

REALITY QUEST

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CONFRONTATION

I came out of an electrical contractor's business to find two burly contractors in deep conversation parked directly behind my car making it impossible to back out. I got in my car, started it, and waited. The two men knew I was ready to go, but they just stood there continuing their conversation. What had I done, I wondered, to offend these gentleman enough to make them have no respect for me? Perhaps they didn't like my looks. Perhaps I had parked my car too close to theirs. I tried to think what it was that I had done to any one of them to cause their reaction. On the other hand, maybe it wasn't me personally who they were mad at. Maybe they were just plain disrespectful to everybody. Then again, maybe they hate guys dressed in worn out bib overalls? I have found that people do what they do for some reason. I pondered greatly on why these two men were doing what they were doing.

Now I had to make a decision. Should I honk my horn to let them know of my impatience? Maybe I should get out of my car, puff out my chest and let these imbeciles know who they were dealing with. Surely, they deserve disrespect when disrespect is what they give to others. Anytime I was disrespectful as a youth, my parents showed me disrespect back by punishing me with harsh words or a beating (which seemed pretty disrespectful at the time of the beating). How does the saying go: "*An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.*" These bums deserved to be taught a lesson.

-Then the little *angel* popped out on my shoulder-

What if these two men were my friends, or better, my brothers Cory and Mike. Would I get out of my car and be disrespectful if they were my brothers? Maybe these men have something important to talk about which couldn't wait? Then again, maybe the transmission in their car went out and they were discussing the best way to get the van out of the way. How did I know that I would not do the exact same thing that these men were doing if I were in the same situation? No Way! (The *devil* on my other shoulder appeared) I would never do what these guys are doing! I am not an imbecile!

After I had had the above "inner" discussion with myself, enough time must have passed to afford the men the opportunity to finish their conversation. The two men parted, and the van moved out of my way. The *angel* and the *devil* disappeared and I was left alone to ponder what I should have done in this situation.

It is obvious what might have happened if I would have had a confrontation with these men- they would have been offended, even though they were probably in the wrong, and hate would ensue. I could have lost my temper and rammed their car and been in a real mess. Once more human beings would be locked in confrontation with each other trying to protect their assumed rights, their pride, and dignity. In this same way wars are started and millions of people suffer just because a confrontation which could have been avoided is perpetuated by pride, ego, and senseless intolerance. (Needless to say, it is usually a small handful of prideful males who make the decision on where war should start and with whom.)

I don't consider it proper that I learned as a small child to give an "*eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*". I think it would have been better for me and the rest of my fellow human beings, if I was taught to back down from confrontations, arguments, and fights. It was allegedly said much more eloquently by a more ancient philosopher:

"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him..."

"But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

(For all you attorneys) "And if any man sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

(*The Bible*, Matthew 5: 22, 25, 39-40, 44)

Anyway, I pulled out of my parking space, smiled at the gentleman who was on foot, (the other had driven off in the van), waved, and left. Thank heavens for little shoulder companions!

MY FATHER

Upon reviewing my own newsletters, and with the help of some very kind critics, I have found that my dear father has taken a "bite in the butt" in many instances. After all, it was he that raised me. However, it was not he who taught me the truths (assumed truths by my own standards) which I embrace today. If it were up to my father, he would have me attending the LDS Church every Sunday and following the every word of its leaders. He has mentioned many times before to me and many of my siblings that the thing which he learned from his own father, the thing which has helped him in his own life more than any other, is that he should stay close to the LDS Church and its leaders. I applaud my dad for standing up for his beliefs and hope he finds his happiness in it. I would only hope that he someday realizes that because he believes this way, he will only know that which his church and its leaders want him to know and nothing more. But, I do not think that any of his church's teachings, doctrines, ect... espouse the idea of bigotry and intolerance towards those who disagree with the views and dogmas of the Church- especially one's own son. My father has told my younger siblings to stay away from me and my beliefs because he is afraid that I might persuade them against what he wants them to think and believe. I don't believe my brothers, who are active Mormons, feel much differently. What are they afraid of? I oft times ask myself. I have no intention on taking away the happiness of others- Whether I feel their happiness is illusionary or not. I would welcome into my home and family anyone and any doctrine. I would instruct my children to hear all things and choose for themselves that which they feel will bring them the greatest amount of happiness.

