

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated at age 39. He did not secure happiness, prosperity, or long life, nonetheless, his legacy speaks to the hearts of millions of Americans born decades after his passing. Dr. King once said,

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

The Problem with Ethical Behavior

an address by

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Good day to you one and all.

Human beings are story tellers. Our ability to tell stories makes us special among all other animals. The stories that we tell ourselves about who we are, and the stories we tell others about who we are, make us who we are.

If you develop the habit of telling stories about your ethical decisions, then when you achieve a position in the world where you have power, the ethical character that you will have developed will guide you to enjoy a good life.

Today, I will be telling you some stories that will demonstrate to you the importance of developing the habit of allowing ethical rules to guide the significant choices you will face as you transform into a powerful leader in your chosen careers.

There is a saying in business, “you get what you measure.” If you measure profits as your gauge for success, then that is what matters. If you measure safety, then that is what matters. If you measure, “new product development, expenses, revenue, stock price, etc. then that is what you get. If you measure your ethics quotient then you will discover that a great deal of the other success items will follow along with good ethical behavior.

I was introduced to you as Philip Henderson. You heard about some of the accomplishments that I have made in nearly 72 years on Earth. Nonetheless, I assert that you have no idea who I am.

What is most important about me, and about you, will only be known when we are gone.

We are known by the work we have done, the life choices we make. That is how we measure whether we have lived a good life.

Our legacy is what we leave when we die. Even when friends and family don't recall our name, when they act in a particular manner, because they learned how to behave from us, then that is part of our legacy. Often it is our children and grandchildren who carry our legacy.

Everyone leaves a legacy. Some legacies are rich and deep, affecting generations that follow. Some legacies are poor and shallow. They do not survive more than a few days or weeks.

What legacy will you leave?

What legacy will I leave?

We cannot know for certain. However, we can dedicate ourselves to creating the legacy we desire by the decisions we make. Dedication and consistent good work is the path that takes you to create the legacy that you desire.

I began a career as an executive coach in 1999. As a coach, I help executives who are stuck in their career to achieve a higher level of success living the life of an ethical leader. People who desire to leave a legacy as an ethical leader in their home life, work life, and in their community are the only people I accept as a client.

Helping someone to become a powerful leader, if they were not devoted to living an ethical life, would be disgraceful.

The final project I offer my coaching clients is for them to compose a written mission/legacy statement. When they have completed the document, I ask them to post it in a conspicuous location. I want my clients to notice this mission/legacy statement often. This mission/legacy statement will serve as a lighthouse, guiding them through difficult times in their lives. This document prevents them from making choices that lead to regret. With a guide like this, one is likely to leave a legacy that is rich and deep; because you are living a life with purpose.

Each of us experiences difficult times, that is part of being human. Experiencing difficult times is particularly part of being an ethical human being. Ethical leaders have more difficult decisions because they do not take the easy solution to a problem, they intentionally seek the hard way. This is the problem with ethical behavior you cannot take the easy path.

People who do not seek an ethical life appear to have less stress. They do not care when their actions that benefit themselves cause harm to others. They are focused in taking care of themselves. The legacy they leave is painful. Their lives are filled with regret, sorrow, and missed opportunities.

Ethical leaders create a future where everyone can thrive . . . this is the duty and the work of ethical leaders.

You recall the cheating scandal involving USC, UCLA, Yale, Stanford, Wake Forest, and Georgetown University among others. We first learned about this scandal on Tuesday, 12 March 2019. On that day authorities arrested 50 people and announced the guilty plea of the ringleader. Rich and powerful people had found ways to get their privileged children into elite universities without meeting the admission standards. You may have taken this news personally. You have worked hard to achieve your educational goals. Now you

hear about people cheating their way to the front of the line. This is what is known as the privilege of the rich, powerful, and unethical.

Would you want these “students” to design aircraft, build bridges, or perform surgery? If they were unqualified to enter, what will they do when they become “students?” Will they cheat on examinations? Cheat on their lab work? Pay others to complete their term papers? Where will the unethical behavior end? If the parents are willing to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to get their children admitted, how much would they spend to see that their children are awarded a degree?

This scandal helps explain what happens when powerful people have no ethical integrity. Some of the accused will pay large fines. Some will be convicted and serve time in prison. Several have already been fired from their powerful positions. All of them have lost their credibility to family and friends. They have disgraced themselves in a way they can never recover. This scandal will follow them forever.

