



Walking Life's Road

by Ken Bradford

Chapter 1 ***Lessons In Life*** ***From Our Children***

I sometimes go back to the countryside where I grew up. The house is gone, but the same hills and creeks are exactly where they were many years ago. I can almost see a small boy running with his dog, Shorty. They hunt crawdads in the creek for a while and then go back to the barn where I played as a child. I can see the boy taking a stick and a lid from a large metal can, driving it into the ground, and traveling to places he had only seen in his dreams.

As the youngest child of a farmer and a factory worker, there were many times I was practically alone. There was just Shorty and me. Oh, my Dad would take me to the fields sometimes, but sitting at the end of a corn field all day could get boring. With a little imagination, we seemed to make it just fine. We never got into too much trouble, but we did have to find ways of providing our own entertainment.

My Mom always encouraged me to try different things and she taught me many of life's lessons like humility and to always respect and appreciate other people. I always knew that she paid a lot of attention to me after I skipped school in the first grade. There was absolutely no one there to see me, but somehow she knew. I guess it was just the sixth sense moms have. Whether it was the experience of having to choose my own peach tree limb or the events that followed, something left a lasting impression and I never skipped school again – ever!

Are parents of today too busy to pay attention to their kids? Do they too often allow them to go to their rooms with an iPad or a computer, without really knowing what they are doing and who they are talking to? When it comes time to eat, does everyone grab a plate and rush off to separate rooms, while the table in the breakfast nook or dining room is covered up with

Wal-Mart specials? Do we miss valuable lessons of life and business when we decide to buy that new video game or send our kids out-of-town for the entire summer?

Parenting is hard, but if we would only take the time to watch and listen to our children, they could help us tremendously. Business owners could build more successful businesses if they would spend more time and learn to observe and interact with their children.

A recent article at Forbes describes leadership as the art of creating environments that cultivate natural talent to grow opportunities to expand possibilities. So, whether you are a freelance writer, skyscraper builder, or shoe salesman, your children have more natural talent than could be assembled in any business seminar. Just watch and listen to learn some very valuable lessons.

Children teach us humility

Do you ever get a couple of pieces of charred toast served to you in bed on Mother's Day? Dads, how about that awful green plaid tie on Father's Day? Of course, you said you liked it – you just had to. Children are always paying attention to others and looking for ways to serve. They simply want to do something special and be appreciated in the process.

Many people just don't get this principle. They never accept fault for failures and they don't give proper credit for successes. If you run a business, your employees are your customers and your top priority must always be to serve the needs of all customers.

Children are certainly flexible

Children see no limits as to what they can do. They know how to express themselves and are eager to try different things. If you want a child to do something, the best way is to tell them they can't do it – right? Children have vivid imaginations. Have you every grilled a hamburger for an imaginary friend?

Some business owners get hung up on certain ideas and absolutely refuse to alter or eliminate methods that just aren't working. Some seem to even be insulted by change. To be successful, we must learn to think outside the box.

Children can teach us to maintain focus

It's true, children can be easily distracted, but when they get their minds set on something, they are determined. If you tell your child you're going to the zoo on Saturday, I'll bet you don't oversleep.

We must all focus on the things that are important to success. Many times we tend to invest a lot of time and energy in things that really don't matter.

Children have a vision

A lot of children develop goals and dreams very early. Many of them hold on to these dreams until they finally become reality. It is sad that too often it is the adults who steal the dreams of children. Business leaders with no clear vision can't possibly encourage those around them to believe in anything. To be successful, we must deliver a clear message in order to instill our dreams in the important people in our lives.

As children, we were eager to learn and to grow, but as we grew older, we seemed to lose some of the pep in our step. We started to smile less and developed a tendency to lose focus on those little things that once amazed us. Could it be time that we take a closer look at our children and pattern our lives and businesses after those valuable lessons they can teach us?

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