

“Why Give?: A Collection of Essays & Poetry on Giving”

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Why give? I give because it makes daily life worth living. My uncle Pete says, “Yesterday is gone. Live for today! I can’t tell you what tomorrow brings, because it’s not here.” My dad was always positive. His mantra was, “You work with what you have. Make decisions and enjoy life!”

I’ve found that my father and uncle’s simple life mottos have kept me energized for everyday living. As a result, my primary life motto is “give love and laugh!” When giving from the heart I truly don’t believe anyone can go wrong. And giving certainly does not always need to be in monetary form. Giving a kind word, a positive gesture, or an action during an ordinary day might be just what they need. And it’s so very easy to do! Even giving by investing time in listening to someone vent could be an invaluable gift. Observing someone’s body language or facial expression, and responding and giving at the right time could make someone’s day.

My co-worker Carol and I were talking about the recent death of another colleague who passed due to cancer. Carol shared that she had still not fully recovered from the death of another company employee (James) who passed nearly 10 years ago. Carol explained that James’ favorite color was red and she decided to wear a red blazer to his wake. However, to her disappointment his family members and friends did not respond favorably to her wearing her red jacket. The memory of the displeased wake attendees had an adverse impact that had lasted nearly a decade. Carol explained she simply could not shake the negative memory. I encouraged her to take another perspective and not replay the event from a negative viewpoint. Instead, remember the red blazer as a signal -- a bon voyage of sorts -- and that she and James would meet again in heaven. The passing of a loved one should always be considered a celebration of life, a new beginning, a journey of faith. Carol’s countenance lifted and brightened. She became elated and actually released a sigh of relief. I certainly could have commiserated with her and even took verbal jabs at the poor social etiquette of James’ friends and family members. But why waste time? We need to live for today!

Several months ago while in preparation for Hurricane Irma I was at the supermarket check-out and noticed the cashier had a few bags of groceries sitting on the counter. A young lady was standing nearby and looking somewhat anxious. I wanted to ensure my groceries did not get mixed in with the bagged groceries, and the cashier advised me the young woman was awaiting her brother’s arrival because she didn’t have enough money to cover the bill – she was \$43.00 short. I advised the cashier to add the \$43.00 to my bill. However, the young woman said her brother was on the way. Yet, I could detect

concern in her young eyes. There were five other people waiting in our same check-out line that seemed agitated. I advised the young woman that I wanted to bless her by covering her bill, and that one day she would have the opportunity to pay it forward for someone as well. The cashier and several people in line in unison said, “God bless you!” I’m not sharing this story for applause, however sometimes when your heart and mind meet to give, go for it! Sometimes you don’t know what another person needs, but sometimes you absolutely do know. And when it’s within your power to do something about it, do it!

There is a song called, “Christmas Shoes”. I encourage everyone to listen to it. It will change your life. The lyrics explain that small things do matter. I have had situations in my upbringing that could have caused me to continuously look back and be stuck. These negative events were not easy to get over; actually they’ve taken me some years to let go. However, with my mantra being “live, love and laugh” I’ve realized the ultimate feeling and action of importance is love. I’m a realist. I am not perfect and I have my flaws. However, I’ve chosen to look beyond my past and focus on love. And when you’re giving love to yourself and others on a daily basis, you’re winning!

Recently, an agency employee was offered permanent employment with my company. It had been a year in the making. For nearly a full 12 months I provided her training and encouragement. I observed and appreciated her commitment to her work and the job. Upon notification of her permanent job offer, she emailed me to express her appreciation. Her words were filled with enthusiasm. She said, “Thank you for the opportunity you gave me almost a year ago. I appreciate everything you taught me, and the time you spent training me.” I responded to her email, “I am proud of you. I love your patience and attitude. You’re a wonderful young lady!” Her response, “OMG! Thank you so much for these words. If it weren’t for you I would not have had the opportunity. This is the best Christmas present I could receive!”

You never know how you can be a blessing to someone. On a daily basis treat people how you want to be treated. Smile and say “hello”. Be encouraging. Show respect for the elderly. I love to address them as young man or young lady...although they may actually be in their 80’s, 90’s, or even older. Appreciate waking up each morning and thanking God for the day, because tomorrow is not promised. Give because it’s the best way to live, love and laugh every single day.