

THE  
*RUDDER*  
OF THE  
DAY



*Stories and Scriptures to  
Begin the Work Day*

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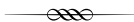
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# DEDICATION



Lovingly dedicated to my wife, Joanne, who has been the main supporting character in my life story for more than 37 years. My days begin and end with your prayers, love and unflinching support. God's finest earthly gift to me is the privilege of knowing and loving you. Your unquestioning enthusiasm for my many projects has allowed me to explore unknown territory and achieve levels of success envied by any man.

*Thanks for being the faithful and accurate "rudder" in my life.*



## INTRODUCTION



Henry Ward Beecher said, “The first hour is the rudder of the day—the Golden Hour.” Since I have discovered that principle, I have seen its truth confirmed in many ways.

Be very careful how you start your morning. You are planting the seeds for what the day will hold. If you get up late, grab a cup of coffee and a Twinkie, rush to work fuming at the idiots in traffic, and drop down exhausted at your desk at 8:10, you have set the tone for your day. Everything will seem like pressure and your best efforts will be greatly diluted.

The importance of planting wholesome, life-enriching thoughts in our minds in that first hour of the day cannot be overemphasized. I never read the paper first thing in the morning, no matter how important it may seem to know the news. The news is filled with rape, murder, pestilence, and heartache, and that is not the input I want in my brain. Later in the day, I can scan the news for anything related to my areas of interest and quickly sort through what I need. But I carefully protect that first hour of the day, making sure that all input is positive, clean, pure, creative and inspirational.

These vignettes appeared originally in the *48 Days* newsletter. Starting with 67 names, the list has grown to over 40,000 people who want to start their week with hope and positive inspiration that can bring out their very most productive and fulfilling potential in the workplace.

I am confident the vignettes, the quotations, the related Biblical references and the application to your own life will enrich your daily walk as well. Enjoy the process as you laugh, cry and learn from the life principles relayed in these stories.

And remember this important thought, “*The first hour is the rudder of the day.*”

Dan Miller  
Franklin, TN

To subscribe to the free *48 Days* weekly newsletter, go to: [www.48Days.com](http://www.48Days.com)

# ALL BEGINNINGS ARE HOPEFUL



CREATING A NEW BEGINNING CAN SPARK HOPE,  
ENTHUSIASM AND CONFIDENCE!

“*All beginnings are hopeful*” is actually a quote from the president of Oxford University, spoken to the entering freshman in 1944, in the midst of a world war. This is a concept that we have seen confirmed throughout history. In working with people going through change, I am often struck by the discouragement, frustration, and frequent anger and resentment. I have come to recognize however, that those feelings always tell me that the person is looking backward, at something that has already occurred. As soon as we are able to create a clear plan for the future, those feelings quickly begin to dissipate and are replaced by hope, optimism and enthusiasm. In all my years of life coaching, I have never seen a person who has clear plans and goals who is also depressed. They just don’t go together.

*The beginning is always today.* —Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797–1851)

Mark came to see me as a frustrated dentist. He described getting into dentistry with no real passion but simply as something that was respected and predictably profitable. He tried to compensate himself for the sacrifices he made there by living a lifestyle beyond his means. Having accumulated over \$1 million in personal debt, he now felt trapped from both sides—unfulfilling work and the bondage of debt. It was only as we began the process of identifying new direction and opportunities that hope and optimism began to resurface.

*The beginning is the most important part of the work.*  
—Plato (427 BC–347 BC), *The Republic*

Viktor Frankl, in his wonderful little book, “Man’s Search for Meaning”, relates his observations of people in the German concentration camps. Age, health, education or ability could not predict those who survived the atrocities there. No, rather it was only those who believed that there was something better coming tomorrow who were able to survive and ultimately walk away from those camps.

Feeling discouraged? Miserable in your job? Just lost your business? Give yourself a new beginning tomorrow! *“All beginnings are hopeful.”*

*From the end spring new beginnings.* —Pliny the Elder (23 AD–79 AD)

Who could you encourage today? Is there someone who needs the hope of a new beginning?

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**FROM THE BIBLE:**

*“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.  
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”*

LAMENTATIONS 3: 22-23 (NIV)

**DIRECTION FOR TODAY:**

**In what area of your life can you have a new beginning today?**

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# GET OFF THE NAIL—TODAY



ARE YOU TOLERATING A FAMILIAR PAIN THAT IS PROMPTING YOU TOWARD A NEW AND UNREALIZED OPPORTUNITY?

