**Motivational Minutes on Making a Difference from 2015**

**(Also see**

1. **Start a Ripple Effect**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he or she sends forth a tiny ripple of hope.” — Robert F. Kennedy

**Consider:**

Ted Kennedy used the following passage in the eulogy he gave at his brother Robert's, funeral. It is taken from an address Robert gave to the youth of South Africa in 1966. I thought it well worth reprinting as it reflects my sentiments as well.

*"Some believe there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills. Yet many of the world's great movements of thought and action have flowed from the work of a single person. These people moved the world, and so can we all. Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each person can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he or she sends forth a tiny ripple of hope. And crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."*

Let us take heed to Mr. Kennedy’s words and start our own tiny ripple effect of hope by standing up for our ideals, improving the lot of others, and striking out against injustice.

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1. **Overcome Evil With Good**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”—Apostle Paul

**Reflection:**

This statement was written in first-century Rome. There are some obvious similarities between the social climate of Rome and of the world of today. Evil was rampant in Rome, and its pull was strong. The Roman Empire didn’t become the undisputed ruler of the Western world through compassion, kindness, or humility. Wealth was in the hands of a few, and they used it to control the rest. The rich and powerful lived extravagantly while the masses struggled to survive. Sound familiar?

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the evil in the world. Every day we hear about horrendous crimes being committed. Meanwhile, the popular media searches for new and more horrific ways to portray violence, perversion, and every kind of evil. What can we do about a world so overcome with wickedness? Paul’s counsel still rings as true as it was in his day. “Overcome evil with good.”

If a dish is dirty, being angry about the situation does nothing to fix it. Neither does trying to ignore it. The only solution is to expose that dirty dish to the power of a little soap and water.

It’s the same with all the injustices in society today. We can get discouraged, angry, or depressed—*overcome by evil*—or we can be a force for good in the world, even if only through a personal example. Not every dirty dish will be cleaned, and not every darkened heart will be enlightened, but we can each do our part day by day, person by person, decision by decision.

What are you going to choose? I choose to overcome evil with good.

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**3. *“*I knew I could make a difference to one person.”**

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**Quote of the day:**

“He most lives who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.” —Phillip James Bailey

**Reflection:**

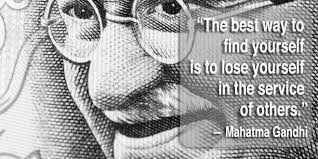
I was impressed by this story of a man who just saw a need and did what he could. He definitely lives up to Mr. Bailey’s quote.

*On a cold, snowy day in Washington D.C., amid the debris of a tragic plane crash in the Potomac River, a real-life hero emerged from obscurity. Flying too low, Air Florida's Flight 90 had crashed into the 14th Street Bridge, catapulting plane, baggage and terrified passengers into the freezing water. A flight attendant was floating in the icy current doing everything she could to stay alive. Someone on shore threw her a rope, but she could not grab it. She went under and popped back up, waving her hands and screaming for help. For a second time she went under, this time for much longer. Wide-eyed, scrambling and gasping for breath, she finally came up for one more attempt to save her life. A shy, unassuming man named Vinnie Skutnick was standing on the bridge watching the tragedy. Believing that he could make a difference, he quickly removed his heavy overcoat, kicked off his boots and dove into the sub-freezing river. Swimming like an Olympian, Skutnick found the flight attendant, lifted her head and shoulders out of the water, and whispered, "You will live." As he pulled her from the river, Skutnick was asked why he risked his life to save the stranger. He replied, "I couldn't save everybody, but I knew I could make a difference to one person."*

Random acts of kindness *do* make a significant difference.

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1. **Being Of Service**

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**110. Quote of the day:**

“There is incredible value in being of service to others. I think if many of the people in therapy offices were dragged out to put their finger in a dike, or take up their place in a working line, they would be relieved of terrible burdens.” — Elizabeth Berg

**Reflection:**

Dr. Karl Menninger, the famous psychiatrist, once gave a lecture on mental health, and then answered questions from the audience. "What would you advise a person to do," asked one man, "if that person felt a nervous breakdown or depression coming on?"