Everyone who knows the people involved in this scandal will feel embarrassed to be with them. Imagine how the friends of these students who did not gain admission feel. Betrayal, anger, disgust . . . especially when audio tapes demonstrate that the parents participating in this scheme were not upset that what they were doing was illegal and unethical . . . their sole concern was whether their actions would be discovered by authorities. They are not sorry for what they did, they are sorry they were caught.

This scheme continued for nearly a decade involving several hundred parents. I suspect that the ringleader of this scandal is not the only person in the United States who stumbled on this scheme. There may be more bad actors who have not been discovered yet.

It appears that many of the students did not know the details of the actions their parents took to secure them a spot in an elite university. Nonetheless, they were smart enough to suspect that they did not gain admission on their academic record. At the very least they must have suspected that their parents used their “influence” (read \$\$\$) to smooth their admission.

Whether these students were aware of what their parents were doing or not, they will suffer the same loss of credibility as their parents. Some will have their diplomas nullified. Most of those currently a student will be expelled. All of the students will observe their parents suffer from the legal process. Some will visit their parents in prison.

They will live with the stigma that their parents did not trust them to succeed without a “tip of the scales” in their direction. The students, the student’s parents, and the student’s other relatives (including siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles) will all share the shame of the scandal.

This scandal occurred because the people involved were eager to resort to unethical methods to get what they want. They were successful in their careers in entertainment, law, fashion design, finance, etc. but they had not developed an ethical center to their lives. They possessed money, influence, and power. They were going to get what they wanted ethics and morality be damned. Today, their lives are in shambles. Much of their fortune will be used to defend themselves and yet many will land in prison. Their involvement in this scandal is their legacy.

The word corruption explains what happens when a person lives without an ethically moral center. This scandal is the result of the absence of ethical integrity. The participants in this scheme lacked the humility that comes when one is dedicated to a life of ethical integrity.

Great empires are not taken down by their opponents or enemies. The fall of great empires always comes from rotting within. Corruption, greed, and hubris rots the institutions that make an empire great. When there is sufficient decay, the institutions can no longer support the great empire and it collapses onto itself. The slightest challenge brings the once powerful empire to its knees.

Ethical leadership is all about service to others. Great leaders make those they lead more successful than they could be otherwise. Ethical leaders demonstrate by their decisions how to live with integrity and honor. When you see these ethical role models succeed in building and maintaining a thriving enterprise . . . you know how you must behave to achieve similar good results.

Ethical leaders are transformative.

The world is a better place because of the actions of ethical leaders. You can measure the success of such people by the influence they have had on the lives of others. An important aspect of their legacy are the people they have mentored and guided to become ethical leaders themselves.

When I designed my coaching programs to help men and women to become ethical leaders, I included **COURAGE** as an essential character trait for each new client.

Courage is the ability to face danger, even death, because what you accomplish is more important than your personal safety or even your life. Martin Luther King Jr said it well, ***“If a man has not discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.”***

Great leaders desire a long and prosperous life; however, they answer to a higher calling. They will give up their lives to create a better future for their children and children's children.

First responders, soldiers in battle, and fire fighters make courageous sacrifices on a regular basis. However, the most important ethical leaders in our community may own a small business, work in a nonprofit agency, work at a fast food restaurant, drive a city bus, volunteer at a hospital, or teach in an elementary school.

Ethical leaders are everywhere. ***You can be one too!***

We need courageous ethical leaders everywhere in our society. The more such people in a community, the more grace that emerges from that location. When the ethical quotient of a community is measured, you get high marks when the number of courageous people is a high percentage of the community.

Ethical leaders must act courageously because the challenges they face, on a daily basis, can cause widespread harm to the community if these challenges are not resolved properly. Instead of waiting for someone else to stand up and do what is right, these courageous people eagerly step forward to action. Without these everyday men and women doing what is right, our society would rot and collapse.

Ethical leaders serve as role models for those who aspire to live with integrity, grace, and gratitude. Many people in this assembly desire to attain such heights. This presentation is designed to inspire those of you with that dream of who you will become.

What is Ethical behavior?

Let's slow down. I have been using the word ethics without defining it. I want you to know precisely what I mean when I use this word.

Ethical behavior occurs in a situation when you take definitive actions to ensure that a just, moral outcome is enhanced because of your courageous behavior.