I heard a story from my friend Bob about an old dog lying on the front porch. A neighbor approached the porch and could hear the dog softly moaning. He asked his friend why the dog was whimpering. And the owner said: “He’s lying on a nail.” Predictably the man said, “Well, why doesn’t he move?” To which the owner replied, “I guess it doesn’t hurt quite that much yet.”

About a year after sharing this story in my weekly newsletter I had an attorney call me. He said he was that old dog—very much in pain about his daily activities but the pain was still almost tolerable. The image was so indelibly etched in his mind that he started every day identifying with that dog. We discussed his situation, his clear sense that he was off track and the necessity for dramatic change in his life. He was seeing his family, his health, and his peace being eroded by his commitment to keeping things the same. Yet six months later I am still waiting for him to begin the process of introspection and exploration of new options.

*If you don't have a vision for the future, then your future is threatened to be a repeat of the past.*

— A. R. Bernard

The comfort of familiarity can be so alluring; even if it is not the best. I see countless people droning through their mundane lives, hanging on to their comfortable misery and blocking the thrill of new and unrealized but available successes.

I guess a lot of people are like that old dog. They moan and groan about their situation, but don’t do anything. How bad does the pain have to get before you get up and do something else? In the workplace today there are incredible opportunities. If you are in a negative environment, one that causes you pain and anguish, maybe it’s time to take a fresh look at yourself, define where you want to be, and develop a clear plan of action for getting there.

*“He who has learning without imagination has feet but no wings.”*

—Stanley Goldstein

For tips on how to take advantage of new opportunities, check out other information at: [www.48Days.com](http://www.48Days.com)

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**FROM THE BIBLE:**

*“Deliver me from my enemies, my God; protect me from those who rise up against me. . . . they return at evening, snarling like dogs and prowling around the city. They scavenge for food; they growl if they are not satisfied. But I will sing of Your strength and will joyfully proclaim Your faithful love in the morning. For you have been a stronghold for me, a refuge in my day of trouble.”*

PSALM 59: 1, 14-16 (HSCB)

**DIRECTION FOR TODAY:**

**What is that familiar but annoying nail that’s sticking you daily? What could you do to get up and move?**

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# THE SECURITY OF IMPRISONMENT



THE COMFORT OF FAMILIARITY MAY BE KEEPING YOU  
FROM NEW AND BRIGHTER OPPORTUNITIES.

Charles Dickens wrote about a man who had been in prison for many years. Obviously this man longed for freedom from his dungeon of despair and hopelessness. Finally, the day of his liberation arrived. He was led from his gloomy cell into the bright and beautiful and free world. He momentarily gazed into the sunlight, then turned and walked back to his cell. He had become so comfortable with confinement that the thought of freedom was overwhelming. For him, the chains and darkness were a predictable security.

For many people change is frightening. The sameness and predictability of what we have may be more comfortable than the uncertainty of change. Day after day I hear stories from clients about the feeling of being trapped in their jobs and lives. And yet, the comfort of at least knowing what is coming each day appears to be more attractive than the uncertainty of initiating change.

Many people have the “dream” of having their own business. I hear stories about people who purchased a business opportunity, got into a Multi-Level Marketing program, or opened their own antique shop. Six months later they are begging to get their old job back. The challenges of being more independent, having to make decisions about inventory, managing employees, and dealing with new tax reporting forms have caused them to long for the old days—back in Egypt.

Remember those people? When the children of Israel left Egypt they were headed for the Promised Land. But a few days of passing through the desert (a necessary passage to the Promised Land) left them whining to go back to the familiar misery of slavery under the Pharaoh. Yet going through “the desert” is an integral part of getting to any Promised Land. Most business people go through 3-4 ideas and “failures” before they reach extraordinary success.

The first step in creating positive change is to identify what you want. What would the ideal job be? What kind of people would you be working with? What skills would you be using? How would it make a difference in the world? Fortunately, you are not trapped in your job or life. You can choose to walk into new freedom—or you can choose to stay in your own private prison. Like the man in Dickens’ story, it’s tempting to become “secure” even in negative situations. Yet freedom comes only to those who are willing to surrender the security of imprisonment.

