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Unc ommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 088

January 31, 2015

Greetings!

January is now in the record books as of midnight tonight. Amazing how quickly time races by.

Got any predictions for the Super Bowl tomorrow? I do: Carl's Jr. will air a commercial on the west coast that will be over the top in terms of salaciousness.



On a personal note, I am just coming out of bout of illness that has keep me preoccupied for the better part of the last month. It's good to start feeling normal again.

Lot's to cover in this issue, so read it carefully, implement intelligently, and share with others liberally.

OK, let's get started.

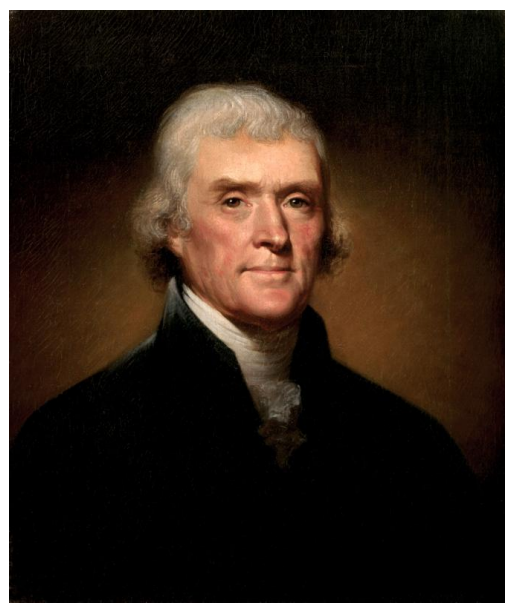
Ara Norwood

Self-Development

On Mentoring and its Outcomes

Some of you may be vaguely aware that our third U.S. President was Thomas Jefferson. He was also our first Secretary of State, and our second Vice President. But in addition to all of that, he was one of the most learned men in U.S. History. While he was equaled by John Adams in matters of law and the classics, Jefferson could run circles around Adams in matters pertaining to the sciences. Indeed, Jefferson was a true polymath, meaning he was brilliant in many areas, including architecture, planting,

music, linguistics, diplomacy, education, philosophy, politics, theology, paleontology, and geography, to name a few.



An interesting question is how Jefferson got that way. Of course, he was largely self-made and often studied for upwards of 15 hours a day. He loved books, bought them in droves, and read them voraciously. He was gifted at asking intelligent questions. But he also had individuals who influenced his thinking deeply. There were the three titans of an earlier era who lived before his time, but whom he considered three of the greatest men who ever lived - John Locke, Sir Isaac Newton, and Sir Francis Bacon. In addition to these three thought leaders, however, were several men who deeply impacted Jefferson's quickly forming mind:

- Dr. William Small, a Scottish professor of Classics and Philosophy was Jefferson's main educator at the College of William and Mary. Dr. Small taught Jefferson mathematics, classics, ethics, and science.
- Francis Fauquier was another serious force in Jefferson's development. As the royal governor of the colony of Virginia, Fauquier held many an event at the governor's palace for a small group of brilliant men, and he included the young Jefferson in these get-togethers, which included dinner, conversation, and music. The governors love of high-level conversation, matters of the intellect, gourmet food, fine music, and the like made indelible impressions on Thomas Jefferson.
- George Wythe was yet another shaper and influencer of Jefferson. Wythe taught Jefferson law, a fortunate outcome for Jefferson inasmuch as Wythe was considered to be the most formidable lawyer in all of Virginia at the time.
- Finally, I would add to this august list Peyton

Randolph, who was the attorney general of Virginia, and a cousin of Thomas Jefferson. Randolph was politically astute and well-connected, and he shaped much of young Jefferson's political philosophy.

My point in all of this is to illustrate that mentoring often results in the shaping and molding of greatness in the men and women we mentor. And not only do we make an impact for good on the people we mentor, but the nature of mentoring itself causes the mentor to, by default, evolve because a mentor has to so deeply internalize the content they will be imparting, that it further refines the mind and skill of the mentor.



Simply put, mentoring develops the mentor as much as it does the one being mentored.

The Elephant in the Room Identifying Our Enemies

In the previous issue of *Uncommon Sense* (#87), I addressed the question of whether it matters if one accurately identifies a Muslim terrorist as a Muslim. The very question has been talked about in the media recently in light of the attacks in Paris by Islamic radicals.

But it is fair to ask why it matters that we accurately

identify who our enemies are, be they Muslim extremists or any other kind of enemy.



Here are three reasons that make sense to me:

Number one: When you don't name your enemy you are giving them a pass they do not deserve and will never deserve. You are allowing them the cloak of anonymity. You are protecting them. Needlessly.

