

A Clear-cut Illustration of the Power of Thinking

It is Brain Surgery . . . !



Keep It Idling Part II

. . . because we all need a lot of brain surgery, performed by The Master Surgeon, to start thinking instead of simply living a life of clichés, wives' tales, "the experts say," "I think," "it's my opinion" . . .

The following is the prevailing thought-process of the average American (this is a gross misuse of the word "thought," but let's not get sidetracked into quibbling about this – the illustration, itself, should prove the point that what we call "thinking and "thought" are seldom defensible uses of these terms):

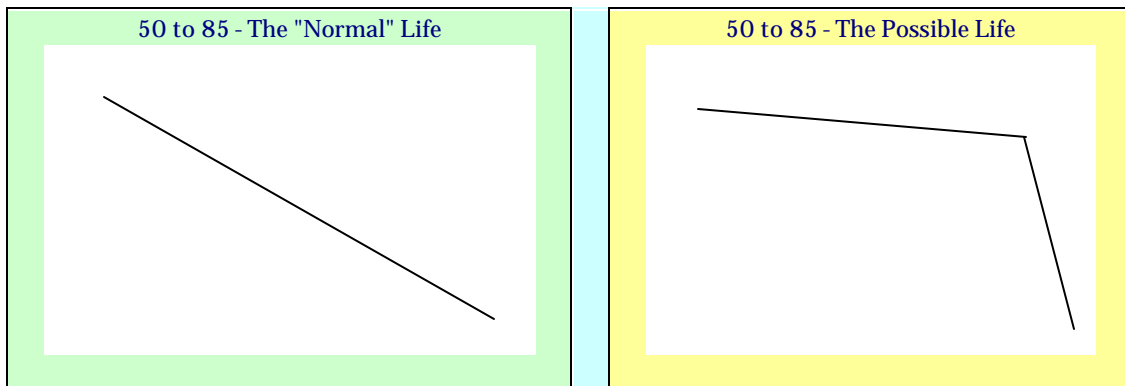
We should get an education, work hard for the "heart" of our life, retire ("enjoy the fruits of our labor") – and we stop here, because the rest of the picture is not that pretty (get/be old, spend most of our money and a lot of our time visiting doctors, being in the hospital, rehab center or nursing home . . . and finally dying).

We need brain surgery to break this model, to change this paradigm!

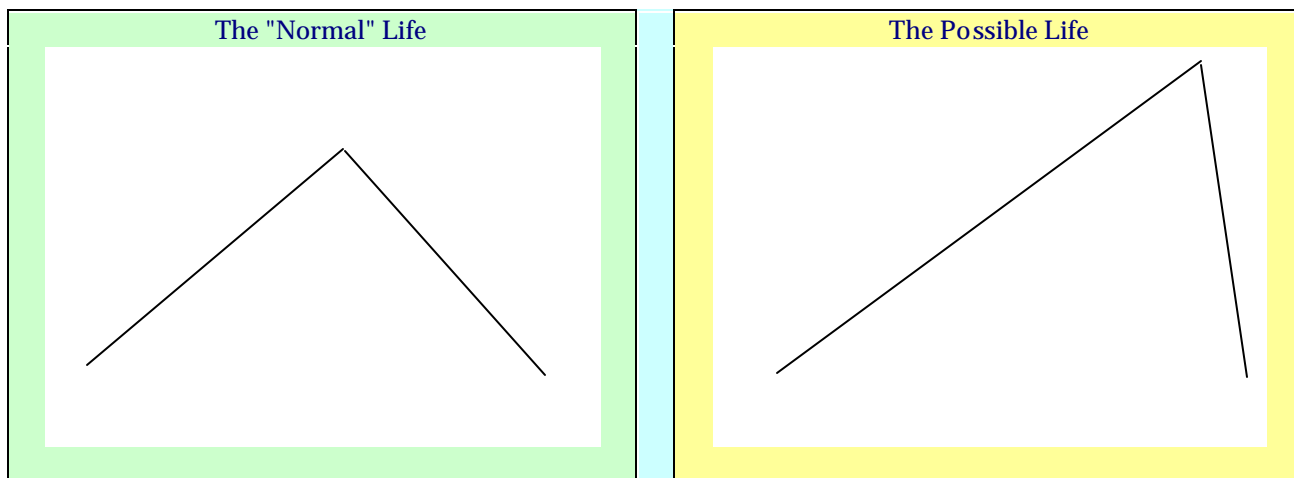
There is a valid reason why we normally search for a confident, assertive, self-assured person (probably in their 30s or early 40s – or maybe late 20s if they have proven themselves) to fix our computers, design our houses, repair our bodies, etc? these are the folks, typically at the "top of their game"; they are about the right distance between current schooling and experience. Those younger generally don't have the necessary experience and those older too often have an antiquated education (or attitude) and have gotten stale. This is the way we think about finding people to help us – this is often how we make these decisions. And in this case, we are more often right than wrong – so why do we need brain surgery?