*You can't sail to new lands unless you're willing to lose sight of the shore.*

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**FROM THE BIBLE:**

*“Oh, that we were back in Egypt, they moaned, and that the Lord had killed us there! For there we had plenty to eat. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to kill us with starvation. Then the Lord said to Moses, Look, I’m going to rain down food from heaven for them. Everyone can go out each day and gather as much food as he needs.”*

EXODUS 16: 3-4 (TLB)

**DIRECTION FOR TODAY:**

**Do you have a secure prison that is protecting you, but perhaps keeping you from a new freedom?**

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# DIVINE DISCONTENT



DON'T IGNORE A SUBTLE SENSE OF UNREST. IT MAY BE  
THE KEY TO FINDING THE WORK AND LIFE YOU LOVE.

Ralph Waldo Emerson talked about this concept—the “divine discontent.” It is my belief that authentic vocational success is tied to our spiritual well being—the identification of those inner gifts and talents that need to be used for us to feel fulfilled. Now I don’t want this to be so “spiritual” that we can’t find real application, but work has to provide more than just an income.

I see more and more people who are feeling misplaced, off-track or just the angst of feeling like they are not making a difference. With the desire to do something “*noble*” or “*significant*” they are leaving lucrative positions in that search for more meaning and fulfillment. Often they are looking to discard a financially successful professional career path started on years ago. How does a person redirect from a position or profession seen as highly desirable by others?

Emerson said this: *“I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in.”*

Frequently I see “advantages” given early in life that misdirect a person and leave him/her with a strong desire to change course in their 40s or 50s. The best medical, dental or law schools cannot provide enough benefit to provide a fulfilling career path if that path is not a match with the unique gifts of the person involved. The process of finding authenticity is a very individualized and internal one.

Expecting the government or corporations to provide fulfilling jobs is to reverse the process of finding one’s “vocation.” A true vocation helps us grow as persons while we meet our own needs and address the needs of those around us. To have someone “give”

you a job is likely to short-circuit the process of finding your “calling.” Believe you can structure your work around your goals, meaningful relationships, and your dreams and passions. Look inward to give shape to the work that is fitting for you and the application will appear.

**Expect change and workplace volatility to enhance your chances of creating meaningful work. I find that it is often in the midst of change that we find our true direction.**

Emerson adds: *“A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesman and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do.”*

— ooo —

FROM THE BIBLE:

*“Happy is the man who finds wisdom and who acquires understanding, for she is more profitable than silver, and her revenue is more profitable than gold.”*

PROVERBS 3: 13-14 (HCSB)

**DIRECTION FOR TODAY:**

**Can you identify an area of “divine discontent” that is prompting you to make some changes? What can you do to act on that today?**

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# DO YOU WANT TO BE A BUTTERFLY OR A FREAK



ARE STRUGGLES ALWAYS SOMETHING TO AVOID OR ARE  
THEY A NECESSARY PART OF GROWING?

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no further. So, the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But, it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings.

The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly.

How do we view the struggles in our own lives? Are they always something to be avoided? If we have a child who has used up all his/her money and then wants to go to the movie with friends, what is the most growth producing response from a parent? If a young couple purchased an expensive car and now cannot make the payments, what is the most helpful response? If I can't pay my electric bill, should my church take care of it for me?

*"It doesn't matter if you're on the right track; if you're sitting still, you'll get run over."*

—Will Rogers

A world class athlete has to go through years of struggle and rigorous daily training to ever be competitive. Any respected musician has spent hours and hours of making mistakes before finding the notes that create a beautiful sound. Can we recognize the valuable training that is taking place in the struggles of our daily lives? The Tartar tribes of central Asia

had a certain curse they used against their enemies. It was not that their houses would burn or that they would contract a disease. Rather they would say, “*May you stay in one place forever.*” If we don’t see the maturing value of our struggles, that could be our fate.

What the man in the opening story above, in his kindness and haste, did not understand, was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening was God’s way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings, so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon. Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our lives. If God allowed us to go through our lives without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. We could never fly!

— ooo —

**FROM THE BIBLE:**

*“I know your tribulation and poverty, yet you are rich. . . . Don’t be afraid of what you are about to suffer. . . . Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*

REVELATION 2: 9-10 (HCSB)

**DIRECTION FOR TODAY:**

**Can you recall a time when you felt like you wanted relief from a tough situation? Did the struggle teach you something important?**

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