**2016 Motivational Minutes on Giving**

 **(Also see Making a Difference.)**

1. **Frugality Can Be a Good Word**

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**Quote of the day:**

"Give what you have to somebody; it may be better than you think.” — Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

**Reflection:**

I read in an article about “frugality fatigue" and how people were recovering from that. But my question is, "How did frugality become a problem from which to recover?" I thought it was a positive character quality—a partner with generosity and selflessness.

Frugality might have a bad name because some confuse it with stinginess. Being stingy is being cheap, hoarding what you have for personal enjoyment. Frugality is being careful with what you have, stretching it to its maximum, so you can have something left over to share with others. Stinginess is repulsive. Frugality is attractive. Stinginess screams "It's all about me." Frugality whispers, "The needs of others matter more than my wants."

I have been living below my means, and giving money away rather than spending it on myself for more than 50 years. Funny, though, I'm not a bit tired! The opposite has been my experience. It energizes me to give part of myself—represented by my resources—to others. Giving money away rather than spending it on myself has not worn me out; it's given me an emotional boost.

Frugality, producing generosity, won't wear you out, it will energize you. Why not try it?

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1. **Happiness**

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**Quote of the Day:**

“The more [money] a man has, the more he wants. Instead of filling a vacuum, it makes one.” —Benjamin Franklin

**Reflection:**

The following story illustrates this quote.

*The English millionaire Jon Pedley had great dreams that he had managed to fulfill. Money, fame, respect—he had it all. He’d even been featured on magazine covers. But it turned out he was struggling. Somewhere past the façade, there was a nagging little voice that told him that all was not as it seemed to be, that there was more to life than just wealth. He hated that voice and tried to drown it out with alcohol. One day he drank too much and had a car crash. He ended up in a coma for six weeks. But that wasn’t the end. When he finally woke up, he’d had enough. He realized he needed to change. And change he did! He gave his heart to God and most of his money to charity. Then he flew to Uganda, lived in a mud hut among the poor, and started an orphanage for lost children*.

Not everyone is called to sell all their worldly belongings and live in primitive conditions, but Jon Pedley’s story is a good illustration of how true lasting happiness isn’t found in accumulating money and possessions.

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1. **Generosity Keeps Us In Perspective**

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**Quote of the day**:

“It is preoccupation with possessions, more than anything else, which prevents us from living freely and nobly.” *—* Bertrand Russell

**Reflection:**

I think this commentary from author Robert Schnase from *Five Practices of Fruitful Living* marvelously illustrates this quote.

*“Giving puts us in a healthier relationship with our possessions and with the material world in which we live. We like making money, but we enjoy other things as well, such as the love of our family, belonging to community, a sense of meaning, accomplishment, contribution, and service. We enjoy making a positive difference in the lives of other people.*

*“But how do we maintain balance and perspective? How can we appropriately secure the basic needs of food, shelter, education, and health while also living with purpose? How do we avoid too much preoccupation with the things that do not ultimately satisfy, and cultivate those things that do? The intentional practice of generosity helps us keep our priorities straight.”*

Do you have a preoccupation with possessions that is preventing you from living freely and nobly? Try being more generous and see if that helps to keep your priorities straight.

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1. **Give What We Can**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Money is a form of energy that tends to make us more of who we already are, whether it’s greedy or loving.” *—* Dan Millman

**Reflection:**

We often recognize the need to make the world a better place. Fulfilling this obligation is seldom easy or painless, and one thing that often holds us back is our own financial situation. We have only so much money, and it only goes so far. Altruistic intentions come up against day-to-day constraints. Our hearts go out to others, but must we sacrifice on their behalf to our own hurt? If we do, how far will it go? How long will we be able to keep it up?

I think you’ll find an interesting, inspiring, and innovative answer in the story below. You don’t need to be Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, or one of the world’s other 1,208 billionaires to make a difference. You just need the motivation and a plan. You might not be able to change the whole world, but you may be in a position to change a small part of the world or even just one family’s world.

*When Toby Ord, a 31-year-old academic at Oxford University, read that Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg had pledged to give away most of his wealth in his lifetime, Ord, who was a student at the time, devised a plan of his own: give 1 million to charity in his lifetime. He figured he could do this by giving away everything he earns annually over the average income in the UK. He started his giving while on a student’s low income.*

*Applying the methods the World Health Organization uses to determine how far aid money goes, Ord has given to date 10,000 years of health for people in some of the poorest countries in the world. Ord also challenges others to give 10% of their life earnings the same way. The first year, 64 people joined his Giving What We Can initiative, pledging 14 million between them.*

This is just one idea of many ways to give. I’m sure you will come up with your own unique way of giving.

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1. **Creative Ways to Giving**

 

**Quote of the day:**

“A man’s bank account doesn’t indicate whether he is rich or poor. It is the heart that makes a man rich. A man is rich according to what he is, not according to what he has.” *—* Henry Ward Beecher

**Reflection:**

Here is a thought provoking article by Peter van Gorder, which was published in Activated Magazine some years back.