We need radical brain surgery, not so much as a consumer, but as a supplier and seller of our services. Do we want to (without thinking and challenging "prevailing wisdom") fall into this pattern of declining "worth" and value as we age? Is this decline inevitable and irreversible or can we actually increasingly improve the standard and quality of our life by giving it some thought and apprehending and harnessing the power this thinking will result in?

Just as in reviewing the paradigm of physical aging (in *Keep It Idling Part I*) is best told by a picture, rather than a thousand words:



a picture can best illustrate the “normal” versus the possible life of worth and contribution over a lifetime. Who should be satisfied with what the world offers, even though we live in the best the world makes available? At what point should we give up – give in to the inevitability (there is that word again – misused to our detriment unless we challenge the prevailing ignorance) of becoming obsolete, worn-out and worthless? Here is the contrast – a picture of the normal and possible life in relation to contribution, productivity, worth (or whatever you want to call it):



It is OK (and often right) to do something making less money or change fields or expertise later in life (you can still use much of your experience!), but this is different than retiring to “Sun City.” Who can imagine anything less interesting than a life focused on self-indulgence (which is all most retired people have to do) – at least hedonistic college students are preparing for some future!

Maybe Life’s Most Critical

For the first time in about 25 - 30



Age and Juncture

years (almost so long maybe we don’t think about it any more) significant physical changes start to occur in the mid to late 40s – it is time for bifocals, the slow slide down to the mid-section becomes an avalanche . . . negative aging, for the first time, become evident. Either we ignore and deny the dangers (effectively accepting these conditions of the inevitability of aging as inevitable) or we challenge and mitigate them with thought and action! Most people fly right past these warning signs without giving them a thought!

And it is not just the physical changes that come at 50, but the even more important attitudinal changes – at just the time we should be “stepping it up” (health, professional training, etc.) many step it down – concentrating not on improvement, but on just simply making it to the magical sunset years (focusing on illness, retirement investments, etc.); an attitude that WILL result in a loss of meaning, productivity, contribution, etc.

And Where is God While All This is Going On?

I have always thought is a stupid question (theory bores me to death!) – “If a tree falls in the woods and no one is around, does it make a sound?” Who cares! But there is a similar sounding question that is invaluable:

What is the effect of grace is no one recognizes it? Is there/it still grace?

Yes, there is still grace from which God will receive glory. But, the receiver may obtain only a small fraction of the possible full benefit if grace is not recognized; and the recipient may not learn to seek and find future grace unless current grace is acknowledged and appreciated.

Church people, too often, characterize *grace* as something God does for us while we are passive – “I want to be healthy, but I don’t think it is right that I have to exercise – then it would be me doing it, not grace” . . . “I should be able to retire and do nothing like everyone else (unless I receive grace so I can retire sooner, richer, etc.) – it’s not grace if I don’t retire and strive to remain productive and meaningful – this would be my effort, my work and to my credit!” . . .”Grace means I will have more. If I am satisfied with less, that’s not grace, that is ME – something I can be boastful about!” But these are just misunderstandings of grace!

Grace usually manifests as the power to do more than we could otherwise think or imagine. If, for example, it is so easy to exercise (everyone has been exposed to the great health benefits of exercise), why don’t most people exercise? The answer is most people cannot without grace. The same is true with thinking; everyone, theoretically, can think – but it takes grace for most people to think. Grace can (but seldom will) give the benefits of thinking without thinking – grace gives the ability to think (and the best book to think from, about, on . . . is the *Bible*) with the result being the thinker obtaining the benefits. Our being given the ability and desire to do a, b or c is just as much (if not more!) grace as our being given the result of doing a, b or c without doing them! Grace takes different forms; in most cases, however, grace includes us in the “doing” process.

The ability to stay connected to life, to be productive, a giver rather than a “vegetable” will be by grace – again, while theoretically possible (and even accomplished by a few people who with greater natural talent and discipline), for most people this power will only come by grace – a grace working with and through actions of the one receiving grace.

We are forewarned of graceless religion in the *Bible*:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves . . . lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — having a form of godliness but denying its power. ^{2Ti 3:1-5}



Who should be satisfied to give up – giving in – and at what point?

Isn’t it obvious how many worries suddenly disappear by adopting the two simple thoughts of exercise (seeking health) and deciding never to stop growing, giving and being productive (seeking purpose and meaning)?

By simply exercising, people (on average) both vastly improve their quality of living while, at the same time, greatly reducing THE major area of expenditure as they age – health costs and insurance?

Likewise, by deciding the traditional retirement paradigm is not the best option, a person will reduce the great need for accumulated funds (and the fear that they won’t have enough to get by – and few seldom do not feel a need for more) since they will continue to be productive and useful. Re•tire is the last thing we need to do – we need to strive to be rejuvenated, reinvigorated, revived, re-energized . . . re•tire? Which sounds better? The person who invented the word re•tire sure hit the nail on the head!

And taken together, these thoughts are even more powerfully synergistic – what if you both exercise and decide to reawaken and relive (versus re•tiring) ? the ability to be a giver should continue to increase with age until the finish line rapidly appears and you find yourself stepping over into eternity.



The  can beat the  if he/she does not give up and give in! 1 Corinthians 1:27-29