When you do what is right, without paying a cost, that does not count as ethical behavior. Ethical behavior always has a cost. Nonetheless, you are **eager** to perform these courageous actions, even when you are certain that some of the consequences of your actions will cost you in the short term, and possibly in the long term. You are willing to perform the ethical action even when to do so risks your life.

Ethical behavior is the answer to the question, "*How do we live together peacefully?*" Ethical behavior leads to peace, prosperity, and good times in our personal life, and in the local community that we call home. We depend on the good will and good actions of others to obey the laws and standards of behavior that make our society strong and resilient. You will meet many ethical leaders in your life. They make your life graceful. You will know these ethical leaders by their actions.

Who do you know that qualifies as an ethical leader? Some of you are thinking of family members, teachers, and neighbors who volunteer their time and money. You are right on all of them and yet there are even more people doing this good work. They are invisible to you, but you could not thrive without their contributions. They are not seeking acknowledgement, they only want the ability to serve. They do the good work that allows us to thrive in relative peace.

Sufi Story. Nasrudin was asked, *“If the Sufi’s are so powerful and important, why haven’t they stopped all the cruel and murderous behavior of tyrants. Why isn’t the world a happier place than what we see daily?”* Nasrudin responded, *“Yes, I see your point. However, imagine what the world would look like without the influence of the Sufi.”*

It is natural for us to live together ethically. Indeed, this is the only way for our species to thrive. When you examine how other animal species live together, you see many different ways of succeeding as a society. For example, in the canine family you see a strict hierarchy of respect. There is, of course, the top dog, and then each dog below him knows his or her special place in the order.

Each species develops a society that prevents them from living in chaos. It is not always the physically most powerful that leads the group, usually it is the individual who has proven himself/herself to be the wisest and most trustworthy. In a herd of horses, the head stallion is the leader of the males, the head mare is the leader of the females; and the overall leader of the herd is the head mare. The same is true for cattle. The head cow is the leader of a herd of cattle. The head bull has other things on his mind instead of the welfare of the herd.

I began to work with cattle in September 2003. The cattle I have worked with have been trained to pull heavy loads. When you train a bull, or a cow, to work, the animal is called an ox. Oxen are cattle that have been trained to follow the instructions of people. When I began my adventure with cattle, I did not know they were smart. I discovered in my first six months that cattle possess an ancient wisdom; they know precisely how to live a peaceful life with humans.

Cattle and humans have enjoyed life together for more than 10,000 years. In America, we do not live close to cattle, however, in most of the rest of the world, people encounter cattle daily. Ownership of cattle is a sign of personal wealth. More than that, cattle remind human beings to remain humble. They connect us to the Earth.

One hundred years ago, one of every three Americans lived on a farm. Today, fewer than one percent of Americans live with cattle. We don't know these animals personally any more. It is a pity. When we knew cattle, we possessed humility and wisdom that we learned from working with these wonderful animals. Today, when we think of cattle, we see them as producers of milk, meat, and leather. Yesteryear, they were our devoted companions.

When I started volunteering at the Orange County Centennial Farm, I did not know how working with cattle would change my character. Now, sixteen years later, I cannot imagine life without these marvelous animals. Just as some people must have a dog or a cat in their lives, I thrive when I get to be around oxen.

Cattle are peace seekers.

Two of the oxen that I worked with (Patches and Freckles) stood six feet at their shoulders. Each animal weighed 3,000 pounds; a ton and a half. These powerful creatures and I learned to live together peacefully. They tested me for months before they determined that I was worthy of their trust and respect. I was humbled by their decision to welcome me as a member of their herd.

I was particularly moved because they accepted me as the dominant member of the herd. It took these bulls six months to give me that position of authority. They did not rush to judgment on me, they had to be certain that I was worthy. This was an important decision for them. In cattle society, once they determine that I am worthy to serve as leader, then I remain the dominant member of the herd forever. However, I could lose this position of authority if I demonstrate I am no longer trustworthy.

If I consistently lead the oxen to danger or scary situations, they will take away my authority to command them. They will see me as a threat to their safety. They will fear me. With fear, at best, they will ignore me. With too much fear, they may attack me. Remaining in their good graces allows us to remain together as interdependent entities living together in peace.

Interdependent entities thrive because the good work of each member benefits the good work of every other member in the group. My good fortune is theirs and their good fortune is mine. We work together for our mutual benefit.

