

## Learning to Live Well - III

### Attitude - The last three important words

Learning to live well is an ongoing process in anyone's life. Growing and aging is something we all do and the more attention we pay to the process the better off we will be. As we continue this topic of leadership and living well, I will share with you another three important words – Survival, Security, Significance.

#### **Survival:**

We begin with the word survival because that is what most people are simply trying to do - survive. In today's economy that is almost an understatement for a lot of people since many may not be surviving at all. When we consider the word survival, the first area of life we think of is economics. I realize that money is essential but should it be foremost and the most important? To me, placing money first is like putting the cart before the horse. This may be why so many people struggle with survival because money is uppermost in their lives. Money will be a significant part of most people's lives but perhaps it should not be first or last. Money can be an asset in many areas of life but it is hardly even the primary agent to living well. Take happiness for instance; there are many wealthy people who are very unhappy while there are lots of people who are economically poor who are very happy. The quick acquisition of money in one's life often brings with it certain demise. Maybe that is why the wisdom of the ages tells us that the love of money is the root of evil. Money must never be first in our lives, only enough for our needs.

It is relatively easy to think about the things we can see – the physical and visible parts of life. When we give some thought to reality however, we begin to realize that it is what we do not see, the inward and invisible that may be more important. Recognizing that we are body, mind, and spirit we are technologically two thirds mind and spirit. Though they are not as immediately and unmistakably known or noticed, as is our body, they may be more important. When we neglect the more central aspects of our humanity, we in all probability lessen our facility to live well. Too often we are mostly concerned about physical things in our day-to-day lives.

It is also true that people focus on tangible aspirations for getting as much as they can, as soon as they can, with as little effort as possible. With the rising habit "buy now and pay later" we can satisfy our cravings for instant gratification. Along with this we have added the custom of accumulating and holding on to as much as we are able. Simply put we try to get all we can, can all we get, and then sit on the can. It demonstrates a clear focus on me, myself, and I. It may be said that if I don't look after "number one" who else will but that attitude may not lead to the success you desire. While there is certainly nothing wrong with wanting to win and succeed, it is never wise to focus on that which may only help you lose. The truth is that we are never more important than anyone else nor will we ever really succeed if we think and act as if we have no need of anyone else. The word survival alludes to endurance and no one can endure alone for very long. Most people are familiar with the poem of John Donne, "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; ..... any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee".

The fact is that most people do little to continue to develop the essential core of their inner nature, the mind and spirit. This, to me, is the main reason that so many in our world remain fixed in a survival

mode. It is much more difficult to move beyond survival when your mind is not completely engaged and your heart is not energized with what you are doing. Counselors and teachers remind and insist that you are what you think; as the Scripture says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7) Too many people discontinue any pattern of learning on a regular basis after they graduate from school. This is especially dangerous when we are living in an age when information doubles about every two years. To stop learning is to fall behind and no one wins in anything when they are consistently moving backward. Place all your energy in reaching out with others in moving forward to a life of contentment and accomplishment.

## **Security:**

Moving toward security is a positive step in the right direction. Security is a condition of feeling good, freedom from worries of loss, and a position of assurance. Isn't this what you and most people really desire? In learning to live well I wish to invite you to do what is necessary to advance into a status of security.

By now it should not surprise you that the first place you must begin in order to grow into security is changing your mind. To help you do this you may also need to change the company you keep. I am sure you have heard the saying, "birds of a feather flock together". Perhaps the point is made clearer by sharing another, "if you wish to fly like an eagle you cannot hang around with turkeys". If you are old enough you may also remember Roy Rodgers singing, "Home on the Range" – "when never is heard a discouraging word and the skies are not cloudy all day". While there is humor in the way I have tried to make the point, it should not diminish in any way the truth that is contained herein. You must first change your mind if you are going to change your ways. If everything stays the same why would you expect anything to be different?

Change cannot come if you are not open to change. Many people who do not like change become resistant to change and happen to be their own worst enemy. Those who are willing to change may not be around people and opportunities that offer alternatives to help them find new ways of being and doing. Some may not have the drive or the energy to move forward toward something new. For many it is comfortable to remain as they are. Because everything in our universe and world keep changing daily, those who make no changes in their lives are actually falling behind. There is no middle ground in life for anyone to simply stand still.

