asked her, 'Why are you buying cat food when you hate cats so much?'

She replied, 'You won't believe this,' and then told him how her little girl had been begging her for a cat, but she kept refusing. Then a few days before, the child had begged again, so the Mom finally told her little girl, 'Well, if God gives you a cat, I'll let you keep it.' She told the pastor, 'I watched my child go out in the yard, get on her knees, and ask God for a cat. And really, Pastor, you won't believe this, but I saw it with my own eyes. A kitten suddenly came flying out of the blue sky, with its paws outspread, and landed right in front of her.' Never underestimate the Power of God and His unique sense of humor. †

(from *Dancin' Toward the Dawn* by Tim Hansel, p. 106-7)

Most of us want to be fixed, made okay, free from pain and loneliness. We want to be protected from the wounds of everyday living.

God is not going to take all the loneliness away and patch every hole in our lives. God is just going to give it meaning and purpose. God doesn't promise to fix us—just make us whole and holy. St. Paul said, in the end of the letter to the Galatians, "Let no one interfere with me after this. I carry on my scarred body the marks of Jesus" (6:17, Phillips).

We still don't understand the Gospel story (perhaps we don't want to). When God raised Jesus from the dead, the imprint of the nails could still be seen. Why didn't God fix Him up? Why did God leave the scars? Can it be that the Gospel words are saying to us in our waiting, "You will not see Jesus Christ unless you see His wounds"? Somehow we must understand that the resurrected Christ is

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NEIMAN-MARCUS

from *A Daily Dose of the American Dream* by Alan C. Elliott, p. 126

From the minute its doors opened in September 1907, Neiman-Marcus was a different kind of store. Herman Marcus, along with Carrie and Al Neiman, had a vision for a unique kind of specialty store. At a time when most fine dresses had to be purchased in New York or Paris, a few companies were beginning to produce “ready-made” clothes. Neiman and Marcus saw

the emerging boom and based their store on a select line of women’s ready-made “outerwear.” Early ads proclaimed: “We have... garments that stand alone as to character and fit,” “We will be known as a store of Quality and Superior Value,” and “We shall be hypercritical in our selections.”

Their desire to satisfy customers spawned numerous stories of “golden

rule” service that have become part of the Neiman-Marcus legend. For example, employees are encouraged to tell customers when a purchase is not becoming or appropriate. They are encouraged to satisfy even the most unusual customer request—such as one from a man who wanted two ducklings delivered to his nephew before Easter. Or, the customer whose wife and child were coming through Dallas during World War II, and needed housing and transportation. Or, the customer in New York who wanted to be taken directly to the fashion houses in order to select an appropriate dress. Why do it? When people experience Neiman-Marcus service, they become loyal customers. When they tell their friends, their friends become new customers... and so the company grows. †

Consider this: Give your constituents more than they expect, then they will become loyal customers and walking advertisements for your business.

Taken from *Everybody’s Normal Until You Get to Know Them* by John Ortberg, pp. 171-179)

THE NEED FOR TRUTH TELLERS

Every one of us needs a few people to tell us the truth about our hearts and souls. We all have weak spots and blind spots that we cannot navigate on our own. We need someone to remind us of our deepest aspirations and values and to warn us when we may be getting off track. We need someone to help us question our motives and examine our consciences. We need someone to perform spiritual surgery on us when our hearts get hard and our vision gets dim. We need a few Truth-Tellers.

We need Truth-Tellers because our capacity to live in denial is astounding. Self-deception, writes Neil Plantinga, is a mysterious process where we pull the wool over our own eyes.

“We deny, suppress, or minimize what we know to be true. We assert, adorn, and elevate what we know to be false. We prettify ugly realities and sell ourselves the prettified versions. Thus a liar might transform ‘I tell a lot of lies to shore up my pride’

to ‘Occasionally, I finesse the truth in order to spare other people’s feelings.’”

... Many of us have never invited someone else to be a Truth-Teller in our lives for the same reason we don’t get on a scale: We are afraid of what we might find out. What if the truth about me is too painful for me to bear? When I think about our longing for and fear of truth, I am reminded of two statements. One of them comes from actor Jack Nicholson in a film called *A Few Good Men*. Tom Cruise plays a lawyer cross-examining Nicholson’s character. Cruise pleads, “All I want is the truth.” To which Nicholson replies in his inimitable snarl, “You can’t handle the truth.”

