

Gardner Newsletter

I'm beginning to understand the importance of eyeglasses. I've been wearing glasses since the seventh grade. My dear spouse has me beat by about five years. Any wearer of glasses knows that if you don't care for them properly . . . if you let them get scratched, then that scratch will appear on everything you see. Distortions in the lenses distort everything in front of you. Tint your glasses yellow, and the world becomes yellow. Tint the lenses red, and . . . well, you get the picture.

Recently I have been talking with friends at New England College here in Henniker as they have tried to make sense of the loss of one of their classmates. At 22, this young man was full of life, passion and unbridled energy. In the space of a few hours, one traffic accident later, he was gone. The students here cope in a variety of ways. Some turn inward, others outward. Some seek out friends, some seek a bottle. The responses are varied, personal, and in some measure, reflective of the person doing the grieving. Nothing I'm about to say is intended to negate the natural processes of grieving. We all experience losses, and grieving, as a process, is the way we deal with it, the way we start moving forward again. There is no "skipping past" the grieving process. Grief avoided is grief postponed. Sooner or later, those chickens come home to roost. Though I'm not talking directly about coping with specific losses in this article, I do want to spend a few moments exploring the ways we interpret the world around us.

Evaluating the character of events is a difficult thing. I remember a time back in my college days when a petition I had filed with my academic department was rejected. I was very frustrated by the rejection, and felt wronged and misused. The request I had

made was logical and fair. I deserved the consideration. And yet the department chairman had seen matters differently. I admit, I was a little angry at him over the affair. That decision forced me to make choices that fixed my life's direction. Looking back, it is hard for me to imagine myself doing anything different than what I am doing at the present moment. But had that decision back in college been reversed, it might have changed my course dramatically. And so, from this vantage point I wonder -- what was the point of that anger? The transition point, that crisis, if you will, led me to become who I am today. Was that event good or bad? Was it harmful or helpful? Was it even possible for me to know the nature of that event back in 1980? Probably not.

This whole conversation begs the question -- for all of our fretting and careful worrying -- how many of the events of our lives do we really see all that clearly? If frustration or friction in our current job leads us to take the risk of trying something new, was that frustration wasteful, or useful? If some trauma of childhood forces us to become more resilient and resourceful, who's to say the pain wasn't transformational at some important level? I mean, life without any obstacles or difficulties might be a pleasant pipe dream, but lots of

(Continued on page 2)



Nancy and Dan Whitney with their boys, Jonathan and Greg



Give Yourself a Very Special Christmas Gift: The Spectacles of Gratitude

By: Dan Whitney

(Continued from page 1)

folks have observed that it is the difficult times that mold our character and build strength into our personalities. Nothing profound there. I confess, I'm not completely certain that knowing that "tough times make us stronger" helps us cope with those tough times while we are in the middle of them. I guess it just helps us make sense of them later, down the road a ways.

What I really want, however, is something that helps me right now, something that keeps me moving forward and doesn't require hindsight in order to make sense. What I am about to say next might not be it. In fact, I am sure it is not.

I'm discovering that, in some sense, we are all on a journey of losing everything.

We gain things as we pass adolescence and grow older -- skills, education, possessions, relationships; if we are very fortunate, we add children and grandchildren. Then at about 40, (I could be wrong about the date -- this might just be self reporting) we start to lose the things we have gained.

We begin to slow down physically. When our children reach college age, we start to lose our wealth and our children. Things we could once lift we can lift no longer; mountains we could once climb might be a little too ambitious for us. In time, we lose our skills; we can't remember everything we learned. Our friends, even our spouses, pass on.

Big News From Ludgate Farms

Probably some folks are wondering ...

You might hear rumors or you might see the real estate listing.

We are not closing! Here is what is really happening! :-)

After 37 years as a family business and no heirs to take it into the next generation, the Ludgate family is exploring new options. It has been especially difficult to manage without "The Squire" around to keep watch over everything. I think we (Roberta, Linda and Mike) are ready to try something new. Our first choice right now would be to "pass the torch" of the family business to another family, person or group who could take Ludgate Farms to the next level - some youthful enthusiasm would be terrific right now! The food business has changed a lot in 37 years and is now entering another really exciting period with all this interest local, renewable and sustainable.

We have taken what we think is the logical first step; this is a business that works the best if the owners are living on the premises - so we have put the entire business and real estate on the

(Continued on page 4)

Below is an interesting appeal from a group I support. I don't know if this kind of thing is newsletter worthy, but it would make an interesting Christmas Wish List. I give gift certificates to my kids, which enables them to go online and pick out investors to support.

Below is the promo and link:
"Join me and a world-wide community dedicated to combating poverty on Kiva.org. Kiva allows you to make small loans to entrepreneurs on five continents, leveraging just \$25 to change a life. "

**Grace and Peace,
Dan Whitney**

Click here to join today:
https://www.kiva.org/register?_isc=38281248-d309-11df-982e-003048cee2ae&te=inu&utm_source=email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=invite_new_user

How are we to cope with this knowledge? Knowing that by design we are embarking on a journey of losing, how do we maintain a positive outlook?

Sometimes, the losing part comes early, or out of sequence. Sometimes we lose spouses or jobs far too early. Sometimes, worst of all, we lose children before their time. But even when this happens, it is only a matter of order, not a change in eventual outcome. We weren't created for permanence. We are time-bound creatures, and we can either embrace our limitations or we can despair of them.

