

WEEK 2

GOALS

JOHN HENRY FABRE AND THE PROCESSIONARY CATERPILLARS

John Henry Fabre, the great French naturalist, conducted a most unusual experiment with processionary caterpillars by arranging them in a circle. These caterpillars blindly follow the one in front of them, hence the name. Fabre carefully arranged them in a circle and in the middle he placed the caterpillar's favorite food, pine needles. Even though the caterpillar's favorite food was there, the caterpillars went around and around in the circle until they all died of fatigue and starvation. Unfortunately, what they needed most in life was only six inches away. They died due to lack of direction. The caterpillars confused activity with accomplishment. They worked hard and tried, but they had no direction. Unfortunately, that is the way it is with so many people today. They put in the effort but they lack a direction. They have no goals to give them the direction.

THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK

The first step to greatness is the willingness to accept responsibility for yourself.

Winston Churchill

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Welcome Aboard! Since you are here I **assume** that you want to become the best “you” that you can be.

Speaking of assumptions, it is important for you to understand what it is that I assume. An assumption is something taken for granted as being the truth. Everything we will be doing is based on three assumptions and two expectations. This is the route we will take to get to the destination. If any of the three assumptions or two expectations is not true, we will have problems. It would be like trying to play songs with two different sheets of music. I have no doubt that you have the same goals in mind as I do, but I want to make sure we have them in writing.

Three assumptions

1. I assume you want to be the best person you can be.

Describing the best person is easy. A group in Colorado determined that the 300 greatest leaders in history (Helen Keller, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Abe Lincoln, and George Washington) possessed 30 qualities that made them who they were. It is an interesting footnote that of these 300, 75% were either born in abject poverty, were abused or had a severe handicap. Obviously none of these conditions prevented them from achieving significance in their lives and having a lasting legacy. Qualities such as honesty, confidence, self respect, tolerance, learner, good listener, hardworking, conscientious.... are what make a person the best person he can be. The great news is this... all of the 30 qualities are skills, which means they can be learned. No one is born honest. You are born a boy or girl. Everyone has honesty in them; you have told the truth once in your life so it is there. What we have to do is pull it out and develop it. Think of it in this manner:

Because of a new discovery in recovering oil, many people are becoming rich. Actually they always had the oil under the soil but because of this discovery of capturing the oil and bringing it to the surface they are just now reaping the benefits. The same is true with you, all of these qualities are within you and we are going to bring them to the surface and use them in making your life better.

2. I assume you want to excel at your chosen field.

To excel today is not the expected. We are taught at a very early age that every participant gets a ribbon. We are taught that participating is what is important, not winning. This is contrary to generations before. Older people were taught to strive to be the best at everything they did. Some took it too far to a “win at all cost” mentality. Since we are a reactionary society, we now have gone to the other extreme. Even going so far as not wanting to give grades or not wanting to keep score. It is why we have what I call a “play to play” mentality in athletics, a “teach to teach” in schools, a “work to retire” in the workplace. These people have no desire to excel, to be the best. They are satisfied to play, to teach, to have a job. Make no mistake, I have no sympathy for those who sacrifice their character for immediate success; it will come back to haunt them. I do believe firmly in “playing to win,” striving to be the best you can be at whatever you do. I believe we all have a desire to do something and whatever it is we are doing, we should place a premium of being the best. I can guarantee I made sure my heart surgeon was a “play to win” type doctor and not one who was just happy to be operating and receiving the benefits. We are all dealing with heart surgery, when we slight ourselves, it breaks our heart. We know we can do more. It is a habit we have to develop: to be the best we can be.

We find that it is the intangibles that define excellence. Consider the following:

Calvin Coolidge said:

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.

Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent.

Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.

Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

The slogan “Press On” has always solved and will solve the problems of the human race.

Thomas Jefferson said:

A man with a good attitude can do anything and there is nothing you can do for a man with a bad attitude.

What neither say is how do you acquire the persistence to be significant? And what is attitude, how do you get it and how do you make it better?

Professional athletes today are paying “sports psychologists” to help them learn the intangibles. You can call it persistence, determination, will power, mental toughness, competitiveness, attitude- but however you label it –“it” is what separates mediocrity/failure from excellence. We all can site examples of immensely talented, gifted people who are failures and in the same breath give examples of poorly talented who excel at what they do. The bumblebee should not be able to fly. Aerodynamic engineers tell us it is impossible for them to fly, yet they do. The intangibles we develop in you are going to help you fly. Do not be concerned with where you have been, only with where we are going. This program is designed to help you become excellent in what you do.

3. I assume you want to be part of a championship team.

The word “team” here can mean family, organization, business, church, school, etc., it is whatever group you want to help make great. The importance is in the saying, “Sorrow shared is half a sorrow; joy shared is twice the joy.” To have an excellent organization, multiply by the number of members the excitement of accomplishment.

For you to be a positive contributor is so simple and yet so difficult. You have to make every decision based on the good of the group rather than on the good of the individual. You have to trade selfish for selfless. On a football team you might be the best at one position but the team might need you at another. You have to be willing to trade “me” for “we”.

QUESTIONS

1. What qualities do you need to develop to be the best person you can be?
2. What has prevented you from reaching your maximum potential in the past?
3. How do you define success for your “team”?
4. Why are assumptions important?