Number two: when you accurately identify your enemy, you clarify that they are the targets of your impending retaliation. Normally, retaliation is not a value I endorse (as I discuss in a column below). But we are talking about a group of people who wish to kill, torture, maim, or subjugate. When it comes to the Paris attacks of a few weeks ago, who should we hold accountable? The Norwegians?

Number three: when you identify your enemy, you telegraph to future potential enemies that they will receive the same fate if they commit the same atrocities. Failure to identify your enemy does the opposite: it tells future emerging enemies that they will get a free pass and they can have a field day at your expense.

The entire Obama Administration, not just President Obama himself, simply will not identify the terrorists as Islamic or Muslim - an absurd policy position.

And that, my friends, is the latest elephant in the room.

From Ara's Journal
What Would Jesus Do?

Invoking Jesus is risky business. The very name of Jesus brings about strong visceral reactions in many. Some use that name to speak sacrilege, as filmmaker Michael Moore [recently did](#) in his continual online rant against a movie (American Sniper), asking "What would Jesus do?" and then uttering a bunch of malicious nonsense. Moore doesn't care at all what Jesus would do in any given situation. It is doubtful Moore even believes Jesus is a historical figure.



But Moore's question, *What would Jesus do*, is an important one, regardless of what level of reverence a person might reserve for this most important historical figure. I myself consider Jesus to be the Son of God, the Messiah, and the Savior of the world. I hold Him in a place that I hold no other - not Emerson, not Gandhi, not Churchill, not Joseph Smith, not George Washington, not Mother Teresa. But having said that, even if I did not hold the feelings of religious devotion to Jesus that I do hold, even were I wholly secular in my outlook, it would be hard to escape the conclusion that the example we get from this person named Jesus is singular, rare, and incomparable.

Thus, asking the question, *What would Jesus do*, is truly a wise question to ask, even if one is not a disciple of Jesus.

I had occasion recently to ponder that question. The setting, interestingly enough, was my church. While walking down a hallway toward the back parking lot where I was to get into my car, I saw two individuals walking up the hallway in my direction. The first was a young man I know rather well. He is a good man, a devoted husband and father, and a professional man who works hard and is honest. About ten feet behind him was a woman who is likewise married and a good wife and mother. She is a brilliant and learned woman with a scholarly bent, and a woman I have the deepest admiration for.

As I passed the man, I offered a warm hello, which he returned. As I passed the woman, I offered the same warm hello. She did not respond at all. Looking straight ahead, she ignored me. Deliberately.

This is not the first time she has snubbed me, but it was the most blatant. There was no chance she didn't hear me, or misunderstood me, or was in some sort of trance. But she chose not to look at me, opting instead to ignore me in a way that sent an unmistakable message of disregard.

It's a curious thing really, as we had been friends of sorts in the past. We did have an unfortunate misunderstanding at one point, but we had cleared the air and gotten past it. She even attended one of my speeches after that and had positive things to say about it. So why the snub?

I have no idea. But there is something more important to consider here: *What would Jesus do?*

Unless one studies the life of Jesus, which is most likely to be found in the pages of the New Testament, it's hard to know. But the clues I have derived from within the pages of accounts written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell me the following:

- I should not condemn, belittle, or retaliate against this woman. I should forgive, even if I do not understand.
- Further, I should recognize that, right or wrong, her snubbing of me seems to her that that is the right and proper course at this season of her life. In other words, she probably has a reason that makes sense to her as to why treating me with undisguised contempt is warranted. My ignorance of her reasoning does not give me license to return rudeness with rudeness.
- Also, I sense that it would not be timely or proper to confront her in an effort to understand such behavior. It is not appropriate for me to corner her and try to pry the reasons out of her in an attempt at some sort of reconciliation. She needs to be left alone and not forced to address this with me. I need to respect her agency in this regard.

And one more thing: in pondering the question *What*

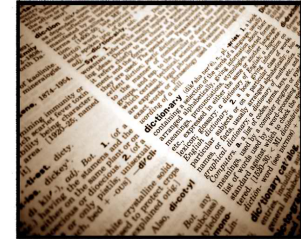
would Jesus do, I need to teach the principles outlined in the bullet points above to my children. Which is what I have done, without revealing her identity.

Allowing our conduct to mirror what Jesus would do makes this a better world.

The World of Words

Lethargic

Building Your Power of Expression



Lethargic, adj.

Pronunciation: lə'THärjik

Meaning: When something or someone suffers from lethargy, one is sluggish, tired, or perhaps apathetic. The person is basically out of it, off their game, and weary.

Usage:

- *Your performance in that tennis match suggested to me you were feeling somewhat lethargic.*
- *You would do well to eradicate your lethargic tendencies by taking a nap.*
- *I just can't seem to get anything important accomplished, as I am experiencing feelings that could only be described as lethargic.*

New subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" should have been sent out to you already. If you have not received it, please communicate that to me via email (ara@aranorwood.com).

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Sincerely,

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