My oxen do as I order out of trust and respect for me. An unethical leader can command his troops because they fear him; however, such followers will quickly change sides when they see an opportunity for a new leader. These are not loyal troops, they are frightened troops. Such followers will not give their best performance. They give just enough to avoid punishment. If you desire to become a great leader, then you want to be sought after for your leadership because you demonstrate the highest ethical standards.

When I am the dominant member of a herd of cattle, they expect me to look out for the welfare of every member of the herd. They expect me to act always to protect the health of the herd and its individual members. I am not merely the “boss” of the herd, I am the trusted leader. This means that I must behave at all times in ways that enhances the quality of life of the herd. I have a huge responsibility. I cannot say, or do anything, that might cause harm to a herd member.

Cows are mind readers!

Moreover, I cannot even have a negative thought in my mind about the herd. You see, cows and bulls are mind readers.

What’s that?

You heard me right, the bulls read my mind. This is part of the ancient wisdom these animals possess that allows them to determine whether a person is a threat or is welcome. The bulls read the part of my mind that is my emotional life. When I am happy and at peace, the oxen understand precisely how I feel. When I am sad, or in pain, they understand that feeling as well. Cattle are **EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT**.

When my oxen encounter someone who is mean and unreliable, they know at once to avoid that person. I am with oxen about 1,000 hours every year. The oxen insist that I remain at peace when I am with them. One of the oxen, a six-year old named Hoss, tests me almost every day I am with him. He used to be the dominant animal in his herd.

According to Hoss, he believes that he did a great job and does not need my help. Hoss weighs 2,000 pounds. He can run almost as fast as a horse and can easily leap over a four-foot high fence. In the yoke, he can drag on the ground more than 4,000 pounds. He is as flexible as a cat.

Most of all, Hoss is smart, emotionally smart. Sometimes, to test me, Hoss will resist following my command. He observes how I respond to his resistance. If I were to show anger and attempt to punish him, Hoss would think I am weak.

What Hoss gets from me when he resists my commands is a quiet repeat of the command, and maybe a chuckle. I laugh at him to show him emotionally that I understand that Hoss is testing me. When I laugh at him Hoss sees that I am strong. He views me as being more powerful than he is. I am not physically as strong as Hoss, but spiritually and ethically, I am the more powerful being between us. Hoss respects my emotional strength.

When a newspaper reporter from the Orange County Register interviewed me to learn about my control of oxen, she dubbed me the “ox whisperer.” She noticed that the oxen were eager to follow my instructions, no matter how subtle my command.

All that I need to do is to lock my gaze with one of the oxen for him to understand what I want him to do. The ox named Freckles frequently would step forward when he was not supposed to do so. If I turned to lock my gaze on him, he would step back in place, a glance was all that was required.

My ethical strength works perfectly with oxen. It works equally well with human beings. The reason that cattle and humans work so well together is we can understand each other emotionally. You probably have had no experience with cattle. However, I would guess that many of you have lived with a dog or a cat in your home.

People say that to a dog their human is family and to a cat their human is a servant. Dogs are seeking to please their humans and cats are seeking to control the behavior of humans. Dogs and cats are using their understanding of our emotional lives to develop a relationship of mutual trust and respect. In the case of the dogs, they trust us to do the right thing at all times. In the case of cats, they know how to get us to do exactly what the cat wants us to do. Both animals are demonstrating their understanding of our emotions.

It is natural for other mammals to figure us out. We are mammals so we have a lot in common. We have enjoyed a long relationship with these animals. Whether humans domesticated cattle or cattle domesticated humans is an open question. ***I say that because my ethical character has changed since I began working with cattle.***

I have become a better human being because the cattle require that I bring emotional peace to the herd. When I learned how to develop and maintain emotional peace; I became a better human being. I use the same emotional peace in my relationships with humans.

Just as I do not have negative thoughts when I am with the oxen, I do not have negative thoughts when I am with people.

You see, . . . a negative thought could lead to negative speech. Accordingly, negative speech could lead to negative actions. If I eliminate negative thoughts, then I cannot take negative actions. In place of negative thoughts, I have peaceful thoughts. People feel different when I am around. People trust and respect me. Even strangers are able to feel my emotional peace and spiritual power.

Learn to live peacefully, gracefully, with passion and integrity.

Ethical life is the foundation that allows one to live in peace. Ethical men and women don't have to remember the lies they have told. Ethical leaders don't have to worry about someone seeking revenge because they were mistreated. Ethical people are sought out by family and friends to engage in positive healthy enterprises.

