

## **“800 Left Turns” May 30, 2010**

I suppose you'd have to see the entire move to really understand that guy's true motivation for putting up so many of those fence posts...8 feet apart, straight...over and over and over. Regardless of the motivation, in my view to accomplish something like that it takes practice, commitment and dedication. Now, each of us is motivated to do things for vastly different reasons...money, power, fame, altruism. Regardless of our motivation, in order to become really, really good at something, it does take the dedication, commitment and patience to keep at it.

You may remember sometime back we showed a video with author Malcolm Gladwell who wrote the books *Blink* and *The Tipping Point*. He was saying that in order for us to become and expert at something...to really master something, we would need to spend 10,000 hours perfecting it. 10,000 hours, can you imagine that? Concert pianist, gold medal gymnast...10,000 hours. Dedication, commitment patience.

Think about the Indianapolis 500 today. Of all the components it takes to win at Indy...skill, luck, the right car set up...lots of capital investment...all of that is important yes, but ultimately, it comes down to having put in the time...10,000 hours, the dedication, commitment and patience to make 800 left turns. Of course being a race car

driver, like any other sport, takes physical conditioning...ultimately though, like any endeavor in life, talent alone can only take you so far—to really succeed at anything, business, school relationships—it is a decision of our mind to patiently commit to something or someone.

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There is no doubt to be a surfer you need to be physically fit—I mean, the guy said it—speed, strength, agility, flexibility, and endurance. But he also said, it's more about the mental power, and the last thing he said really struck me. “Practice for the worst so you can do your best, that's our theory.” The thing that really struck me was practice...again, you can have all the skill and talent...all the physical attributes, but if you aren't willing to practice—again, the dedication, commitment and patience.

I'm guessing each of us here this morning could think of instance after instance when skill and strength was trumped by practice and determination. This really pains me to say, but I think of Bobby Knight coached basketball teams. Sure, every now and then he would land a great player, but by-in-large he took average talent and molded them into a team through dedication, commitment, patience. In the movie *Hoosiers*, the practice of passing the ball four times was borrowed from Bobby Knight's playbook. Knight took average players

an instilled in them the belief that if they put in the work, something far beyond their imagination was possible.

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I think often times we think about being brave and achieving great things in terms of the big stuff of life...winning a sports championship, being a world renowned musician...don't get me wrong, those aren't bad things, but what if we took the same philosophy of practice, commitment, dedication into our everyday lives?

I believe that is what our Bible passage is talking about this morning. It is talking about a making a commitment to a way of being...it says this

But what happens when we live God's way? God brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

BUT...living God's way takes practice. For the past several months Harry and I have been working on practicing good habits at home to create positive behavior. I've been telling him... "Harry, having success at positive behavior is

no different than you practicing basketball out in the driveway...you have to practice. You can't just wake up one morning and be kind, or forgiving, or whatever. You have to practice those things.

Now, Harry is a smart cookie and a quick learner. Every morning I put Harry on the bus for school. I give him a big hug and say, I love you boy, have a good day...do your best. The "do your best" is our code for practicing that positive behavior. Recently, Harry has amended his farewell back to me...it's always I love you too dad...but recently it is "Dad, do YOUR best." I'm sure he has no idea how powerful that is coming back to me. I assure you having your eight-year-old sincerely say to you...Dad, do your best has an effect.

The thought I want to leave you with this morning is the idea of doing our best through commitment, dedication and practice. Harry's simple statement really got me to thinking, what do I need to practice on? If you are like me there is probably a pretty long list, but for me the one that came to the top of the list is thankfulness. I mean very simply...saying thanks to people for their kindness and compassion. And really, as I thought about this in the context of Memorial Day, what better time to start for each of us than to practice saying thanks to the U.S. service men and women who have given their service and life to our country...and so often thanklessly.