Jesus had a fundamentally different take on the subject. Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

You have to decide whom to believe: Jesus or Jack Nicholson...

We need Truth-Tellers who will help us grow in our acceptance of reality. But we also need them because they serve as anchors; they help hold us accountable to the commitments we make...

We need others to help us live up to our best intentions and deepest values. Just as mountaineers rope together for a climb and athletes work out with trainers and coaches, so it is in every area of life. Organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers are carefully structured around this one constant truth. They know that for people to think that they can live up to their best intention on their own is a recipe for disaster. These groups are made up of people who have faced up to the fact that they’re not normal and are committed to help one another live one day at a time. David Watson says, “Anything that is subject to human limitation or error requires the collegial presence of another person to ensure responsibility. It is a fact of life.” ... Anytime we try to handle temptation in isolation, we are extremely vulnerable to deception.... One of the first signs that we’re in trouble with a temptation is that we don’t reveal it to anybody else...

In authentic community each person is responsible for one’s own life. We cannot abdicate this responsibility even if we want to. Accountability is a tool and a gift we give to one another to try to realize the growth we could never know all by ourselves. †

CURB EMOTIONAL EATING

by Jillian Michaels

A bad day at the office soothed by a pint of creamy ice cream. Nightly boredom in front of the TV solved by a bag of crunchy pretzels. Stressful family events managed with heaping plates of gooey pasta.

Whatever the cause, millions of people struggle with emotional eating, which is defined as eating because of an emotion, not hunger, every day. Experts estimate that 75 percent of all overeating is fueled by emotion....

Try Jillian's top tips for putting a stop to emotional eating and getting back on track with your health.

Write a list of alternatives. The No. 1 piece of advice Jillian offers to emotional eaters: Focus on feeling good with something or someone that's not food. When she's feeling down, Jillian says she turns to uplifting activities, such as riding her horse, walking her dog, or even just relaxing and watching a favorite TV show. "I have these behaviors that I turn to, that I find pleasurable, that are going to help distract me from feeling scared, upset, emotional, or anxious," she says. "Make a list of hobbies you love and people you can turn to. Reach out to those people and establish the ability to call them at any time so they can be a support system for you."

Ask for help. To avoid emotional eating, you ultimately have to keep yourself accountable. But that doesn't mean you have to go at it completely alone. Find a diet buddy to confide in, or reach out to loved ones, and ask them to cover for you when you need a little time to yourself for your favorite stress-busting healthy activity, such as exercising or reading a good book....

Know your triggers. If you can't stay away from chips and salsa or your favorite cereal, don't keep it in the house. You're more likely to overindulge in your favorite comfort food when it's easily available. If your family can't live without the trigger foods that send you spiraling, keep them in a cabinet that's separate from your day-to-day foods — out of sight, out of mind.

Analyze your hunger. When you're

about to reach for that second serving, put the brakes on and stop to think. Are you really hungry, or tempted to overeat because of boredom or stress? If the answer is emotion, the next step is to ask yourself what's *really* missing from your life. Figure out which emotion is driving your eating, and take steps to solve it.

Take a hike. If you're bored eating, some sort of activity is usually the answer. Pry yourself away from the kitchen and go for a brisk walk instead.



The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely, or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature.

~ Anne Frank, Holocaust victim, 20th century

FLORIDA COURT SETS ATHEIST HOLY DAY

In Florida, an atheist created a case against the upcoming Easter and Passover Holy days. He hired an attorney to bring a discrimination case against Christians and Jews and observances of their holy days. The argument was that it was unfair that atheists had no such recognized days.

The case was brought before a judge. After listening to the passionate presentation by the lawyer, the judge banged his gavel declaring, "Case dismissed!"

The lawyer immediately stood objecting to the ruling saying, "Your honor, how can you possibly dismiss this case? The Christians have Christ-

mas, Easter and others. The Jews have Passover, Yom Kippur and Hanukkah, yet my client and all other atheists have no such holidays."

The judge leaned forward in his chair saying, "But you do. Your client, counsel, is woefully ignorant."

The lawyer said, "Your Honor, we are unaware of any special observance or holiday for atheists."