Ecclesiastes 8:17 says, "No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it." In other words, the meaning of events may simply be beyond our ability to understand from our current perspective. And if that is the case, I want to argue for making an interpretive choice independent of the way our present circumstances feel to us.

I'm not suggesting a foray into denial. I don't have any trouble telling the truth about my emotional state on any given day of the week. If I feel

(Continued on page 3)



We need YOUR articles

(Continued from page 2)

down or depressed, I want close friends around me in whom I can confide. I want to be the kind of friend who is available to others who need the emotional support that is necessary in times of trouble. I say, live honestly with integrity.

I love the passage in the book of Job, where after all his devastating losses, Job says, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face." (Job 13:15) Job is essentially saying, "I am going to make my case before God, even if He doesn't like it. I didn't do anything wrong, and I am going to stand up before Him and tell Him so."

The assumption is that God can handle our doubts, fears, accusations, even our questions of "why me?" His shoulders are broad enough for all of that. But as satisfying as unburdening ourselves before God can be . . . where does it really get us?

I think to get the most out of my remaining days, I want to wear a very special kind of spectacles. The eye glasses I choose are the glasses of gratitude. Here's where this train is heading: I want to make the choice to celebrate what I have rather than groan for what I might lose or have lost.

Colossians 3:15 gives some interesting advice: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."

I am captivated by the idea of choosing to be thankful. The older I get, the more I lose, the more I need to be grate-

ful, intentionally. It is so easy to get caught up in what I can no longer do. It is easy to worry about what I might lose. It is easy to lose the joy of the present moment in anxiety over the uncertainty of the future.

That is precisely what I want to reject. If the creation story of the Old Testament means anything, it means that life is a gift -- a multi-faceted, marvelous gift! It deserves celebrating! And what better way to celebrate life than to purposely give thankful attention to all of the good gifts we have received. It takes conscious effort to continually live in the land of gratitude. In the last several months I've been getting some great help in this endeavor myself.

I recently signed up for painting lessons on the advice of a friend of mine, a gentleman who is a successful painter himself. Whenever we are together, he helps my eye see beauty.

"Look at the way the light is striking the trunk of that tree. Isn't it beautiful?"

"Look at that cloud formation! Stunning, isn't it?"

"Do you see how the reflection of the sky colors that rushing brook?"

Again and again, he helps me find beauty in everything. What if we took that same approach to being grateful?

"Wasn't it great to see the kids over the holidays!" (rather than -- why do they have to live so far away?)

"Wasn't the evening around the fire peaceful?" (rather than -- why doesn't anyone come to visit us?)

"Don't the Christmas Carols sound especially sweet this year?" (rather than -- those songs sounded better last year without the drums.)

"Wasn't the macaroni and cheese delicious?" (rather than -- I wish we could have afforded a slice of ham to go with these elbows.)

The list could stretch on forever.

(Continued on page 4)




 Contribute Articles for 2011

(Continued from page 3)

Please understand, I am not advocating a campaign of pointing out to everyone else the things for which they should be grateful. That kind of behavior becomes annoying in a heartbeat. Don't try to convince the rest of the world to be grateful -- no, simply be grateful yourself.

Consider the things for which you are grateful. Dwell on them. Find the silver linings. Express your thankfulness. Reminisce about the grand times you have had with family and friends. Remember with fondness all the joy you have shared with others. Practice gratitude. Even in extreme circumstances.

At the memorial service, I was amazed at the skill of the father whose son was killed in the car accident I cited earlier. Through tears, he confessed his sorrow at the loss of his boy. But then, he continued by listing, one after another, all the things he had to be grateful for in the 22 years he was privileged to be a parent. He remembered times and events, football games and NASCAR races, vacations and emergency room visits. He talked about birthday parties and pranks pulled on one another. He told stories and relived memories, right there in

Please make a New Year's resolution to contribute articles in 2011. See you then!

front of us. It was as if he were demonstrating that he was not going to forget the gift of the life of his son, regardless of the pain he was currently enduring. And his example reminded us all to cherish the times that we have -- to celebrate the blessings -- to be grateful for every gift that comes our way.

Call me Pollyanna if you like. Accuse me of wearing rose-tinted glasses, if by habit or temperament you think that's a bad thing. It won't bother me. I, for one, will not risk missing the blessing of life by worrying about what I have lost or might soon lose. I will choose to focus on what

remains, on the gifts and opportunities I still possess. I will choose to let the peace of Christ rule in my heart. And I will be grateful! In a world increasingly strident and belligerent, I will be grateful. In a day more argumentative and negative than ever, I will be grateful. When the economic recovery stalls, I will remain grateful. The gratitude glasses are the ones I choose to wear. They have served me well in the past, and I am confident they will continue to serve me well into the uncertain future. I recommend you pick up a pair.

(Continued from page 2)

market. The asking price is reasonable; just a bit more than the value of the real estate plus inventory. This would be an excellent opportunity for an energetic person or family to jump right into an established farm market with a loyal customer base.

How can you help? It would really help to the Ludgate Family at this point in time to find an enthusiastic buyer as soon as possible so we can offer a smooth transition for our customers and employees. If you know someone who fits that profile, please pass this letter on to them. General questions can go to Mike here at Ludgate Farms (mjl@ludgatefarms.com). Serious real estate inquiries

will be referred to our realtor, Joel Abrams at Lama Companies.

joel@lamacompanies.com or 607.273.4814

Thanks for your support,

The Ludgate Family :-)

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