

Chop Wood Carry Water: How to Fall In Love With the Process of Becoming Great (Medcalf, Joshua)

He viewed it more as an obligation than an opportunity.

The next phase was much more appealing and important to him than the present phase.

“The only thing that is truly significant about today, or any other day, is who you become in the process. Each of us are building our own house. Sometimes you might think you are building for your school, your family, your company, or your team, but you are always building your own house... I hope you build wisely.”

“John, Mother Theresa always told people, ‘Be faithful in the small things, for it is in them that your strength lies.’”

Steve Jobs didn’t set out to transform entertainment, computers, music, tele-communications, and education. It happened as a byproduct of passion, persistence, and faithfulness to a small idea.

The problem with small is that it isn’t sexy, and it’s often repetitively boring.

Everyone wants to be great, until it’s time to do what greatness requires.

Dream BIG. Start small. Be ridiculously faithful.

Phil Jackson had just released a book, *Eleven Rings*, and how he was constantly telling the guys on his teams about the necessity of “chop wood, carry water.” No matter whether you are winning or losing, the point was to focus on the process and neither get too high or too low, but instead to control the controllables.

The key to ice climbing is to focus on one solid step at a time. “No man climbs a mountain all at once. He climbs it by making one solid step at a time.”

I constantly have to remind myself that my value comes from who I am, not from what I do.

John looked at his sensei in surprise and confusion, as Akira continued. “It is much easier for your brain to focus on the negatives, even if they are totally outweighed by the positives! Many people’s confidence suffers, because they are more concerned with appearing to be humble, so they have been conditioned to tell really negative stories about themselves and their performance.

But let’s be clear, negativity and a ‘nothing I do is good enough’ attitude is not humility. A much smarter man than I said, ‘Humility is not thinking less of your self, but thinking of your self less.’

Most people never realize their potential, because when things get hard, or they experience failure, they just quit. Or, they never give their very, very best and exhaust themselves in order to protect their ego. They enjoy being able to say, ‘I didn’t even really try,’ or ‘I didn’t really care.’ Because if they did really give it their best, and still failed, that would be too much for their ego to handle.”

let me tell you two very important things: comparison is the thief of all joy, and the grass isn’t greener on the other side. The grass is greener where you water it. You have grown up in a society where things like social media and twenty-four hour television have established a culture that is hyper-focused on comparison. But if you are constantly comparing, you will have all the joy sucked out of you. You must focus on your journey, yours alone.”

“Winning the lottery skips the valuable process of going up the rough side of the mountain. Instead of being forced to learn and develop the skills necessary for creating or sustaining success, you arrive at the top, without any of what it takes to stay there. Talent can be a kind of lottery, John. A talented athlete is often less likely to develop the skills and work ethic that a less-talented one has to develop just to survive, and because of that, they may end up much worse off down the road. They never

learned the work ethic, persistence, and grit needed to overcome the inevitable challenges that life throws their way.

In fact, a wise man once said, “hardship often prepares ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny.⁴”

We can take solace in knowing that we are going in the right direction by the signs on the road. Here are some of those road signs: • This is hard. • I don’t feel like doing _____ today. • Everyone else has more time than me. • I don’t feel like this is making a difference. • Almost no one else is doing this.

“John, there is only one thing you have to do in life, and that is die. You are always doing what you want to do, because there is always a choice. You may not like the choices, or the consequences, but you always have a choice. When you tell yourself that you have to do something, it creates a negative internal energy, but when you realize you want to do something it creates a more beneficial internal energy.” John nodded, “Then let me correct myself: I want to go chop wood, carry water now!”

Today, our parents and coaches do all sorts of things to shelter kids from the consequences of their choices, and rarely inspire them with a mission.

A mission will make you think beyond the moment, which is greatly important because the only thing that is significant about the moment is who you become in the process, and the impact you have on others.

Akira nodded, “Remember that the next time you are struggling and you need a perspective shift! It’s not just what you do, but it is also the heart posture you have while doing it. If you broke your legs, I bet you would give anything to just be able to go for a walk. But it is easy to lose perspective and focus on silly things like the results of a tournament, rather than on being grateful for even being able to participate in that tournament in the first place.

When Jackie got up to speak, he said he wanted to talk to them about the importance of failure, and that failure can be an incredible launching pad if you have a growth mindset. He said that a growth mindset is believing that, “anything that happens to me is in my best interest and is an opportunity to learn and grow.”

‘You can go chase a dream, but then sometimes you look back and there’s a trail of tears behind you. And the tears are usually your wife and kids.’

It took me a long time to learn how to live by principles, instead of feelings.

“At every crossroads there are at least two choices: to view your circumstance as a calamity, or to view it as an incredible opportunity.

He then shared a quote from a man named Eric Thomas, ‘At the end of your feelings is nothing. But at the end of every principle is a promise.’

Many days, you aren’t going to feel like working out and honing your craft. Many days, you aren’t going to feel like treating people really well. Many days, you aren’t going to feel like being unconditionally grateful. Many days, you aren’t going to feel like giving your very best. But the principle says you are going to reap what you sow. The principle says that diligent workers are going to serve kings instead of ordinary men. The principle says to turn the other cheek. The principle says to seek wise counsel. The principle says to speak life and not death. At the end of principles there is life, freedom, hope, joy, and peace. But at the end of feelings is destruction.

“One: you are building your own house. Two: to play present, you must train to live present. Three: you must surrender the outcome and commit to the process or you will become your own worst enemy. And four: no matter what my circumstances are, always chop wood and carry water.”

If you put one crab in a bucket, it will crawl out. If you put multiple crabs in a bucket, they will pull each other down every time one starts to crawl out. If a crab continues to try and crawl out of the bucket the other crabs will break its leg. Unfortunately, John, we live in a society of crabs. But we weren't created to sit still and learn the 'right' answer. We were created to explore, create, to be loved, to love and to learn.

Be courageous, and never listen to 'they.' Once you break out they will call you a genius, and tell everyone how talented you are. They will try and neatly sweep all your years of sweat, turmoil, and uncommon persistence under the rug. Why? Because it is so much more comfortable to believe greatness is reserved for the chosen few than it is to work your ever-loving butt off to become the best you are capable of being."

"the difference between a pest and a guest is an invitation."9

I always ask "would you like my opinion or do you just need to be heard and want me to listen?" Sometimes this annoys them, and just because I could help, I must make sure they need it, want it, and give their permission.

He said that greatness is a bunch of small things done well, added up over time, that most people think are too small to matter.

John, you have learned to fall in love with the process of becoming great, to take the rough side of the mountain, and to let your skills and character be refined by the day-in, day-out process of chopping wood and carrying water. I am so proud of you!"