The judge said, "The calendar says April 1st is April Fools Day. Psalm 14:1 states, 'The fool says in his heart, there is no God.' Thus, it is the opinion of this court, that, if your client says there is no God, then he is a fool. Therefore, April 1st is his day. Court is adjourned." You gotta love a Judge that knows his scripture! †

Dancin' Toward the Dawn *continued from cover*

the wounded Christ. Living, but never "fixed up." Not bound by death, yet scarred for eternity.

The deaf have a sign for Jesus. The middle finger of each hand is placed in the palm of the other. Jesus, the one with wounded hands.

We must find our wholeness in the midst of our woundedness. We must find peace in the midst of our loneliness. We cannot wait for the scars to go away.

The Bible is a book about battles won and lost—and there are always scars. It has been said that when you get to heaven, God will not measure you for your diplomas or degrees or medals, but for your scars. †

OBLATE HISTORY

Fr. Eugene de Mazenod's letter to Fr. Tempier at Notre Dame du Laus, March 13, 1821

... I am quite tired, my voice is hoarse and only with an effort can I raise it but what else can I do? After all one has to continue. The good God knows our needs, that is what consoles me in our distress.

... God knows what his people need. We have to leave matters to him, without however ceasing to ask him earnestly to send workers after his own heart. ...

You must not put up with and still less authorize practices that are so contrary to good order. Have we become a republic or a representative government? Does it pertain to you to establish new usages and has the community of Notre Dame du Laus the right to deliberate, to present the least thing even in a body? Certainly not. So everything that has been done must be regarded

as null, as an abuse and diametrically contrary to the spirit of our Constitutions. Each one is individually free in our Society to approach the Superior to communicate his thoughts on everything and even on the changing and improving of whatever is left to his disposition, local superiors are still more strictly obliged in this respect, but never will it ever be permitted to take the initiative of changing, improving, if you like, the usages practiced in the whole Society, whatever condition or restriction you may put on it. The time of the Chapter General is approaching, if I am not mistaken, then it will be time to propose all you please. This assembly will have the right to discuss and deliberate and its resolutions will be valid; until that time, only what is ordained by the Superior General will be legitimate. †



Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not.

—Walter Bagehot

WHEN THEY TRESPASS AGAINST US by Steve Godier

I saw a sign in a church parking lot. It read: “Parking for Church Use Only. Violators will be towed.” I wondered if it might be more effective if some humor were used: “Parking for Church Use Only. Violators will be baptized and expected to tithe.” That should clear the lot.

I heard of one church that posted a sign that read, “We forgive those who trespass against us; but they will be towed all the same.”

We’ve all had people trespass against us in one way or another. And we have each done our share of trespassing. The dictionary defines trespassing as any offense, transgression or error against others. Trespassing covers a huge territory. Though not always intentionally, I know I’ve trespassed plenty over the years and more people than I can remember have trespassed against me.

In his book *LEE: THE LAST YEARS*, author Charles Flood reports that after the American Civil War, Confederate General Robert E. Lee visited

a Kentucky lady who took him to the remains of a grand old tree in front of her house. There she bitterly cried that its limbs and trunk had been destroyed by Union artillery fire. She looked to Lee for a word condemning the North or at least sympathizing with her loss.

People will always trespass against us. But there comes a time to cut the tree down and forget it.

After a brief silence, the general said, “Cut it down, my dear Madam, and forget it.” He seemed to know that as long as she continued to recount her losses, she’d never get over them. She had to release the North from her debt in order to find anything like happiness again.

There’s a lot I have had to cut down and forget. I believe it’s the only way ahead. It’s the only way to really live after loss, hurt or insult. Cut it down and forget it.

Judith Wallerstein studied and wrote

for years about the lives of people who experienced divorce. At first she was surprised to discover how long feelings of anger and hurt lingered after a divorce. Even ten years after papers were signed, Wallerstein noted that many former husbands and wives were still just as angry at one another as in the beginning. It’s as if they gazed every day in contempt upon the grand old tree that used to be their relationship, now scarred and irreparably damaged, and used the ritual to feed their bitterness. She noticed that some former spouses, years after a separation, still recited in detail negative violations and trespasses of the other. The problem? These unhappy people were trapped emotionally by their anger and bitterness.

People will always trespass against us. But there comes a time to cut the tree down and forget it. For in the end, I’ve discovered that only when I fully release others from my debt am I able to build the happy and productive life I want. And though cutting that tree down is rarely my first impulse, but it is my best final response to those who trespass against me. †