

A Lesson in Forgiveness

On a quiet Saturday afternoon, my friend and I were throwing stones onto the roof of an old lady's house. It didn't matter to me that I knew the old lady because I delivered the newspaper to her every day. The truth was we were bored, and throwing stones was something interesting to do—at least to boys like us.

I found a stone and sent it for a ride. However, it slipped out of my hand when I threw it. It hit a small window of the lady's house and broke the glass. The crash was very loud. We were afraid of being caught, so we took off without delay.

For the next few days, I was so worried about getting into trouble that I didn't think of the old lady and her broken window. However, when I was sure that I wasn't in trouble, I started to feel sorry about what I had done. Besides, I still had to deliver the newspaper to the old lady. Every day, she smiled at me when I gave her the paper, but I was no longer comfortable in her presence.

I made up my mind to save the money I made from delivering newspapers, and I calculated that seven dollars would cover the cost of repairing her window. In three weeks, I had the seven dollars ready. I put the money in an envelope and wrote a note. It said that I was sorry for breaking her window and that I hoped the seven dollars would cover the cost of repairing it.

When it was dark, I walked quietly to the old lady's house and slipped the envelope under her door. I felt relieved and couldn't wait to look straight into her eyes once again. The next day, I handed the old lady her paper, happily returning the warm smile that I received from her. She thanked me for the paper and said, "Here, I have something for you." It was a bag of cookies. I thanked her and left.

I walked away, enjoying the cookies. They tasted great. After I ate several, I discovered an envelope inside the bag and pulled it out. When I opened it up, I was very surprised. In the envelope, there were the seven dollars and a short note that said, "I'm proud of you!"

(Adapted from "True Forgiveness" by Jerry Harpt.)

Afghan Lovers on the Run

It's said that love knows no boundaries, and that's certainly the case for the Afghan newlyweds Zakia and Mohammad Ali. The couple spent their honeymoon on the run from the police and their own families.

Zakia, 18, and Mohammad Ali, 21, just wanted to get married like many other young couples in love. She is his Juliet, he is her Romeo, and their love is doomed. Due to the fact that they belong to two conflicting ethnic and religious groups, the lovers are destined to face numerous obstacles. Both of their families were enraged at the idea of their marriage, especially Zakia's, which disowned her and issued death threats against her. Almost all marriages in Afghanistan are still arranged by parents. Hence, Zakia's decision to be with Mohammad Ali is regarded as an unpardonable offense to tradition.

Mohammad Ali and Zakia, the children of rural farmers, became friends while working in the fields. When Mohammad tried to bring Zakia to his home, his family turned her away and beat him to the point of hospitalization. Afterward, anyone who met Mohammad Ali could see a mark bruising his face as a result of the beating.

The young couple tried twice to convince their families to accept their love, but failed both times. Finally, Zakia fled her home and Mohammad Ali took her to a women's shelter. Her family later claimed she was engaged to someone else, which Zakia denied. They beat her outside a courtroom and insulted her in public. Yet this didn't deter the young couple. Instead, their Romeo and Juliet story continued on the road. With the help of several women's rights groups, they managed to elope. The couple stayed with friends, and even slept in caves while on the run. To them, love is a powerful faith that helps to conquer ignorance and hatred.

(by Bryan Shettig –實用空中美語)

Credit Card Slaves

In the early 2000s, credit cards and cash cards spread like wildfire in Taiwan. Banks advertised card on TV, in newspapers, and on the Internet. They also set up booths all over the place to look for more customers. In just a few years, tens of millions of cards were issued.

For those who paid off their card balances every month, things were fine. However, with interest rates of 18-20%, those carrying large balances often wound up in a cycle of debt. In many cases, people had to use cash cards to borrow money to pay their bills. This made the cycle of debt even worse, since cash cards often have interest rates of 25%!

People with a mountain of debt came to be known as card slaves. By 2006, there were half a million people with 300,000 NT or more in debt. Many people were simply unable to pay their bills. That led to banks losing billions of dollars from unpaid loans. Clearly, something had to be done.

More than 200,000 people worked out repayment plans with banks. Plus, banks cut back on advertising credit cards and made it harder to apply for new ones. Also, a new law was passed in June 2007. It let people apply for bankruptcy if they could not work out a repayment plan.

These moves helped reduce the problem. However, there are still thousands of people with serious credit card debt. And, there are some 37 million credit cards and 2 million cash cards still in use. Hopefully, from the problem of credit card slaves, we've all learned a lesson about how to use (and not abuse) credit and cash cards.

