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A Word from Mack

There are times when life experiences are so pointed that they underline abiding truths that all of us remember as “teaching moments.” They stand out. And they burn themselves indelibly into our brains so that we can recall them and grow ever wiser as we walk this winding road of daily living.

One of those times I was witness to. And I have never forgotten it. Judy and I were attending a marriage enrichment seminar many years ago in which the character traits of various “well known” personages were held up as archetypes to illustrate the differences we celebrate in the clinging and the clash of our male/female relationships.

Of course, Adam and Eve were the prime examples from which to extrapolate our gender related tendencies. The seminar leader with utmost seriousness listed all of the activities of Adam and drew from those activities pointer-arrows nailing his innermost nature. Here came the list of how we men are; thanks to Adam. When he finished enumerating the idiocy of our nature and ways, most of us had our heads on the table buried ashamedly in the crooks of our arms.

Then came Eve. As he began to tick off the list of personality traits describing Eve, I was in very close proximity to a couple and could almost feel their pulse. Our leader said, “Eve was ‘contentious,’ so that is in a woman’s nature...to be ‘contentious.’” (I look back now and think, “how silly.”) Then, I heard the woman in a low voice ask her still-head-down husband, “What does ‘contentious’ mean?” He just rolled his head over and said, “It means ‘argumentative.’” Immediately she snapped back, “IT DOES NOT!” I almost had to leave the room. That was definitely a teaching moment for me.

No, the life lesson wasn’t about you and me and Adam and Eve. It was just about you and me, period. We are captives to a “contentious” era that brings out our “contentious” nature. But the lesson I learned is that nothing is solved, nothing is constructed, and nothing is inspiring by staking out a position then finding and defending an issue-stance to fit

our self-first nature. I think it was Rousseau who pithily observed, “You cannot change by reason that which was not conceived by reason.” But that truth sure does not keep us from shrilling our lives away at each other, does it?

To the contrary, people make millions of dollars because they are adept at spewing out at us and evoking from within us red-faced vein-popping contention. “Does so!” “Does not!” has been elevated to an elaborate and sophisticated art form filling the atmosphere around us. And at the end of the day our spirits are hammered but nothing else is built. Period.

But that is not the way it is with we who are dedicated to this High Cause of the renewing of our lives and our communities and our society and our world. And for this fact I am truly grateful everyday of my life. We have escaped the very real trap of illusory contentiousness. We have a reason to live that transcends all of our differences and bonds us to one another as we strive to construct a lasting and meaningful togetherness here on planet earth.

I continually tell all of our faith-group and political group and ethnic group partners that there is a common doctrine to which we can all ascribe and that is the “Doctrine of Doing Good.” We can all join in that cause together. So I guess my age is now dictating my days. I just don’t have time to argue. There is too much to do. And sometimes I wonder if people avoid commitment of their energy, time, and treasure by throwing up clouds of controversy in the air to cover their cowardly non-committed lives. I hope that they can get free of the Adam and Eve in all of us.

I remember the words of one of my heroes, Paul, when he told the Macedonian faith-strugglers, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things....And the peace of God will be with you.” God bless you community renewal peacemakers!