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A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

Do you want to hear a good one? A great friend of mine was standing in line to see the movie, *Titanic!* in Fayetteville, Arkansas. She was behind two eager, pony-tailed, teenyboppers, who were straining at their emotional leashes to get into to see the romance of the decade. My friend, who is soberly truthful called us to tell us the conversation she overheard between those girls. One girl, bouncing on tiptoes with a perfect teenage blend of whining/excitement intoned, “Oh, it is going to be sooo saaad when the ship sinks at the end!!” The other girl who was also bouncing in cadence with her friend stopped on a dime. A look of absolute shock and disbelief made her face a mask as if she had experienced an existential trauma falling between the categories of being shot or slapped. Her neck went rigid. The irises of her eyes became pinpricks. Her jaws went slack and mouth dropped open. Then the explosion came.

“I can’t believe you said that!!” (she said to what would become her former friend) “I can’t believe you said that!!” (her voice rising now) “How could you do that?!! You’ve ruined it - ruined it!!

How could you do that to me - I can’t believe it sinks!!!” The ensuing fight probably went down in the annals of Razorback history. I am sorry, but I laughed most of the night and woke up tickled the next morning after our friend called to tell us what she saw.

Titanic lore is abounding nowadays. But it was in high school a *few years ago* when I first read Walter Lord’s epic book on that tragic ship and her sinking, *A Night To Remember*. Written in 1955 and amazingly never out of print, Lord’s chronicling of eyewitness accounts is stunning. I bought the book and have kept it in my library for years. Sixty-six thousand tons and 882.5 feet long, *Titanic* carried a priceless copy of Omar Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat* and a list of passengers collectively worth \$250 million dollars (that is the equivalent of \$2.5 billion dollars today!!) *Titanic* also carried thousands of irreplaceable human souls.

Last month, on my way back from visiting Rome with Bishop Friend, we flew over the area of the Atlantic ocean where the mighty ship met her horrible end. And I began to *remember* that night. The lessons of life are especially stark when we see them in the kind of snapshots of history which crises present. So I want to share with you my thoughts on the terminal condition of *Titanic* for you and me.

Very very few people will admit to living self-centered lifestyles. Because very very few people realize that the central core of their day to day living fulfills the odious claim, “*I want to do what I want to do when I want to do it!*” They cannot see that most of their decisions are steeped in this fundamental foundation of self. But crises have a way of helping us get focused on the vital pretty quickly. So with *Titanic*. But searching questions can reveal our core values as well.

Here is one of those questions which can precipitate a crisis of value for us which can be the stepping stone of self realization and therefore growth: ***Are you this generation oriented or are you next generation oriented?*** Who among us would admit that we are only *this* generation oriented? Who would be so stupid to live a *this* generation life? Taking no thought of the future, caring not a whit for the lives of the little ones yet unborn, and saying

with our foolish steward, “Soul, take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” forgetting that there is an iceberg looming in the dark for all of us, is not a lifestyle that many would admit to living. History does not exactly bestow laurels on the King Louis XV’s among us who flippantly crow, “After us the deluge.” No. Few would admit to a *this* generation and *this* generation *only* lifestyle. ***Because precious few of us realize that this is precisely the lifestyle which we live!***

How can this be? How can so many good people with great intentions for future generations really be living a *this* generation life which will so rob and starve the very lives which they hold so dear?

How can the investment of so much time in the lives of our children, the sacrifices made to provide, to educate, to store up money for them when we are gone be classified as *this* generation living on the order of a Louis XV?

Here is the answer. We are living right now in a declining society. (Elton Trueblood called it a “cut flower” civilization - pretty for a while but ultimately destined for decay because the roots are sliced.)

We keep looking out for the tidal wave but it is the seeping bilge water that is silently sinking us. And therefore if we are storing up our treasures for ourselves and our children and their future (?) but not providing resources to measurably rebuild the whole ship of society then we are dooming them to shipwreck!

We do not ensure a bright future for our children unless we are also investing in restoring the world in which they will live! It doesn’t help to be a wealthy man or woman on a doomed ship. We have not helped our children simply by leaving them a fat bank account, a big house, a super stock portfolio, a family business, or any other means of keeping or acquiring wealth if we have left them in a crippled vessel in a killer ocean. We are guilty of a massive deception thinking that we are living for the *next* generation while in reality living a *this* generation lifestyle.

It is one thing to live in a first class cabin on this passage through life, storing treasures in your personal safe. It is quite another to see that even these perquisites went down with the ship. What if the first class passengers on the *Titanic* could have taken just some of their wealth and by some miraculous means been able to invest it in the life of the ship to save it from sinking. Surely they would have responded immediately so that their lives and the lives of their families could have been saved! So many were brave and gallant. So many showed a *next* generation heart by stepping aside and allowing children to enter lifeboats and be saved.

We do need to *remember* that night. We can do what they were unable to do. We can take some of our investments and restore and rebuild a ship that is sinking. I want to ask you this. ***What are you specifically investing in that is realistically and actively engaged in restoring and rebuilding the ship of society which will carry unborn generations into a safe and caring life on the streets of our cities?*** That is a *next* generation lifestyle. It is fixing the ship for the salvation of the children. Otherwise they will simply drown, perhaps clutching a safety deposit box.

Our whole purpose here at SCR is rebuilding the ship for future generations. I want you to join us and together we will make it to our destination with all flags flying!