Most people expected him to reply, "Consult a psychiatrist." To their astonishment, he replied, "Lock up your house, go to the poor area of town, find someone in need and do something to help that person."

The moral of the story is when you help others you help yourself. Like Booker T. Washington says, “If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.”

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1. **Lamplighter**

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**Quote of the day:**

“We cannot hold a torch to light another person's path without brightening our own.” — Ben Sweetland

**Consider:**

In many countries the Festival of Lights is being celebrated. From what I understand it is a celebration of light over darkness—good over evil. It can be discouraging thinking about the negative environment that exists in the world today. An environment filled with greed, violence, and a pervading feeling of hopelessness. How can we bring light into a world that all too often seems so dark and hopeless? How can we be enough of a positive influence in the lives of others that they would not just survive, but instead willingly work to change the world around them? Perhaps the following story will help give you insight on how to combat the darkness.

Around the turn of the century in England, a lamplighter would go up and down the streets lighting the streetlamps. He carried a long pole that had a small candle on top with which he would reach up to light the kerosene-fed lamps. From a distance you could not see a lamplighter very well, the light from one small candle was not very bright in the surrounding darkness of night. You could follow the progress of the lamplighter as he went along a street. The presence of his candle was barely visible until it joined with the flame of the streetlamp being newly lit. A radiant glow erased a portion of the night's darkness, and looking back down the street, you could see that the light from the glowing streetlamps made the entire street bright as day. The darkness was held at bay.

We all can be like the lamplighter by sharing from our own flame in order to light other’s individual lamps. By sharing our wisdom and demonstrating our love, we can provide the fuel necessary to nourish and sustain other’s flames. Together we can become bright enough to conquer the darkness and hopelessness of the world.

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1. **Bring Love Back to the World**



Quote of the day:

"Have you a kindness shown? Pass it on. It was not given for thee alone. Pass it on. Let it travel through the years, let it wipe another’s tears, till in Heaven the deed appears. Pass it on.” –- Henry Burton

Reflection:

I just love the following story and even though it’s a bit longer than usual I think it will be worth your time reading and may even inspire you to do the same as it did me.

*I was in New York the other day and rode with a friend in a taxi. When we got out, my friend said to the driver, "Thank you for the ride. You did a superb job of driving." The taxi driver was stunned for a second. Then he said, "Are you a wise guy or something?" "No, my dear man, and I'm not putting you on. I admire the way you keep cool in heavy traffic." "Yeah," the driver said and drove off.*

*"What was that all about?" I asked. "I am trying to bring love back to New York," he said. "I believe it's the only thing that can save the city." "How can one man save New York?"*

*"It's not one man. I believe I have made that taxi driver's day. Suppose he has twenty fares. He's going to be nice to those twenty fares because someone was nice to him. Those fares in turn will be kinder to their employees or shopkeepers or waiters or even their own families. Eventually the goodwill could spread to at least one thousand people. Now that isn't bad, is it?"*

*"But you're depending on that taxi driver to pass your goodwill to others."*

*"I'm not depending on it," my friend said. "I'm aware that the system isn't foolproof so I might deal with ten different people today. If out of ten I can make three happy, then eventually I can indirectly influence the attitudes of three thousand more."*

*"It sounds good on paper," I admitted, "but I'm not sure it works in practice."*

*"Nothing is lost if it doesn't. It didn't take any of my time to tell that man he was doing a good job. He neither received a larger tip nor a smaller tip. If it fell on deaf ears, so what? Tomorrow there will be another taxi driver I can try to make happy."*

*"But you can't do this all alone!" I protested. "You're just one man."*

*"The most important thing is not to get discouraged. Making people in the city become kind again is not an easy job, but if I can enlist other people in my campaign..."*

*"You just winked at a very plain-looking woman," I said.*

*"Yes, I know," he replied. "And if she's a schoolteacher, her class will be in for a fantastic day."*

Why not try some random acts of kindness yourself and make your part of the world a little kinder?

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