Besides what I have just written about my father, he is an exceptional member of the human race. Like all men, he has his strengths and his weaknesses. I have never known a man to be more dedicated to what he does. Whether it's a school teacher, garbage man, police officer, bookstore owner, (the list is extremely long), and he has been all of these, he is very good at what he does. My father has made more money than what can be credited by his current lifestyle. Many ridicule him for his ability to make money and then loose it the next day. I believe the reason why he has no money, is not because he wastes it, but because he shares it. Even knowing the distance that my father's soul and mine seem to be at, even though he can't stand my unorthodox lifestyle, if I truly was in desperate straits, I could count on my dad.

I remember as a young boy about 15 years old driving with my father along a busy California interstate where we passed an old lady peering down desperately at a flat tire. Countless cars passed her- the drivers looking the other way as if they saw a rare phenomena which required their utmost attention so they could justify passing the old lady. Now, it might not seem too heroic to some to stop and help a stranded old lady along the road. But it would be something if one passed the individual on the other side of the road divider, exited on the next turn off, turned the opposite direction from where one was going, and stopped to help the matron. Now, this still might be something that a lot of people might assume they would do, but not everyone has a 15 year old teenager, who thinks he knows everything, as a passenger.

Needless to say, while I fixed the flat tire, my father casually carried on a conversation with the lady about how wonderful his boy was for helping her. Now, dad could have change the tire himself, but what would that have taught me? I felt pretty good about my father that day.

When I was in my ninth year in high school I was a pretty talented basketball player. In fact, I made the varsity squad as a freshman and started a few games as point guard. There was an annual nationwide freshman basketball tournament held so that the college scouts could see what type of talent was coming up so that they could follow the athletes through out their high school years for recruiting purposes. I tried out for the San Diego Area team. I was one of the first choices the coaches made to represent San Diego. Boy, was I excited and proud!

To go to the tourney, which was held in Chicago that year, all participants had to get their parents permission. My father seemed thrilled at first. What father wouldn't be proud to have a son chosen for such a honor? My dad asked what the itinerary was for the games to be played. He found out that the tourney was two weeks long and that we would be required to play on Sundays. If our team made it to the championship round, the final game would be played on Sunday. My dad talked with the coaches and told them that I could go, but I could not play on Sunday. The coaches decided that I would just be excess baggage for the team if I couldn't play in some of the key games. They decided not to take me.

I was devastate. In fact, at that time I decided to make basketball my second sport and football my first. From that day on, I lost the drive that could have propelled me to a big college scholarship and perhaps some professional playing time as my uncle had. Was my dad wrong in his decision?

To this day I am extremely grateful to my dad for keeping me from playing in that tournament and teaching me that sports were not as important as integrity in one's beliefs. (However, had he let me play, I might be leading a more orthodox lifestyle than that which I now pursue. WAY TO GO DAD!) From what I have learned about life, I am glad I had a dad like mine.

There aren't too many beggars who leave the presence of my dad empty handed. From an early age I recall many instances where my father's example of giving helped instill in me generosity. Some even say I am too much like my dad in that way. No matter what his downfalls might be because of his personality and religion, my father is an exceptional human being. He had twelve kids which never went hungry or naked. Nor did we want for experience. Sixteen different houses and neighborhoods and four different high schools assured me of experience. For these things I am grateful to him and I would not change my past and upbringing even if I could.