An ethical leader chooses service first. An ethical leader encourages a thriving community where everyone is lifted. An ethical life is one of sacrifice. There is a price to pay for behaving as an ethical leader.

By definition anything that is "free" is not as valuable as something you pay for. Students know all about this. In order to complete your educational goals, you commit time to study, time to attend class, and decline paying jobs that would distract from your learning.

You give up earnings now, for the opportunity in the future to work in the career field you desire. Instead of using your earnings to enjoy a vacation, you purchase next semester's books. Instead of enjoying good times with friends and family, you schedule study time with fellow students. Getting an education is all about ethical behavior.

You attend classes, study, and learn so that when it is time for you to work in your chosen field, you know precisely what to do to complete the work. What good is it to receive a degree, if you did not learn the material presented to you.

Imagine someone with a physician's degree who rarely attended medical school classes, who cheated on his tests, and who did not understand the complex functions of the human body. Receiving a degree in medicine is of no value to society, if the receiver did not learn the subject matter and could not perform as a doctor. You want to leave the institution as a changed person . . . someone with the ability to perform with distinction. You want to have become a better human being.

Of all the subjects you study to become a medical doctor, it is your ethical education that matters the most to society. Doctors often make life or death decisions. We want physicians to be of impeccable ethical character. We want to trust that their ethics, and their knowledge of medicine is first rate. Whether your profession is medicine, law, education, business, entertainment, finance, the military, food industry, or farming, working with people of integrity and knowledge are required for you to thrive.

Human beings are storytellers.

Bill the ox taught me a lesson I will remember forever

In the fall of 2003, I began working with bulls at the Centennial Farm on the Orange County Fairgrounds. One of the bulls I worked with was named Bill.

After I had worked with Bill for about six months, I decided that we had to make a change in our relationship. On most days, when I entered Bill's corral, it took me twenty minutes to attach a lead rope to him to begin our work for that day. Bill played a game with me called frustrate the new teamster. When I approached him, he would turn his head away from me and move to another corner of the corral. He understood that when I attached the lead rope that he had to follow me. That's why he made it hard for me to capture him. He enjoyed his freedom more than he wanted me to command him.

Instead of approaching his head to snap the lead rope onto his halter, one morning I walked to his flank and shoved him as hard as I could. You know, like when you want to "tip a cow." Bill stood about five feet at the ridge of his back and weighed about 2,000 pounds. From point to point, his horns were more than four feet. Bill was large, strong, powerful, and had his own mind about how he wanted to spend his time. Shoving him did not tip him over, it merely announced my presence.

After shoving Bill, I turned and walked away from him until I was about forty feet from where he stood. He was in a corral comprised of sturdy steel fencing. The barrier was mostly to keep people from bothering him. It only contained him because he wanted to be inside. Inside this fencing there was ample food, cool water, and shade; outside there were strangers he did not want to meet. If Bill wanted out, he had two options. Leap over the fencing or knock it down and walk out. Bill enjoyed his time in the corral.

When I stopped walking away from having shoved Bill, I turned to face him. My plan was to wait for Bill to come to me rather than to chase him around the corral. After a couple of moments Bill walked to the fence closest to him, lowered his head then crashed into the fence. He backed up and crashed his forehead into the fence three more times. Next, Bill turned to face me and walked slowly toward me.

When Bill was about twenty feet from where I stood, I thought, **“If he hits me the same way he hit that fence, I will be dead. However, I was finished chasing Bill, either I capture him now, or he kills me, I don’t care.”** Bill stopped in front of me and lowered his head. I snapped the lead rope on him, and Bill followed me out of the corral.

When Bill was crashing into the fence, he was demonstrating his physical power, he was invincible. When I waited for Bill to approach me, my spirit was at peace. Bill noted my lack of fear and accepted me as a dominant power. My spiritual power was enough to overcome Bill’s physical power.

In America, ethical integrity is the ability to rise above material things to spiritual dignity. You and I face ethical dilemmas daily. If we are not prepared, we will fail to develop the ethical strength to make the correct choices when it is most important to behave according to the highest ethical standards. Our society, and each of us within the society, benefits when more people live as ethical leaders.

Everyone is not able to live at this high level. More people could if they began to practice living an ethical life at an early age.

When is the best time to begin such a life?

Today.

Not tomorrow; that would be too late.

Today, is the only good day to begin such a lifestyle.

