

Spring brings new growth...

Last night we had an interesting meeting with a group of high school athletes. We discussed what they wanted to create for themselves this coming season. We asked what it was that they envisioned for their team. This led to lots of discussion and ultimately a sort of 'mission statement' evolved. They wanted to be a positive, competitive, confident, committed, respectful, communicative team. After defining what that meant, it eventually boiled down to, " Yes, that's great. But, what will you do as an individual at the time that vision is threatened? " And doesn't life ultimately come down to that? Whether it be in school, on the field, at your job or in a social atmosphere, the question is, do you have the guts to take a stand when something happens that you aren't in alignment with? What standard of excellence do you hold yourself to? Do we walk our talk? We asked them if they would have the courage to take their teammates to task? This was where they looked at each other and were kind of stuck. You see, they were worried that others may consider them a 'bitch'. Now I didn't think of it at the time, but an acronym for b.i.t.c.h. is a babe in total control of herself. High school is a period in life where "fitting in" is at an all time high. Going along with the collective flow, whether it is in line with your values or not, is the norm. Being true to yourself and a master of self discipline is not. Taking a stand for your values and a team vision takes guts and leadership skills that would be considered "super hero" in high school. But wasn't it always the b.i.t.c.h. that earned your respect?

As Dewitt Jones said in his speech, *If I knew then, what I know now- I wouldn't worry so much about "making a difference."* One morning he found himself looking through his camera lens at a single tree. The tree was so achingly beautiful, so simple, so glorious that it moved him to tears. Was it trying to make him cry? Was it doing anything to "make a difference" in his life? No, it was just putting out the best it had to offer without any regard to whether it was received or not. Just growing there, in all its treeness. He was the one who had taken its beauty in and allowed it to resonate on his soul. In that moment, he realized something incredibly important. It wasn't him who "makes a difference" when he speaks. It's those who hear him. He was not the one with the power to change lives; they were. All he could do was put out the best he had to offer and let it go; not to make a difference, but to make a contribution. He said, "Here it is, the very best I have to give, the very best that I am. Take it and do with it as you will. It is my gift, my contribution. "

So this is the question. Do we find ourselves following the sheep's trail because it's well worn and familiar like a pair of old shoes? Or are we brave enough to blaze a trail of our own, as uncomfortable as it is because it is who we choose to be, it is our gift, our contribution. Ultimately true leadership shines when the blazing of a trail is the most difficult, the steepest, and the roughest terrain. For a true leader knows, it must be done. It is who they are. It is their contribution. And in doing so, they give others permission to be themselves and walk their own path.

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