

A Word from Mack

Our friendships will bring us to renewal

Years ago I learned a vital truth: People can change. Therefore, you never want to freeze-frame a life, thereby concluding that the slide of someone's life, which you are examining under the microscope of your limited judgment, is the determining truth about their possibilities for growth. It's true that a few of us are arrested in our personality's development and we are dominated by our lesser selves. And it is also that all of us have arenas of immaturities which constantly command poor performances. But the truth is: we can change. We do not have to stay the way we are. We can change.

Now that truth leads us to recognize another truth. We cannot change ourselves by our own dogged pursuit of our best self. We lack the regenerative power necessary to transform ourselves from the inside out. But there are means of transformation all around us that have the power to change us for the better—some to a lesser degree and some to a great degree.

Reading a book can change us. Joining a cause can change us. An association of like-minded people can change us. Having a friend can change us. And even an idea can change us. History is chock full of examples of the above ways that act upon us to forever change us (and the dickens of it all is that these means can impact us for good or for ill!) Just think about this!

Augustine, one of the greatest rhetoricians of his day, heard a voice that said, "Take up and read. Take up and read." He picked up a book, the Bible, which he had scorned, began to read deeply and was forever changed becoming St. Augustine, the bishop of Hippo. Ghandi was a want-a-be society fop taking ballroom dancing lessons in London, when he left for South Africa, and there took up the cause of equality for all and became "mahatma" or "great soul," leading 400 million people to their freedom in India. Francis of Assisi was the rakehell son of a rich merchant, who, having radically been changed himself, started an association of "brothers" which changed young men all over Italy, and then the world, as the "Franciscans." And Helen Keller was changed from a wild and frightened blind, muted, and deaf little girl into an inspirational force for all the world because she had a friend, Anne Sullivan.

Of course we know that there good books and bad. There are great causes and evil ones. There are healthy and sick associations. And there are creative and destructive friendships. These means of transformation can affect the human personality in equal doses of power for building or for ripping the soul of each of us. And we know that the power to choose blessing or curse lies within each of us. Further, we know that once we consciously choose the means of change, we are unconsciously changed by the powerful agent itself. The key is to make the right choice.

I have deliberately saved the power of an idea to transform our lives for last. I have done so because the idea of love, one's utter devotion to seeking the good of others, is the most powerful force in the universe. Love drives the other means of transformation to the highest and

best that we can be. We did not invent the idea of love. We can only choose to allow it to invest in us and to use us. I hope that by reading this newsletter and seeing ordinary folks like you and me change in extraordinary ways, it will strengthen your will to choose the life of love.

And if you and I make this choice, to embrace and to be embraced by the idea and reality of love, then the books we read, the causes we join, our associational fellowships will bring us to renewal! And what is more, we will have discovered for ourselves the great foundation of all truth... We love, because God first loved us. Love is God's idea.

May God bless you and keep you as we join in fellowship and friendship in the great call and cause of love's renewal! And may God's kingdom of love come on earth as it is in heaven!