I am like you. I am a work in progress. I am no better than the last actions I have taken. I have seen great men and women taken down to total disgrace when something they said or did showed an aspect of who they are that no one knew about before. Our reputation is only good until it is sullied.

How does one protect one's self from ethical failure?

A concert piano player achieves excellence because she practices. She practices every day, often with a coach or mentor listening to her play. She knows that practice will allow her to play just the notes she desires when performing for an audience. You cannot excel in this art by merely looking at the piano.

Once you have become a successful performer then you must practice harder to develop your skills. You must play the instrument. A teacher must guide you. An expert must keep the piano in tune. That is, it takes effort to make a concert pianist; effort that involves the work of the artist, and a cast of supporting characters.

Excellence requires a price to be paid. You make mistakes at first, but because you are dedicated to becoming excellent, you put forth the effort and your supporting cast keeps you on track. You cannot achieve excellence alone. You must practice with the support of others.

Living an ethical life requires the same dedication and practice that it takes to achieve excellence in any other endeavor. For example, you rely on your parents, family, religious leaders, teachers, and friends to support your ethical behavior.

Knowing what is right, is merely the first step of living an ethical life; the proof is in how you behave when you think that no one is looking at you. You get no credit for ethical behavior when a policeman is watching you. Even the worst criminals are good when officers of the law are standing guard. How you behave when you suspect no one is watching, determines whether you are an ethical leader.

Human beings are storytellers.

We tell two types of stories. We regale in happy stories of success and good times. In addition, we repeat stories of regret that illustrate challenges to our ability to live as we desire. Our personal history makes us laugh or makes us cry, but these stories explain how our ethical character was formed.

You tell stories about yourself all the time.

Everyone you know tells stories about themselves all of the time.

I am going to suggest an assignment for you that I give to my executive coaching clients. They enjoy this exercise because they always come back with gems of wisdom they receive from their loved ones. This is a listening exercise that requires some preparation. There are two steps to this listening exercise. Each step requires the active participation of someone you choose. I am suggesting for you that you choose a parent or a grandparent.

HOMEWORK EXERCISE

Ask a grandparent (or parent) to write down two stories. This exercise is more useful if they write the stories by hand rather than using a computer.

STEP 1

The first step is to write the two stories. Suppose that you choose one of your grandmothers to help you. One story is about something she did or did not do that she now regrets.

The second story is about something she did to help someone without claiming credit. It just felt good to perform the good deed.

STEP 2 occurs one week later, ask your grandmother to tell you why these two stories are important to her. The exercise begins when she tells you why, of all the stories in her life, she chose these two stories. Your role in the exercise is to demonstrate to her that you understand the importance of the stories. You will know when you understand her because she will say to you, “**Yes! That is exactly why this story is important to me.**”

I am convinced that if I lost my memory of my personal history, that I would miss the memory of my regrets more than the memory of the good times. I can always replenish my happy memories. However, my sad memories taught me lessons that made me stronger and wiser.

I am a better person because I endured and learned from these sad experiences. You see, love and sadness are intertwined. They appear to me to be opposite sides of the same coin.

Just as steel is strengthened by fire . . . our ability to make ethical decisions is improved by the pain of the errors we have experienced while resolving difficult challenges. We become stronger by making mistakes and getting schooled.

If you are fortunate, your grandparent will tell you a story about her regrets. This is a way for her to pass on wisdom to you. She may tell you that she regretted not completing her formal education. She may tell you that she wished that she had followed her dream rather than playing safe. The stories she will share with you are a gift more valuable than any material goods you may inherit from her.

We do not know when we will face an important ethical challenge.

There is no advanced warning. Just like the concert pianist, you will be ready when the time comes, only if you have been practicing good ethics.

Students have many opportunities to practice good ethics.

Whatever field you choose as your career, you will be faced with ethical challenges on a regular basis. I estimate that it is normal for each of us to face an ethical challenge at least three times each day.

If you don't notice the challenge, that is a problem. Not noticing the ethical challenge does not mean that you did not receive a challenge. It may mean that you are incapable of noticing ethics violations.

For example, when someone tells a joke and the story has racist overtones, that is a challenge.

When you look at someone who does not look like you, dress like you, eat the foods you enjoy, or otherwise is "different" from you, as somehow a lesser person because of these differences, that is a challenge.

A homeless person is a person.

Someone who does not share your ethnic background is a person.

Someone whose religious views are different from yours, is a person.

