

“Breakfast with Fred”

Fred Smith, Sr.

Notes by Dave Kraft

It is often said it's not how you start but how you finish that counts. In his mid-20s, he decided his life motto would be to “stretch others.” His desire has been to help people fully use their god-given gifts and talents. ...I know his humanity. But I also know that he is a man steeped in God's grace, desiring to be used until his very last breath. (14) Emerson's question to Thoreau, “What has become clearer since last we met?” (15) Education is not the problem—disciplined motivation is. (19) A ship with a lot of steam doesn't get to port unless it stays on course. (20) In my (Pat Williams) book *The Paradox of Power*, I define vision as the ability to see farther than the eye can see and the ability to see what isn't there. (24) Leaving a legacy is much more important to me (Ken Blanchard) than leaving an inheritance. (30) Brother Lawrence said that when he made a mistake, he didn't spend any time thinking about it—he just confessed it and moved on. (32) Steve Brown: My pastor, Pete Alwinson, has a great definition of grace. “Grace,” he says, “is doing good for someone when there is no compelling reason to do so and every reason not to.” (33) My late friend Jack Miller was right when he said that all the bible can be summed up in two statements: (1) Cheer up, you're a lot worse than you think you are; and (2) cheer up, God's grace is a lot bigger than you think it is. (34)

Philip Yancey: As I think about them (Fred's heroes) as a group, I realize that humility is the one characteristic most of them have in common. These are towering men and women who have changed the world around them, yet they have done so in the spirit of Jesus, by serving others rather than dominating them. (36) “Mr. Smith, we are not trying to destroy the traditions of the faith, but we're not willing to perpetuate them without the experience that created them.” (42) Too many people move from data to information to knowledge but never get to wisdom. (44) Chuck Swindoll saw that the life of David teaches that “it is devotion, not perfection, that warms the heart of God.” (46)

The more I can delegate tasks that are not uniquely mine, the more attention I can pay to those that are. I have never been short of time, because I believe I know how to prioritize. I keep for myself the things that only I can do and delegate the rest. (53) To me, doing what only I can do is a proper leadership philosophy. Many leaders tie their ego to activity and forget that results are the measure, not the fact that they turn out the lights at night. Always do what you do best. Stick with your passion. (54) Many people work at things they enjoy and do well but that don't pay big dividends. Work at projects that energize you. Stay away from anything that leaves you feeling drained at the end of the day. (55)

John Wooden...He had an eye for talent and for men who would grow in an atmosphere that demanded their best. (59) We work to find the uniqueness in others and then to develop, encourage and reward it. Catching a vision and then creating an atmosphere in which talented men and women thrive is the role of the leader. (60)

Dr. Mike Murdock, founder and senior pastor of The Wisdom Center, writes, “You are here on assignment. Everything God created is a solution to a problem.” He characterizes one’s assignment as follows:

- Your assignment is always to a person or a people.
- Your assignment determines the suffering and attacks you will encounter.
- What grieves you is a clue to what you are assigned to heal and restore. What grieves you the most reveals the greatest gifts you contain.
- Your Assignment is geographical.
- You will only succeed when your Assignment becomes an obsession.
- Your Assignment requires seasons of preparation. (68)

Dr. Ramesh Richard...gave me the “Five Alones” of the faith:

- (1) by grace alone,
- (2) through faith alone,
- (3) with scripture alone,
- (4) in Christ alone, and
- (5) for God’s glory alone. (70)

Ramesh Richard: ...but the biblical understanding of “faith,” a paraphrase of the technical definition of Hebrews 11:1, is “to believe something that you know is true, but can’t presently see.” (71) The successful people say “I will” and they do it. They create a successful plan *and do*. Too many unsuccessful people get ready, aim...but fail to fire. (74)

Remember the great story of the statue of David? When Michaelangelo was asked how he carved such a splendid work out of the massive piece of marble, he replied, “Simple. (90) I just cut away everything that wasn’t David.” (91) Not knowing anything, I dropped in on a tour just in time to hear the guide describing the remarkable root system of the Muir redwoods. I heard these trees do not grow like pines or oaks with individual root systems. Rather, their root systems, while relatively shallow, are completely interconnected. (100) Here are three simple things that I have learned about people.

First, I have learned that I waste time in trying to correct other people’s mistakes.

Second, I have learned that you can’t change anybody else.

Third, I have learned that people are the way they are because they want to be that way. (105)

Many times events occur in our life that are “beyond arithmetic.” The numbers just don’t add up. Nonbelievers call these coincidences, but we are happy to see them as evidences of God’s active presence in our everyday life. (118) When I was 28, I sat in a cemetery thinking about what I wanted my family to put on my tombstone. “He Stretched Others” came to mind, and it hasn’t changed in 63 years. (123) To think about death too much is morbid. Not to think about it at all is stupid. (125) The person with a healthy ego recognizes his or her strengths and weaknesses, and feels no compulsive need to emphasize either. In my opinion, this is true humility. (131) There is an old axiom that is tried and true: *Be yourself!* You may not be the best-looking, most intelligent or most charismatic person, but sincerity, integrity and humility will compensate for shortcomings and shield you from humiliating experiences. (132)

Frederick Buechner, *The Hungering Dark*: “Your calling is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” (135) Successful men and women have an intense rhythm and energetic pace. You can’t have the placidity of a mule and the winnings of a racehorse! (141) As I think about spiritual leadership, I am convinced that the key is the Holy Spirit’s energizing and directing the leader’s uniqueness and giftedness by giving him or her a vision that creates a passion. I have never known a lazy or confused leader who was clearly passionate. (144) Christian leaders should always remember that theirs is a calling, not a career. The leader must decide from what source he or she wants to hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” (145) It is not the number of tasks, but the net energy required that determines the point of overload. (151) An outstanding young man I recently met said this to me: “A leader is not the one who *has* the best ideas; a leader is the man or woman who *uses* the best ideas.” (157) A leader makes friends with his or her ignorance. In those times when I have had the privilege to be with Fred Smith, I have found him to model the quest for new ideas. The older he grows, the more insatiable is his appetite for learning.

Being teachable reflects the realization that my knowledge is still incomplete. (158) The great executives I have known choose to lead in a way that sacrifices their egos *to* the organization rather than satisfying it *from* the organization. (163) Most of us view success as fame, accomplishment and acquisition. Our society has chosen personality over character. Christian success must be built, instead, on character and not personality—or even skill. The measurement of success is simply the ratio of talents used to talents received. (170) Good habits not only bring us success; they also save us time. Once I told my friend Mr. Jarman that I was a person of few habits. He replied, “You must waste a lot of time.” (179)