



TWO DOORS ...

Each decision has two choices!

(excerpt from the book, Live a Thousand Years, by Giovanni Livera)

Nick stood before the large, arched doorways ... Nick pulled the left door, struggling slightly with its heaviness. Glancing in, he saw a solid staircase leading downward. He pulled the door to the right to reveal a similar staircase heading up... "I suppose it'll be easier if we head down." ... The steps they had just descended were gone. "What just happened?" "You made a choice." ... "besides, is 'easy' your goal?" Nick sighed at the stairways. "Well, we've already come down one flight. No use going back up, now." ... Reaching the bottom, he found himself staring, once again, at an identical pair of doors. He looked back, saw that the stairs he had taken had vanished ... "Is this supposed to be teaching me something?" "Everything teaches you something, Nick" ... "No matter where you are in life, you always have two options. A negative one and a positive one... Every choice you make brings you closer to something or somewhere. You are the sum of all your choices. You create your path one flight at a time. One day at a time. One choice at a time."... "Attitude is a choice, too, Nick ... When you approach each day with a positive attitude, there is a greater likelihood that you will make other positive choices."

We can learn a few lessons from the above excerpt ... notice Nick says, "I suppose it'll be easier if we head down." All-too-often the easy way, the one requiring less effort, is the wrong way. Also note Nick's comment, "Well, we've already come down one flight. No use going back up, now." Isn't it true that Satan will try to convince us that it's "too late" to "turn back now." What do you think Christ would say? These are not the only lessons from the above excerpt. Read it over a few times and come back to it. Discuss it with family and friends! The overall quality of our life "hinges" on which door we select whenever we have a decision to make ... and remember, many decisions need be made only once (like not smoking, drinking, etc).

One could, in truth, say that one door is labeled "Satan" (the negative one) and the other door is labeled "Christ" (the positive one) ... and the door we choose is the one we list to obey. "Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually. But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God. (Moro. 7: 12-13) Not that we are evil choosing the negative door; it's just that by being negative we are succumbing to Satan's influence of not becoming all we can be. Negativity stifles; positivity expands and enlightens!

Personal motivation automatically increases when what you're doing gets you closer to what you really want. You'll never excel until you connect your actions to something you truly value. If you've never decided what's MOST important, you're endlessly chasing after things that simply don't matter. Like blood coursing through your body, your mission courses through your spirit. A strong sense of mission ignites your spirit. Get yourself into the mind-set of asking yourself "What's Important NOW... What's Important NEXT"—10 times each day—you will not only understand the art of planning... you will master it! ... and putting your mission and goals in writing, so you can see them... feel them... touch them... is the first step towards actually LIVING them. (Today'sTQ, 10/23/07) "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." (Thomas Edison) "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." (also Thomas Edison, a statement he made about his invention of the light bulb) Indeed, most successes certainly won't take 10,000 attempts; however, more often than not, they will take persistence ... a persistence born out of our passion for that which we are pursuing ... a passion that can only come from deciding what we *really* want out of life, or perhaps, better stated, what we want to *give*.

If you change nothing about your daily routine, will you ever achieve your goals and dreams? You will never change your life until you change something you do daily.

We change our habits, then our habits change us!

THE GREAT MEASURE OF DISCIPLESHIP
(by Kenneth L. Southwick, CES Administrator)
(excerpt from BYU-Idaho Devotional, May 29, 2007)

Imagine yourself in the post-mortal realm, and the announcement is made that it is time to give a report on the great measure of your discipleship... This question might occur to you, “Well, what is the great measure of my discipleship?” Write down this sentence: “The great measure of my discipleship is....” Then take a moment to consider how you would fill in that blank.

I think there are a lot of correct answers possible for that question. You may have written something like “living by the Spirit,” “obedience to the commandments,” or “keeping covenants.” I believe all of those are correct. They are great measures of our discipleship. For our purposes today, however, I would like to suggest the following: “The great measure of our discipleship is how we view others.”