When you are listening to your grandparent tell her stories to you, please notice how your mind and heart is quiet. This is because your purpose in listening to her is to understand how she feels about these stories. You are not attempting to judge her, or offer her advice, you just want to understand how she feels. Telling you these stories is a great gift to you. She will feel wonderful knowing that you understand some of the stories that made her who she is today. This is a transfer of wisdom from one generation to another.

Remember how you feel as you listen to your grandparent. You can use that feeling to determine whether you are listening with love, or just waiting for the other person to shut up.

When you are listening with love, all that matters to you is to understand the feelings of the person you are listening to. You are not judging that person, merely seeking to understand the speaker.

If you can listen to your closest loved ones the same way you listened to your grandparent, you will have made a perfect connection with those loved ones.

If you would like to do the homework exercise with your grandparents, I have a copy of the instructions here for you or you can visit my website and read it there. This exercise has magic in it and will transform your relationship with the person you choose. He or she will instantly become more deeply connected to you and that new connection will continue forever.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." Martin Luther King, Jr.

Blessing to each one of you!

Honor, courage, and virtue make life worthwhile.

Success is about doing what is right despite the personal consequences. This is true in your family, your career, and your life as a member of the community of humankind.

Thank you for your kind attention. Live your lives each moment with grace, generosity, and gratitude. You will create kindness and goodness whatever it is you choose to do as a career.

Below is a news story about Phil Fleming published at the time of his death.

This is from the Los Angeles Times.

Family, Friends Gather to Salute Crash Victim : Eulogy: Phillip Fleming Jr. was a passenger on USAir jet in L.A. Airport collision. He was remembered as a man who worked hard and helped others.

February 08, 1991 | JESSE KATZ | TIMES STAFF WRITER

The charred wreckage was long ago scraped off the runway and the gruesome images have already faded from TV, but for those who knew Phillip Fleming Jr. the painful reality of last week's deadly collision at Los Angeles International Airport is only just beginning to sink in.

In one of the first memorial services for the 34 people who died in the fiery incident Friday, about 200 family members and friends of Fleming filled the wooden pews of First African Methodist Episcopal Church on Thursday to pay tribute to the hard-working accountant and business teacher, who leaves his wife of 20 years and a teen-age son.

Fleming, 44, the only victim from Los Angeles aboard the USAir jetliner, was returning home from a business trip to Ohio when the aircraft slammed into a SkyWest Airlines commuter plane and burst into flames on Runway 24-Left.

In subsequent days, several survivors have knocked on the door of Fleming's Baldwin Hills house to tell his family that he heroically stayed inside the jetliner helping others escape, even as flames began to engulf the aircraft.

"That just epitomized Phil," said his close friend, Roland McFarland, manager of broadcast standards for ABC-TV. "He was always there for you. He was there to the end."

In the emotional ceremony, which occurred the same day that USAir released a list of all those who died on the jet, Fleming was eulogized as a quiet achiever, devoted family man and talented CPA, who used his business skills to promote economic opportunity in the African-American community.

"This is a man who's not a superstar . . . not an individual who ever gets any press or publicity," said another good friend, Craig Cummings, a Los Angeles attorney. "He was just an average guy out there who was taking care of his family, working hard . . . and touching a lot of people."

Under a vivid mural depicting black achievement, a soloist filled the church in the West Adams area with "Amazing Grace," another sang "The Lord's Prayer," and dozens of men and woman in the congregation struggled with their tears.

At the front of the church, next to a lavish floral arrangement, four easels balanced collages of photographs from Fleming's life--from his days as a UCLA business student, to his marriage to Johnetta Dockins Fleming, to the confirmation of their 17-year-old son, Omari.

Then there were testimonials from his boss at the Department of Defense facility in El Segundo where he worked as an auditor for the last six years, from the principal at Crenshaw Dorsey Community Adult School where he taught business at night since 1974, and from a representative of Mayor Tom Bradley's office, who praised his work on behalf of small, black-owned businesses.

"We come to rejoice for a life well-lived," said state Sen. Diane Watson (D-Los Angeles), whose district includes the airport. "I just think Phil was in God's plan."

The Rev. Cecil (Chip) Murray, pastor of First A.M.E., said, "Phil Fleming was and is a care package--one of those rare human beings who carries love upon his back . . . He lived giving; he died giving."

Fleming, the oldest of nine children, flew to Los Angeles 22 years ago from the small Mississippi town of Natchez. On Saturday, his remains will be flown back there for burial.