SERVICE

This past week I received a kind note from one of my many uncles, on my dad's side, indicating his desire to meet with me sometime and discuss, (quoted verbatim from his note) *"...and discuss what I feel is even more important than those things you have touched upon (referring to my first two issues of my newsletter) and that is how much of our lives are involved in serving other people and helping them enjoy their existence through true happiness and joy."*

Now, I love this uncle and appreciate his concern. He has been more concerned than most about the well being of his relatives. In fact, by way of his note, he is the first relative of mine who has tried to persuade me by love instead of ridicule and anger. (Though I had a cousin attempt at one time, his concern for me quickly turned to anger and frustration.) I have always considered this particular uncle to be a man who tries his best to live as he believes. He, like my father, is also very dedicated at what he does and has devoted a great deal of his life to his religious beliefs.

He refers to service of one's fellowman in his note. He suggests in his note that service is helping others *"enjoy their existence through true happiness and joy..."*. He makes the assumption here that he knows what *true* happiness and joy really are. What I think he means is what happiness and joy are to him.

This uncle is an attorney, has been married four times, and has experienced some heartache with his children. Foremost, I am not quite sure how any attorney could possible know anything about happiness. Attorneys serve for money. There are times when the human conscience catches up with them and they accept clients pro-bono (free of charge), but if they have not earned enough to take care of their lifestyle's needs and wants, they work for whomever, doing whatever they can. Now, this isn't quite fair about my uncle. He did handle one of my divorces pro-bono, (Which later on became a great detriment in having Brittany and Joshua taken from me due to the fact that the judge assumed my uncle had manipulated the court in my behalf. (My uncle doesn't play golf with this judge)), and I know he has done many pro-bono cases for many people. However, his lifestyle is what I look at when I am trying to find out what happiness

and joy mean to him. I was being charged with felony kidnaping once, and always wondered to myself why this uncle did not come to my defense as an attorney. Despite these jurisprudence criticism, I love my uncle a lot. I just want to figure out what he means by happiness and joy which he is trying to give to others.

I have no idea what happened between my uncle and his many wives, neither do I concern myself with the details. I wonder, though, what kind of happiness he was helping them enjoy and why, if he was serving them and helping them enjoy happiness, they got divorced? You see, I don't understand what my well-off, attorney at law uncle means.

To me, service is indeed the thing that brings the greatest amount of happiness. I do not see service as helping my fellowman and getting something in return for what I do for them. Whether it be gratitude or compensation. The greatest example of service which I can think of to give, is the alleged works and life of the man known to the christian world as Jesus Christ. This man was extremely poor and taught that the rich who only give of their abundance, are not truly servants of anyone, but of their guilty conscience:

"And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of he scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces. And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses and for a pretense (excuse) make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation. And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many who were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast in the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." (*The Bible*, Mark 12:38-44)

Jesus was one who taught that money and material things corrupted the soul of the individual and the whole society. Of course, those in power who had authority had money- and so they killed Jesus to shut him up.

For me, and possibly me alone, I believe the greatest service I could be to my fellowman is to teach my children to have tolerance and love toward everyone, regardless of race, color, sex, or religion. To teach them to seek truth in all things. I believe that dedicating my life to the search for truth, without asking for compensation for sharing that which I know and learn with others, sacrificing any pursuit for worldly success or material goods, and giving all of myself to my quest, will benefit this world more than anything else. To me this is service and true happiness.

However, I do not find joy of serving in taking away the happiness of others. If my uncle truly finds his joy and happiness in his worldly success and/or his religion, then I support him in this and hope he finds what makes him happy. I only hope he will love me and give me the same consideration.

CRITICISM

I have been critiqued much in my life and I have "dished out" a lot myself. I hope in my criticism that the reader will understand I love and accept all people, lifestyles, and beliefs. I state my opinions which oft times can be described as: "A tongue sharp as a two-edged sword." I do not want to give or take offense from anyone. In fact, I relish in criticism and find it quite illuminating at times. However, I try never to become angry because of criticism. I believe when a person receives criticism and is angered, then they act this way because subconsciously they feel their critic has a basis for his or her criticism. If one is not angered, it is usually because they find no truth in the criticisms which they receive.

Nevertheless, I do not want to anger anyone with my writings. I only wish to share my ideas and opinions so that perhaps I am better understood by those who care. If I have or do anger someone through my writings, I must most respectfully and honestly say: It's their problem!

