

What Will You Take Into 2012?

The other day I watched a giraffe drinking. It's the first time I've seen it in the flesh. Ensuing conversations taught me a few things about the mechanics of giraffes drinking. That is one of the greatest miracles of life, I think, that we never stop learning and that learning is free. The other bountiful and free gift is beauty. Colour, light, pattern. They are everywhere, even in ugly places. On a grubby street down town, bright sunshine turning a pile of oranges into a pyramid of vibrant, exotic jewels. One of my desires in life is to be more aware of these gifts, less caught up in daily concerns.

A tool I sometimes use is the Reflective cycle. A series of questions that help us to maximize our growth in life's situations and events. What happened? Why did it happen? What have I learned from what happened? And finally, what learning can I take with me? Imagine if we were really good at this process. Imagine if politicians were really good at this. Too often we rush onto the next thing, generally repeating the same mistakes, often digging a deeper hole for ourselves. Or else we get stuck on the Why question. Why me? Why not me? Why now? This all too quickly becomes a festering, stagnant pool of self pity and bitterness.

Thus, at this end of year, try to set aside a couple of hours for yourself to reflect on this past year. What happened? Financially, physically, relationally. Why did it happen? What choices did you make that lead to that point. What have you learned, about yourself, about life, about other people? What will you take with you? In other words how will you do it differently next time?

I would like to share a couple of my learnings as in a way I often feel my journey is shared by many of you. As I have the privilege of being privy to your questions and decisions I too am provoked to examine my life.

Financially. Of course it has been sticky. But again, I have been reminded of the relativity of wealth. A friend and I were joking about how when we say we are broke we mean that we are buying milk with the coppers from the change jar. For others, broke means a dip in the shares index. But during that conversation we drove past the East Street squatter camp. That put a whole new perspective on broke. Wealth is relative. Wealth does not define our intelligence, personality, character or value.

What I would like to take with me into the new year is that so far I haven't gone hungry, I can trust the promise that if the birds of the field and lilies are provided for then so will I be. Going back to my opening paragraph I would also like next year to be even more acutely aware of the incredible wealth available to me, even if my wallet is empty. I would like to remember that opportunities arise from the most unlikely places and that I need to have open eyes and ears to notice them and then courage to seize them.

Participating in the Non Stop Dusi was a physical, emotional and mental challenge greater than any other. I had thoroughly given up at one point and it was only my friends who pulled me through. I still feel moved by their generosity, sacrifice and exertion on our behalf. "No man is an island" wrote Donne, at periods of my life I have determined to be an island yet in the end always realise that we are all interdependent. I met with my own frailty in a new way and hope that next time I will be more cheerful, more determined, less scared. I love physical challenges and encourage you to try one. I realise I am wired that way but one thing I like about a physical challenge is that a lot of life learnings are crammed into a short intense space of time, and you can't hide from yourself. The thing I would most like to take forward into the new year is that most people are mostly kind and good and noble.

What have you experienced this year? What have you learned this year?

[The difference between a failure and a mistake](#)

A failure is a project that doesn't work, an initiative that teaches you something at the same time the outcome doesn't move you directly closer to your goal.

A mistake is either a failure repeated, doing something for the second time when you should have known better, or a misguided attempt (because of carelessness, selfishness or hubris) that hindsight reminds you is worth avoiding.

We need a lot more failures, I think. Failures that don't kill us make us bolder, and teach us one more way that won't work, while opening the door to things that might.

School confuses us, so do bosses and families. Go ahead, fail. Try to avoid mistakes, though

So wrote Seth Godin. May we not be careless or selfish nor repeat our failures but instead may you have a New Year filled with purpose, friendship, learning, courage, laughter and new adventures.

Thank you for all of your encouragement and support in this past year.