That may come as a bit of a surprise. I would guess that few, if any, would choose that phrase. Some of you might very well have chosen the phrase, “The great measure of our discipleship is how we *treat* others.” I would agree with that; that is also a correct answer. What I would invite you to think about today is how we treat others is determined by how we view others. We need to pay particular attention to how we view others.

Let me say it this precisely: Our judgments about, our conclusions concerning, and our actions toward others all grow out of how we view them. If this is the case, then the question becomes: do we see others as a spirit son or daughter of God, as a person, as a human being, as a soul of infinite worth? Or do we see them as something less? Or do we fail to see them at all?

Some bad things come of our failure to see others for who they really are. Some of the world’s greatest evils can be traced to this failure. Genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, misogyny, and a whole list of other ills all flow from it. But, of course, none of us are guilty of those kinds of things, and we will not be talking about them today.

What I will propose is that the failure to see others properly is widespread. You and I do it all the time. Most of us are not even aware that we do it. And finally, and most importantly, failing to see others for what they truly are makes us less like the Savior.

How does that work? When we see others in the proper way, we cannot help but love and lift them—just as the Savior would. When we fail to see them in the proper way, we almost always devalue and dismiss them—like Christ never would.

Now what do I mean when I say, “We see others as something less than what they are?” I will give you give examples and try to explain myself... For each of these five examples, I am going to [state them as] an object lesson. I do this on purpose, because when we see others as less than who they really are, we see them as objects.

The first object is a checklist. . . Sometimes instead of seeing another as a person to be served, we **see them as a task to be accomplished** [“I’ll visit Sam, then Evelyn, then Carl, then I’m done.”]. . . The next object is a bunch of grapes. Sometimes we **see others not as an individual, but only as a member of some group**. We are unable to distinguish them as an individual person. [For instance,] This is very easy to do when someone has a different skin color than we do, and we succumb to racial stereotypes and prejudices. The third object is a can of bug spray. Sometimes we **see others not as a person but as a pest or a nuisance**, an annoyance to be dealt with, postponed, simply endured, or avoided altogether. You may think to yourself, “Brother Southwick, I don’t ever do that.” Have you ever looked at the caller ID and saw who was calling and thought, “Oh I don’t want to talk to them right now.” Have you ever been walking by yourself or with friends and changed your route because you saw someone up ahead that you did not want to talk to? . . . The next object is a TV remote. . . We **view others as an interruption** [like if your son asked you to shoot some hoops with him and you pause the evening news long enough to play with him a few minutes before the next program comes on]. . . The last object is a mirror. Sometimes we see others as a mirror. When we do this, what we are most interested in is the reflection back about us. We treat that person a certain way not because they deserve to be treated that way, but because we want to be known as a person who treats people that way. We are **more interested in the other person’s opinion of us that we are the other person** . . . If we were in a classroom, we could share other ways that we have of viewing others . . .

I am going to share a list of commandments that deal with interpersonal relationships. Pay attention to these commandments and imagine how your ability to live these commandments would be impacted if you consistently sought to view others in the appropriate way.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” (John 13:34) “Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged. But judge righteous judgment.” (JST Matthew 7:2) “But behold I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you.” (3 Nephi 12:44) “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. (D&C 64:10) “And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear. (D&C 63:16) “And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking.” (D&C 20:54) “And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. (Mosiah 4:16)

Ponder how our ability to keep those commandments at the level the Savior desires us to keep them can be enhanced if we seek always to view others in the right way. . . .

The central factor determining our level of spiritual growth is the degree to which we have lived for the sake of others.

Perspective on Life

The purpose of life is to become like our Father in Heaven ... to acquire those qualities of character he already possesses.

The ONLY way we can do this is through life's experiences ... those that s-t-r-e-t-c-h us, sometimes to our limits. Seeing this, we would not so dread those challenges (opportunities) that "push" us out of our comfort zone ... we would welcome them, even seek them out!

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TO LEARN AND INCORPORATE
INTO OUR CHARACTER
(TO BECOME AS GOD IS – Matt. 5:48)

Patience
Persistence
Perseverance
Love
Kindness
Gratitude
Develop Talents
Serve Others
Order &
Organization
To Think, then
To Take Action
To Make Right(eous) Choices
To Collaborate

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