

## **HUMAN CONNECTIONS DEAR TO THE HEART**

All Americans have been in a state of emotional shock since the tragic events in New York City last week. During my early career I spent eighteen years in New York City. I love this city dearly and it was emotionally wrenching to see both trade towers collapse, one floor at a time, to the ground. Part of my fear was that this event represented the greatest single act of violence and destruction that has occurred on American soil due to outside enemies.

It is important to me to remember that these buildings represented the World Trade Tower, not the American Trade Tower or the New York Trade Tower. As such, eighty two nations were represented in the tragedy last week. The pain that is enormous is truly and dearly shared throughout the world.

I attended church last Sunday because I wanted not only to hear and see how the minister would discuss such a violent act but also to speak with individuals, most of whom I did not know, about their pain and further show, through support and occasional comments, that I care about each of them dearly.

Rather than hypothesize the best solution to combat world terrorism, which no one knows as yet, I just wanted to listen and find out how each person was doing and how they were processing this tragedy in their own personal lives. With each conversation I looked clearly into eyes that were deeply concerned and provided support that words cannot describe.

During the ensuing weeks I have tried to continue this kind of "Connection to the Heart" and have found that, with each conversation, I feel stronger and more confident that the citizens of the free world, including our own, will gain strength and prevail in this time of great tragedy.

Yet there still is a nagging question that somehow we may have lost our real focus on fulfillment and joy in life and particularly life in America, which is currently the beacon of world capitalism, democracy and freedom.

Our expectations seem to have grown beyond reasonable bounds and the time that we spend chasing ill-defined and trivial goals seems to preclude us from finding meaning and happiness in the most important events of life, the events that bring people together in meaningful ways.

As a society we are doing quite well with technology, including space exploration, the human genome project, stem cell research and the reconstruction of western civilization with sophisticated computer systems. Yet personal and family relationships have been devastated in this country to a degree that is far worse than that witnessed in the collapse of the World Trade Tower.

Why do we spend ever-greater numbers of hours on computer circuits (overdose of information), market networks (obsession with money), television networks (demeaning behavior) and entertainment channels (unquenchable fantasy, violence and sex) yet

ever-diminishing numbers of hours building, extending and nourishing human connections. Could it be that the attractiveness of such “adult toys” has eroded much of the infrastructure of human society in which we live?

Could it be that all of us need to readjust our lives so that we spend more time discussing, probing and learning how to appreciate dear ones, including family, friends, neighbors and community and thereby improve important aspects of life that have to do with human connections that give us consolation, hope, fulfillment, laughter, love and true happiness?

If some of these thoughts evoke your response, either positively or negatively, there is no need to praise or chastise the author. However, there might be a need to talk amongst your friends, neighbors and loved ones to guide life back to the center where true fulfillment and happiness may be found.

And shouldn't our communities, spiritual institutions and schools be spending far more time on developing senses of identity, tolerance, understanding, appreciation and values amongst our children as they navigate the difficult stepping stones to maturity and life?

And why have the generations and genders become isolated from one another? If we are sons, shouldn't we be trying to develop into men and fathers, whether fatherhood is considered biologically, family-based or community-based? And if we are daughters, shouldn't we also be trying to develop into women and mothers, whether motherhood is considered biologically, family-based or community-based?

And shouldn't husbands and wives live together? And shouldn't sons and daughters care about one another? And shouldn't women and men find interest in each other and their special gifts for continuity in the fulfillment of life?

And if we are older citizens who have experienced success and failure in life, shouldn't we be leading, rather than following, to put our sense of family and community life back on track?

And shouldn't there be greater sharing of bread, meals, laughter and life?

And shouldn't there be more forgiveness, one to another?

And shouldn't we embrace these responsibilities and opportunities, sooner rather than later, since our time here is very short?

If we can look clearly into another person's eyes and appreciate how dear that person is we might begin to rebuild our own life into a meaningful human connection, one person at a time!

God Bless America & God Bless you!

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