

Got Initiative

So this set of stories is about initiative, and so it's partly about the discernment, recognizing signs and indicators and clues and cues, but even more so it's about acting on what you have discerned. Knowing is only of potential value. True or actual value is an application only. In other words, you have to do something about what you've become aware of. So when I was studying leading up to presenting, this material to others, I ran across an author who talked about failure. And as I was listening to the concepts that he was sharing, something occurred to me. I think most people, it's not that they fail. It's because they fail. It's because they never give it a go in the first place. That fear of failure prevents them from attempting. They don't go out and put themselves out there. They don't give it a go. They're afraid of failure. And so what I came to suspect was that what most people suffer from in that situation is that they don't give it a go. And that instance is forfeiture. It's not that they fail. It's that they forfeit. And they forfeit because they never act. You know, they may have a goal. They may have a dream that they would like to pursue. It could be a relationship. It could be a career. It could be some kind of creative expression. But that fear, that fear of failure prevents them from ever trying, from ever giving it a go. And so the way I came to see that is they forfeit. And later I had come up with a phrase, acts of non-forfeiture. If you don't act, you forfeit. So as a first illustration, of this concept of initiative and having the courage to put yourself out there and give it a go. Years ago, I heard a story about an editor. And the editor was interviewing for some, well, for an entry-level position at the paper that he worked at. And he had a collection. Of candidates that were all pretty much equally qualified for the entry-level position. And as the story goes, I think there were maybe four or five or six

of these candidates that he was going to interview. And what he did was outside his office door, there was a file cabinet. And he took a broom and he laid it behind him. And he lined the file cabinet to where just the top of the handle of the broom stuck out into the threshold of the doorway. And he did this kind of set in the stage before any of the candidates arrived to be interviewed. And so one by one, he brought them through the interview process. And as they were being ushered in or invited into the office, out of the candidates, there was one candidate who saw that broom handle sticking slightly out into the walkway of the doorway. And they took their foot, their shoe, and they pushed the broom handle back. And that was the one that he hired. What he said was, everything that was needed, that would be required by the candidate to be successful and grow in their career at the newspaper, they were all equally qualified to be able to learn that as if they got hired and they went into the mentorship and began training. He said, but the one thing he couldn't have, one thing that he couldn't teach and the mentors couldn't teach was, is initiative. They either have it or they don't. And that setting the stage of putting that broom handle out and allowing the candidates to pass by it and seeing one that would hesitate and push that broom handle back, that was the one in his estimate that possessed the one thing that they couldn't be taught. And that was initiative. And that was the one he hired. And the interesting thing to me about this entry-level position was this editor who is now running the paper, that he was hiring for the first job that he had there. He started in that very position, in that entry-level position, and rose all the way up to being the editor of the newspaper. And it was all based on that one characteristic that that candidate possessed, initiative. So, again, it was an opportunity. And to me, that was an act of non-forfeiture. He saw a need. No one asked the candidate to do it. But he saw that. He saw that. He saw that it, you know, it was about safety. He saw that it

could be a tripping hazard. And he pushed it back out of the way. So, the next story in this collection that I want to share is a story about myself. And so, what happened? And I was a young boy. Probably five years old, give or take. And at my grandfather's, at my grandparents' place, there was a long driveway that led up the hill to the street. And I was not allowed to go anywhere near that road because it was a well-traveled road and people traveled pretty quickly along the road. I think the speed limit was probably 35. I think the speed limit was probably 35 or 40, but they probably weren't always doing the speed limit. So, anyway, I saw the newspaper man come by and slip the newspaper in the newspaper box up at the street, up at the road. And, you know, I'm thinking, I'm going to do a good deed. I'm going to go up and get the newspaper for my grandfather. So, I walk up to the road, and, of course, as, you know, just fate would have it, it was just at that time that my grandfather came out to check on me and saw me up at the road. And that was, as my grandfather's, that was one of his prime directives. Don't go up to the road. Everything was about safety first. And I disobeyed. And so, he came up and pretty much paddled me all the way down the hill to the house. Never forgot that. So, I guess the reason I really wanted to bring that up in this storyline was because sometimes it happens that you have mistaken initiative. Meaning, in that case, it was about safety. Safety first. But, there's other times when initiative can get you in trouble. And that is if what you're attempting to do is outside of your, let's say, wheelhouse. Meaning, you're attempting to do something that you know very little, if anything, about. And if you do that, you can get in a trouble. Real quick. So, it was both sides of the coin of initiative. One, having initiative and acting on it so you don't forfeit. But, on the other hand, having discernment to know, to recognize when acting is advisable. Advisable. Meaning, if you're not qualified, and you know little or nothing about it, it's best not to act. Now, there is

an exception to that. And what I mean by that is, if you notice something, and it seems it needs attention, especially if it needs immediate attention, then maybe don't do anything about it yourself. But, go find something. Go find someone else, and let them know about it, that either they're qualified to do something about it, even to determine if something does need to be done, or they are qualified to know who they can call on to take care of whatever that concern is. Well, I guess that's about the best I can do on those issues. On those topics, thank you, and I'm signing off.