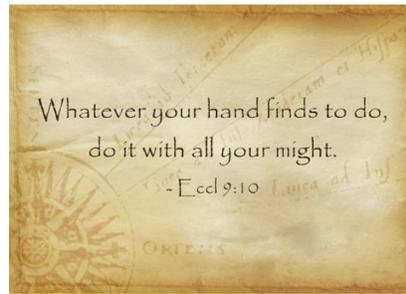


Laurie's Message for Friday June 5, 2020



Hello Apostles Family and Friends!

I hope you all had a wonderful week. Did you venture out and about and take advantage of the opportunities afforded from being in the yellow phase of reopening? I sure did. Last Saturday morning, I strolled downtown Waynesboro and enjoyed the outdoor Market. There seemed to be a good turnout (although I feel certain we far exceeded the 25-person limit) and it was nice to see the various wares, food and produce for sale. People were generally uplifted and did not seem to mind wearing masks. It felt great to be out and about!

The beautiful weather prompted me to spruce up the outside of our home and plant some annuals. So, on Sunday afternoon I ventured out to the garden center at a local business. Admittedly, I was a bit dismayed that the garden center was very crowded, in a general state of disarray, and the selection of annuals was sparse in comparison to previous years. People were everywhere and there did not seem to be any order to the plants, people, or checkout lines. What I intended to purchase was not available, but I decided to make the most of the trip and to fill my flowerpots from the options available to me.

Sadly, it took far less time to choose the plants than it did to wait in line to pay for them. There were only two registers open, and each had quite lengthy lines that snaked through the crowd of other shoppers. To make matters worse, only those who were at the beginning of the lines waiting to reach the checkout register were positioned in shade. Between keeping a 6-foot distance between those waiting in line and the number of people waiting in line to check out, I got a good 30-minute dose of vitamin D from the sun. During my wait, I couldn't help but notice there was a marked difference in attitude among my fellow shoppers in the garden center in comparison to Saturday's Market. The lady behind me in line kept bumping the back of my legs with her cart, the man in front of me kept yelling at people for no apparent reason and parents seemed to have little patience with their children. I found myself thinking that I was hot and uncomfortable too but being rude to others certainly could not make the lines move faster or help the chaos in any way. Why don't these people put forth some effort to be kind or to strike up a conversation about gardening or the weather or whatever to distract them from their discomfort instead of letting the discomfort add to the chaos? So, I decided to put forth effort myself – starting with the lady who kept bumping me with her cart. It took a few tries, but then she finally put away her cell phone and chatted. I soon engaged the man in

front of me who had taken a break from yelling and we had a good conversation about the different kinds of potting soil. Before I knew it, it was the man's turn at the register and his mood seemed to have improved. At least he did not yell at the clerk, and before leaving he lifted the potting soil out of my cart for me so the clerk could scan it. I was so thankful for his effort and gesture. I know he could not see my smile due to the mask I wore, so after thanking him, I told him to have a great day. And he replied the same to me!

Effort. What a simple word, but sometimes exceedingly difficult to put forth. Putting forth effort requires expending energy. And, I have always believed that if you are going to put forth effort, you may as well give it your all. Bert covered this aspect very well in his message yesterday. Yet, sometimes putting forth effort and expending energy is extremely hard to do at the time it is needed. Or sadly, sometimes the reward received from your effort does not seem to be worth the effort expended. But what happens when no effort is given, or no energy is expended?

Entropy happens.

In physics, entropy is a thermodynamic quantity representing the unavailability of a system's thermal energy for conversion into mechanical work, often interpreted as the degree of disorder or randomness in the system.

In layman's terms, entropy is lack of order or predictability, a gradual decline to disorder. And here is the scary part – The second law of thermodynamics (also known as the Law of Entropy) says that entropy always increases with time. It is the natural tendency of things to lose order. It is the one force of nature that governs everything and everybody's life. Left to its own devices, life will always become less structured. Weeds overtake gardens. Ancient ruins crumble. Cars begin to rust. Mountains erode. People age. The inevitable trend is that things become less organized. Out of all the laws of Nature, Entropy holds the highest position.

The good news is that you can fight back against the pull of entropy by expending energy and effort! Your efforts can create and maintain order! We can pull weeds from the garden. We can preserve ancient ruins. We can eliminate rust on a car. Because the universe naturally slides towards disorder, you must expend energy and effort to create stability, structure, simplicity, and order. This also holds true with relationships. Harmonious relationships require energy, care, and attention. Successful teams require synergy to be built within the group, some nurture and effort. Churches are viable because of the efforts put forth by the staff and by the congregation.

According to James Clear, this insight – that disorder has a natural tendency to increase over time and that we can counteract that tendency by expending effort and energy – reveals the core purpose of life. We must exert effort to create useful types of order that are resilient enough to withstand the unrelenting pull of entropy. Optimal lives and organizations are designed, not discovered. They take effort and energy to flourish.

Do you remember Murphy's Law? "Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong." Entropy provides a good explanation for why Murphy's Law seems to pop up so frequently in life. There are more ways that things can go wrong than right. It is simply entropy at work!

The moral of my story today is that it is extremely difficult to constantly give 100% effort in everything that you do. But it is something we can strive for. Giving some level of effort is a must. The alternative – to expend no energy or to give no effort at all will surely cause chaos, disarray, disorder and ultimately demise due to the Law of Entropy. Think about all the good you can do by expending effort. Good not only for yourself and family, but for others and the world. When you look at the chaos in the world right now, do not let it overwhelm you. Empower yourself in the smallest degree. Every act of kindness, every act of goodness, matters more now than ever.

Dear Lord. Thank you for giving us such a fascinating organ as the brain. Please guide the scientists to continue to delve into the mysteries of nature and the universe to provide us with principles that we can apply to improve our lives and the lives of others. Please guide us to use our brains, to expend the necessary energy to create order within the world, and to exert the necessary effort to maintain the order peacefully. Amen.

Ironically, Bert and I had chosen the same topic to write about this week without realizing it. Once discovered, we decided to follow through with doing so as we often come to the same end (or point) but by a different route. Hopefully, you enjoyed both routes.

I wish you all a wonderful weekend, and I look forward to seeing you on June 14th at church! Weather permitting, we will be outside, so bring a lawn chair!

Thank you for reading each of my 12 Friday messages while the COVID Stay at Home Order was in effect. This is my last message. My hope is that you found some of them interesting, some a little thought provoking and that all of them brought a smile to your face.

Blessings,
Laurie

Matthew 7:14 ¹⁴*But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*