## **FREEDOM – Foster Respect Encourage Equality Develop Opportunity Methodically**

How does one have the freedom of security? Perhaps the acronym above will be helpful. Foster means to promote or encourage. Freedom cannot exist without significant positive activity. It is vital to have self respect as well as respect for others if one is to become liberated. Without equality there is no freedom so one must not only work for but also constantly encourage freedom. Opportunities that bring freedom do not come automatically so they must be planned and developed. Methodically suggests that one must be logical, careful, precise and systematic in expediting the feasibility for freedom. In short, freedom is hard work.

What does one need to do to obtain the assurance of security? It requires knowledge and understanding. It is one thing to gather the information, facts, and data to become knowledgeable but one must also acquire the facility to use knowledge with understanding, comprehension, and experience. Education is important and is the basic way that most people acquire knowledge, but life

experience is where we get to use that knowledge and grow in our understanding, comprehension, and experience. This is why many schools and colleges give academic credit for “life experience”. People who move toward security are usually those who are both “book smart” and “street smart”.

## GRACE – God’s Recreational Activity Causing Excellence

There is one last point I wish to make about security – awareness that no one can obtain security in a vacuum. Everyone needs to remember that we were born into this world and that no one has life through his or her own doing. I am grateful that I had loving parents, a large family that was caring and supportive, and have the privilege to live in communities that are vibrant and life giving. I am also convinced that there is a divine force, which most call God, that initiated and energizes our universe with unfathomable opportunities for everyone to enjoy. It is through this grace that I believe we are gifted with security. As we are open to feel, interact, and grow in God’s creativity that we then experience the activity of re-creation causing excellence.

### **Significance:**

Why stop at security when there is even more to living? Having moved from survival to security you may now enjoy the ecstasy of significance – meaning, worth, and importance.

You must know that you cannot give away what you do not have, but the greatest source of pleasure in life is to be willing and able to share what you do have with others. Obviously this means that you need to know who you are, what you have, and how much you are willing to share. All three of these areas are not always easily known or understood by most people.

There are three areas of life that each of us has - time, talent, and treasure. How we use these wisely may be the best test and indicator of our significance. It will be important to honor each area and to utilize them efficiently so that we may have all that we need for ourselves and in service to others. Too often we tend to think of money as soon as we think of one’s significance and lose site of the wholeness of one’s being that is what makes us significant. After all, one’s treasure is only one third of who we are and the other two thirds of time and talent may be more noteworthy.

Think about it, when it comes to time we are all equal. Everyone has the same amount of time – 24/7. Therefore it can become the first important measure of how much we are allowing for caring and sharing with others. It is very easy to see how much we care for ourselves in survival and in security and just how desirous we are in moving toward significance in our lives.

When it comes to talent and treasure we are quite different from one another. Not only will the amount of each person’s talent vary but also in which areas each person’s talents may be. This still does not suggest an inequality among us because of the tremendous variety of gifts that are necessary in order to create the interdependence needed for living with one another. Too many parents hope that their sons and daughters will grow up to be doctors, lawyers, or Indian chiefs because they are looked upon as honorable professions. How many, however, would like to live in a community where there were no trades like carpenter, plumber, or those who chose to be garbage collectors? The laborers needed for the innumerable services necessary for living well together is clear. It is like the parts of our human body where no one, visible or invisible, can say to the other that they are more important for our wholeness.

Treasure is another variable; the divergence of those with a great deal of money and the others who will have much less is obvious. In Christian Scripture we are told, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." (Luke 12:48) This is said not only about money but about our responsibility to one another in every area of our lives. Sharing is always necessary for anyone who wishes to be significant but money alone is never as important as time and talent and can never replace the welcomed personal care and involvement.

**SIGNIFICANCE - Sensing Infinite Grace Nourishes Inspired Faith In Consistent Action Needed for Compassionate Endeavors**

What is in your heart? Never leave home with out it.