*Knowing that I am actively involved in several charitable projects here in India, an acquaintance introduced me to some of his friends from the business community at a party we all attended. They happened to be discussing The Giving Pledge, an initiative headed by Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. Those three had challenged 400 American billionaires to commit to donating at least 50% of their net worth to charity and social causes in their lifetimes. “This is really taking on in India as well,” one of the men at the party said with the excitement of a child announcing that the circus was coming to town.*

*As it happened, there was an article in that day’s newspaper that quoted social commentator Santosh Desai. “Indians have always been generous people. Corporations can take a lead from Tata [India’s largest business group] who have institutionalized philanthropy, making it an act of corporate social responsibility and not charity.” An insert calculated that if India’s 100 richest individuals took up The Giving Pledge, a total of over 250 billion dollars—a quarter of the Indian GDP—would be raised.*

*It’s hard to grasp those kinds of figures, or to imagine ourselves in the position to be so generous. The wealthy can afford to give, while we sometimes struggle to make ends meet. But where there is a will, there is a way. For example:*

*A 24-year-old London man named Jack Diamond biked through India for two weeks to raise funds for a Goa-based charity that helps street and slum children like those he had gotten to know on a previous visit. “It never crossed my mind to do something like this before,” he explained, “but I wanted to make a difference.”*

I’m not suggesting you bike across your country to raise money. This is, however, an example of where there is a will there is a way. There are many creative ways to give, even when we don’t have much cash ourselves. See what you can come up with

1. **Do What Is Right**

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**Quote of the day:**

"The value of a man should be seen in what he gives and not in what he is able to receive.” —Albert Einstein

**Reflection:**

*A well-known German preacher of the 17th century, named August Francke, founded an orphanage and took in homeless children right off the streets in Halle, Germany. One day when he was desperately in need of funds to carry on his work, a destitute Christian widow came to his door begging for money. All she wanted was one gold duckte. Because of his own financial situation, he politely but regretfully had to refuse. He just didn't have it to give to her. Disheartened, this woman sat down and began to weep.*

*Francke was so moved by her tears he said, "Wait a minute. Let me go in and talk to the Lord about this." He went into the orphanage, closed the door to his office and began to pray, seeking God's guidance. As he prayed, he felt that the Spirit of God wanted him to give that woman his last gold coin. Trusting the Lord to meet his own needs, he gave her the money. He had no anticipation of anything in response; he just did what was right.*

*Two mornings later he received a very warm letter of thanks from this widow. She wrote that because of his generosity she had asked the Lord to shower the orphanage with gifts. That same day he received 12 gold coins from a rich woman, and 2 from a friend in Sweden. He thought that he had been amply rewarded for his good deed to this woman, but shortly after that he was informed that Prince Ludwig von Vertenberg had died, and in his will he had directed that 500 gold pieces be given to the orphanage.*

This is the attitude that God looks for among His people. He wants us to cast our bread upon the waters, to give without regard to rewards. This pearl of wisdom teaches us simply to do what is right, and let God take care of the rest.

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1. **Invest In Humankind**

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**Quote of the day:**

“To be able to give away riches is mandatory if you wish to possess them. This is the only way that you will be truly rich.”—Muhammad Ali

**Reflection:**

*A traveling salesman veered off his route one day and was lost on a side road. After driving awhile on a narrow, winding road, he came upon a farmer sitting on the front porch of his old, dilapidated house. The farmer was a rough looking fellow, with ragged clothes and bare feet. After the man asked for directions back to the main road, he decided to engage the farmer in some small talk. So the salesman asked, "How's your cotton doing this year?" "Ain't got none," replied the farmer. "Afraid of boll weevils." "How about your corn crop?" the salesman asked. "How's it doing?" Again the farmer said, "Didn't plant any. Feared it'd be too dry." "Well," the salesman continued, "how about your potatoes? Are you having a good year for potatoes?" "Nope," said the farmer, "didn't plant any 'taters either. Scared of 'tater bugs." "What did you plant?" the salesman questioned. "Nothin'," the farmer replied. "I jest played it safe."*

Some people are like that when it comes to giving, they just want to play it safe. They've heard of a huge economic crisis coming and they want to be ready for it. Or they want to make sure they have enough money invested for retirement. Who knows how much is enough?

Are you playing it safe or are you investing in humankind?

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1. **Depressed?**

 

**Quote of the day:**

"The best thing about giving of ourselves is that what we get is always better than what we give. The reaction is greater than the action.” — Orison Swett Marden

**Reflection:**

There is one healing tool that particularly stands out to me, and repeatedly comes up in my extensive research regarding that all-too-common human condition of extreme discouragement. I think this method is exceptional, because it is something that not only benefits the one implementing it, but also others. It’s the simple act of giving to others in whatever way one can. The act of *giving* is known to improve mental, emotional, and physical health in measurable and sometimes profound ways.

Studies have been done by numerous institutes, such as the National Institute of Health, Harvard Business School, and the University of California, Berkeley, and published in such journals as the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science.* One such study found that the areas in the brain that are activated by giving are the same as those that are activated by other positive stimuli—such as in response to sexual pleasure, monetary rewards, enjoying a meal, exercising and a number of other activities. Contributing in some way to help others, actually triggers the release of chemicals in the brain called endorphins, which are sometimes called “feel good” chemicals because they promote social bonding and a sense of belonging.

In another study a researcher found that this principle of reaching out to others had definite, positive benefits for the one reaching out. This applied to people suffering from a wide-range of conditions, including depression, chronic pain, and AIDS. As she expressed it, "When humans help others regardless of a shared condition, they appear to live longer and happier lives."

In another study, Paul Arnstein of Boston College and his colleagues evaluated the effects of volunteering on chronic pain patients. Their findings show that pain, depression, and disability consistently decreased after volunteering.

One researcher discovered some unexpected results in her study of a group of long-term sufferers of multiple sclerosis that made phone calls to encourage others suffering from the same affliction. While their calls had some benefits for the recipients, the greatest beneficiaries were those initiating the calls, and who were lending a supportive ear to others. In fact, those who offered support experienced dramatic improvements in their quality of life, several times greater than those they were helping.

If you suffer from discouragement or depression why not try giving to others.

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