



The Learning Clinic

Education & Career Development Agency

If you don't have enemies,
you don't have character.
— Paul Newman

To exercise good character
daily is to be morally fit for
life.
— Karen Hartz

What someone is, begins to
be revealed when his talent
abates, when he stops
showing us what he can do.
— Friedrich Nietzsche

Why are we surprised when
fig trees bear figs?
— Margaret Titzel

Character is like a tree and
reputation like its shadow.
The shadow is what we
think of it; the tree is the
real thing.
— Abraham Lincoln

Many a man's reputation
would not know his
character if they met on the
street.
— Elbert Hubbard

You can tell a lot about a
fellow's character by his
way of eating jelly beans.
— Ronald Reagan

What a man's mind can
create, man's character can
control.
— Thomas Edison



Giving Up The Good Now For a Better Future

REFLECTIONS by...

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We all like to hear a good riddle now and then. It is fun to try to guess the “trick answer” or come up with the “punch line”. The neat thing about riddles is that once you've heard the answer it tends to stay with you forever. The next time you hear the same riddle, the answer pops right up in your head and out comes the correct answer. You may not have “got it” the first time, but our brain seems to process the answer so that we are never tricked again.

The other day I came across an interesting riddle. Let me try it out on you...

THERE ARE FIVE BIRDS ON A TELEPHONE WIRE. TWO OF THEM DECIDE TO FLY SOUTH. HOW MANY ARE LEFT?

While you are thinking about the answer, I want you to read the following brief warning which was written by a man named Frank Outlaw. It is entitled “It's All About Character”.

Watch your thoughts; they become words.
Watch your words; they become actions.
Watch your actions; they become habits.
Watch your habits; they become character.
Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

DO YOU HAVE THE ANSWER TO THE RIDDLE?

No, it's not three; it's five.

DECIDING TO FLY and ACTUALLY FLYING are two different things. So even though two of the birds DECIDE to fly south, it doesn't mean that they actually left yet.

Strangely, when I read the riddle I didn't have the urge to laugh. Instead I reflected upon the life lesson that this riddle has to offer to all who hear it. What

the riddle is saying to you is that you will never get anywhere you want to go in this life until you point yourself in the right direction, jump off the wire and flap your wings. Two birds may have decided to fly south, but until they jump off the wire, they will never have a chance of getting there.

I've come across many people during the course of my life who had dreams and aspirations, but they just couldn't jump off the wire. I've seen people who wanted to reduce weight to improve their health, but who could not resist the urge to have a donut or chocolate bar, rationalizing their actions by having a diet Pepsi as well. Anyone can want to be thin when they are not hungry. The problem is when they are hungry they are tempted by the momentary pleasure that comes from eating that one donut.

The same can be said about a person who is trying to quit smoking. It is easy to quit right after you've put out a cigarette. The real challenge is to resist the urge to light up later on in the day. Cutting back on drinking; eating junk food; fast food diets – it is always easy to set goals and say that you are going to stop drinking; stop eating junk food; and stop going to fast food restaurants. But it is too easy to fall to temptation later on.

In the end, it's not our goals that determine the quality of our life; it's our actions. When there's a conflict between what we want NOW and what we want for the future, LATER seems so much more attractive than now -- but it's not a good life strategy.

I love donuts, but I've never had one that was so good that the pleasure lasted for more than a few moments.

The key to a happy and satisfying life therefore, is to resist urges and impulses for momentary pleasures that may sabotage long-term goals. Lots of things that feel good aren't good for us, and lots of things that are fun won't make us happy.

As I leave you this week, I want to leave you with a quote by Dante: "There is no greater sorrow than to recall in misery the time when we were happy."

Giving up the good `now` for a better `later` shouldn't be seen as a sacrifice; it's an investment.

	
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