(From Reading Stream, p. 76)

Incredible: This Son's App Saved His Mother's Life

In May 2013, Andrew Josephson, 23, was clearing a spot in his parents' basement for his college gear, and he stumbled upon a mysterious old set of CDs. The disc jacket read "Heart Sounds and Murmurs, by Daniel Mason, MD." Mason was Andrew's grandfather. The CDs contained the sounds of 125 different heartbeats, some indicating rare heart conditions. Dr. Mason, who passed away at 92 in 2011, had recorded them throughout his 50-year career as a cardiologist. That summer, Andrew bought books on computer coding and taught himself how to write a mobile app of heart sounds for smartphones. The program used an iPhone microphone to record a heartbeat and then match it with Dr. Mason's recordings to determine if the beat was irregular. By July, Andrew had created a prototype, which he first tried on his own heart. As he expected, it registered that his heartbeat was normal. But when Andrew used the app to test his mother, Tina, her heart sound came up abnormal. He recorded it several more times, and each time, the app produced the same outcome. Months later on a family ski trip, Tina noticed she was exhausted at the end of each run. Her mind returned to the irregular reading she'd received from Andrew's app. Tina was convinced she should see her doctor. A week later, tests revealed that Tina was suffering from a serious disorder that prevents a heart valve from shutting properly. In March, Tina underwent successful open-heart surgery. She's now back at work, and she's playing tennis, running, and cycling again. Andrew's initial curiosity about his grandfather's recordings and his tenacity in making the app astound Tina. "I'm just very lucky," she says. "My son saved my life."

(this article is written by Melody Warnick from Reader's Digest.)

THE 90/10 SECRET

Did you have a good day yesterday, or was it another day when something went wrong? If you have one bad day after another, you need to learn the 90/10 secret.

A BAD START

At breakfast a few weeks ago, Jack's daughter, Emily, spilled a glass of milk on Jack's pants. Jack got upset. He yelled at his daughter, and she started to cry.

"Why did you yell at her?" said his wife. "Why did you put the glass on the edge of the table?" replied Jack angrily, as he went upstairs to get changed.

Because she was upset, his daughter didn't get ready for school in time, and she missed her bus. Jack had to take Emily to school. Because he was in a hurry, he forgot his computer. He was 40 minutes late for work--and as soon as he got there, he had to go home to get his computer. It was a bad start to the day, and it didn't get any better.

A few days later, Jack read an article about the 90/10 secret. The secret is: Ten percent of life is what happens to you. You can't control it. The traffic's bad, you lose something, somebody spills coffee on you. That's life. Things happen, and you have to deal with them.

Ninety percent of life, however, is how you react. Jack's bad day started because he reacted badly. Remember that the next time that something bad happens to you!

Since Jack learned about the 90/10 secret, his attitude has changed.

DID IT HAVE TO BE A BAD START?

The next time Jack's daughter spilled her milk on Jack at breakfast, this is what happened: Jack smiled and said, "It's OK. Accidents happen. Don't worry." He went upstairs and got changed. When he came down, Emily said, "Bye, daddy," kissed him, and ran out to get on her bus. Jack didn't have to take her to school. He picked up his computer, kissed his wife, and they both left for work. He got to work early, and he had a great day.

(source: Network 3, p. 11)

The Power of YouTube

YouTube opened its online doors in December 2005, as an easy way for people to share videos. The response was incredible. The site quickly became the home of millions of home videos, music videos, TV clips, and more. Now, more than 100 million videos are viewed every day! Google felt so strongly about YouTube that it bought the company for \$1.65 billion in 2006.

One sign of YouTube's growing power is its influence on politics. During the 2008 US presidential election, two special debates were held. YouTube users sent in thousands of video questions, and a number were chosen as questions for candidates. The debate made people feel like an important part of the election. Suddenly, thanks to YouTube, politics was cool again.

The site is also changing the face of news reporting. In the Internet age, many people are losing trust in information sources like newspapers and TV news programs. At the same time, there's a new group of reporters. They are people like you and me, using digital cameras to record events as they happen.

More than anything, YouTube gives its members a voice. Every day, thousands of people use webcams and other cameras to record their opinions. They talk, sing, play music, laugh, and cry.

It's a worldwide movement, with more than half the videos coming from outside the USA. In the coming years, online video will likely become even more popular. As it does, YouTube hopes to remain the best place to watch it all happen.

(From Reading Stream, p. 74)

First Impressions

Little things you can do to change how people perceive you

Does meeting new people make you nervous? If so, you're not alone. But making a good first impression isn't as hard as you might think. It just involves a few simple choices.

Look your best

Obviously your appearance influences people's impressions of you. But you don't need to look like a model to make a good impression. You just need to take care of yourself.

Make sure your clothing is clean, not wrinkled and appropriate for the situation. One survey said blue or black are best for job interviews. In professional situations, women should avoid flashy jewelry and thick makeup, which can be a distraction.

Don't forget little things like brushing your teeth, washing your hair and trimming your nails. They change how people see you.

Stand tall

The way you stand, sit and move tells others a lot about you. Standing up straight makes you look – and feel – confident. When you approach someone, make eye contact and smile to show you're friendly and interested. Then greet them with a firm handshake.

Speak up

Speak loudly and clearly enough that people don't have to strain to hear you. If you don't know what to say, ask questions. Most people enjoy talking about themselves. Listening is just as important as talking, pay attention to what they're saying rather than planning what you'll say next. And if you're not sure what they mean, ask!

Value people

Most importantly, show people you care. Your concern for them will be evident if you smile and listen carefully.

Respect other people's time, too. Don't keep them waiting because you arrive late or keep using your cellphone instead of talking to them.

Everyone you meet, whether they're a businessperson, a receptionist or a bus driver, is important. So make eye contact, smile and greet them. They'll appreciate it – and others may be watching.

And remember, you are important, too. You probably want people to like you, but their opinions don't define who you are. You are unique and have a lot to offer, so don't be afraid to show it.

(source: Studio classroom)