



KeyNotes[©]

...an electronic dose of **insight, inspiration, and encouragement!!!**

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I spent the 4th of July holiday this year with several friends. Included in this group of several families were quite a few small children; six of which are between the ages of 1 and 6 years old.

As I was watching a couple of the children play, I noticed an interesting, yet predictable pattern: whenever one of the children wanted something that another one had they made no secret of it. Several times, the situation degenerated into a screaming, crying, tug-of-war. Parents of the involved children had to intervene, so that we could enjoy a relative, though temporary, peace.

On more than one occasion I heard one of the children's mother tell her child "we share!". The look on the face of the child was priceless. It seemed to say "YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!!!!". A child's definition of "share" is basically this: "the thing that's supposed to happen whenever **you** have something **I** want".

We rightfully look on the actions of selfish children with disapproval. It's ironic, though, how many adults act just as childish? If you need proof of this, simply watch just about any reality TV show, or a rerun of "The Jerry Springer Show". The prevailing message is that it's all about "me, Me, **ME**" !!

If we allow ourselves to be overexposed to examples of such people who "do not play well with others", we can become desensitized to the fact that selfishness spawns more selfishness. The positive flip-side of that is also true: selflessness, acting to benefit others with no strings attached, creates a wave of goodwill with infectious momentum.

I encountered one case in point in late October 2002, as I was at my computer one evening reading through stories on the website of my local newspaper. I happened upon a report of a high school football game that had taken place in McDermott, Ohio.

I initially thought it a bit odd that my local paper would report on such a "small time" sporting event that took place in another state entirely. As it turns out, however, the story was about high school football only on the surface. On a much deeper level it was life, and about the benefits of selflessness, and giving to others.

The two teams involved were from Waverly High School and Northwest High School. Northwest had a player named Jake Porter, a young man with high energy and a great personality. He was one of the school's more popular students. In fact, when Jake was a freshman, the homecoming queen picked him as her escort to the big dance.

He was also on the football team. For 3 years, he attended every practice, suited up for every game, ...but he never played. Jake was born with a genetic condition that rendered him mentally challenged. I can understand how someone could be cynical, and ask "so why was he even on the team? Was it some type of misdirected pity!?"

The answer is simply, no. He was on the team because his outlook is the type that makes those around him want to be better people, and give a little more.

Because of his outlook and positive influence on the team, Jake's coach, Dave Frantz wanted to get him in for at least one play before his senior season ended. Waverly was a powerhouse team, and was expected to soundly defeat Northwest, so a week before the game, both coaches agreed that if the last play would have no effect on the outcome, Jake would come into the game, get the ball, take a knee (nobody would hit him), and the game would be over.

Two hours before the game, Jake met Waverly's coach, Derek Dewitt. Coach Dewitt took an instant liking to Jake; that's just the effect Jake has.

As the game progressed, the outcome that was expected was well underway. With only 5 seconds remaining in the game, Waverly was pounding Northwest, 42-0. (The official technical football term for this is: "a whuppin' ".) When Coach Dewitt saw Jake come in for that planned final play, something in his spirit said "no, that's not enough". With his team on the verge of their first shutout, he called timeout. He talked to Coach Frantz, and told him "Let him score, Coach. We're going to let him score."

Despite Coach Frantz's objections that this wasn't necessary, Coach Dewitt insisted. When play resumed, Jake's quarterback handed him the ball. Jake was confused, because nobody moved. This was not at all like they had practiced. He expected the other team to come charging after him, but none of the players moved. ...none of them moved, until both teams turned and pointed the way.

The crowd went wild as they sensed what was happening. 10 seconds and 49 yards later, Jake Porter stood in the end zone. TOUCHDOWN!! Players on both sidelines cheered. Parents and students alike, on BOTH sidelines, cried and hugged each other. As sports writer James Walker wrote, "Tears flowed from the bleachers well into the night, and the life of one young man was changed forever".

Coach Dewitt plays well with others...

His team was about to record a shutout, and he could have held on to it tightly. He could have allowed Jake's "throw-away" play as originally planned. He certainly didn't have to allow Jake to score a touchdown. He could have been selfish, but instead, with one simple, selfless act, he started a tsunami; a huge wave of goodwill. It not only impacted Jake and his family; it impacted those two towns, where people now treat one another just a little bit nicer. ...just because he chose, to give...

There is a huge difference between how a selfishness and selflessness. It is primarily about how we view our fellow-man, and the position of our hearts. It's about improving

the quality of your life, through selfless contributions to others.

I would sum it up like this:

If all that you do, is all about you
You'll miss life's greatest rewards.
But when you begin to give, you begin to live,
And then, you'll be richer, by far.

...GIVE!!!

Make it an AWESOME today, for a BETTER tomorrow!!!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Key". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jim Key, Speaker/Coach

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