

SPIRITUALITY IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS BY PETE SWINFORD

Once I was on a mountain trail above Ouray, Colorado. For me to feel secure about hiking in the Rockies, I need both a map and a planned route. So my goal was to hike the circular Portland Trail, and for a map I had the Ouray County Trail Guide. About 1500 feet above my starting point I met a couple who asked me if I had a map and if they could please see it. For they, you see, were on a mountain trail without one. Which of us had the best chance of a successful journey, me with a goal and map, or them with a tentative goal and no map?

Life can be a lot like mountain trail hiking. Those with a sense of goals or desires have a greater chance of fulfillment than those without. It seems to me that Jesus had a specific sense of the principles that life should encompass. This paper is an exploration of the applications of those principles in the journey from the cradle to the grave, which we call life.

A few of those principles, it seems to me, are:

- The Greatest Commandment
- Jesus is the Light of the World
- You are the Light of the World (sharing your faith)
- Honesty
- Honor
- Integrity
- Courage
- Discipline
- Living life with priorities, doing the most important things first (the principle centered life).
- Being compassionate.
- Striving to live a life well spent.

Is there a reasonable way of merging the chaos of day to day life with the concept of principle filled life? It seems to me that there is. What follows is a brief explanation of the idea:

Sunday is the beginning of the week. As such, it is the best day of the week to review one's principles, one's way of being, and to plan for the next 6 days. This is a good day to spend some time in silence, Bible study, and reflection. We all have a variety of roles in life, such as church attendance, employee, choir member, parent, son/daughter, Optimist Club member, citizen, amateur poet, musician, creative source, and so forth. What roles do you play? What roles do you need to play versus what roles would you like to play? Should you drop and/or add other roles? What should be your goals within each role? How can you accomplish each goal? This is a time to ask and answer the questions: What have I done so far? What do I need to be doing? The real issue is one of control; are you doing those things that best fit your situation and personal principles?

Sunday evening was always the time that Chrysler chairman Lee Iacocca mapped out his next 6 days of guiding Chrysler.

As to the rest of the week, since no day goes as planned, each morning is a new opportunity for prayer, silence, contemplation, and just straight appreciation for another day. Each day we all engage in activities and relationships at different levels, all with possibilities. So as we journey through each day, we all have the chance to exhibit through behavior our inner core of light, our principles, and our faith. A few examples of such behaviors are:

- Honesty when others would cast honesty aside.
- Courageously talking to a person with whom you have a problem (instead of talking to everyone else).
- Treating someone with concern when others would choose to hurt.
- Living with integrity, because integrity is a component of love. It is hard to believe that someone loves you when they lie to you.
- Courage and control that comes from knowing that you are doing what you should, and that it is important, because you are trying to focus on what you consider important.
- Support for others when they adhere to principles, when they avoid the syndrome of “but everyone does it that way”.
- Compassion that comes from the knowledge that all of us are less than perfect, and that all of us need forgiveness from time to time.
- The stalwart defense of one’s own needs when it seems necessary. Good relationships flow both ways.
- Repentance for wrongs done or errors made, accepting the responsibilities of our own actions.

We are all capable of mirroring the love of God in a way that can redefine what is “real”, or “how it must be”. We can interject the surprise of unearned love, or unearned generosity into each other’s life, which can help us keep in mind what God reaching to us really means.

Each day is a new set of opportunities to shine. Prayer and silence can play an important part of each day. In this way, the work day is no different from the weekend (though the cast of characters usually change).

Of course the above methodology of principle centered life is amenable to larger planning. Some people have periodic personal retreats to plan for the next chosen segment of time, such as the next three months, the next year, or whatever. They will spend a day, three days, or a week in prayer, introspection, personal observation, mission development, thinking about their roles, future planning, and such. Of course this process can be personal oriented, couple oriented, family oriented, or group oriented. The place of retreat might be a picnic table, a shoreline, a park lodge, or wherever they feel comfortable.

Living a life of Jesus-formed principles should add meaning, opportunity, and joy to each life. Each week becomes a part of a well lived life. All of us can “run the good race”, with the help of prayer, silence, introspection, and principles.

A resource book: *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, by Stephen R. Covey,
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