



Loving *Life* Fully

A FEW THOUGHTS FROM DR. HERB SENNETT

THE POWER OF PROMISE

FINDING YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE

A great Scandinavian scholar once said, “People understand me so poorly that they don't even understand my complaint about them not understanding me.”

Have you ever felt like you're being misunderstood? Have you asked yourself, "What's wrong with me?" Most of us believe that this is a problem with other people. But, as I thought deeper about his idea of being misunderstood that perhaps it could be that we do not understand ourselves? Could we simply not understand what we're all about?

Perhaps people seem to want to find the promise of power in their lives, when actually what we need to be looking at is the power of promise in our lives. Let me illustrate by sharing a story about my particular life experience. First, you need to understand that on standardized tests and other IQ indicators that I took in the public school system in the 1950's and 60's, I always scored in the “average” parameters. I was not considered in the “elite” of intelligence.

One day during the fall term of my senior year, my high school guidance counselor called me into her office. She had a letter that I had sent to the US Naval Academy in which I asked for information about how to get in. Somehow when they opened the letter, they had ripped my name apart. It seems that I had written the letter in long hand. Unfortunately, the only readable part was my high school name and city. So they sent the letter to the school asking, "Who is this so we can give this person the information he had asked for."

She looked at me with a smile on her face and said, "So you're interested in going to college." Please note that she did not say “the Naval Academy;” she said “college.” She then continued with a chuckle in her voice.

“Herbert, you know you don't have what it takes to go to college. This is silly of you to even consider it. What you need to do is to join the navy” (BTW: I grew up in a navy town.) “... join the navy and learn a good skill, a trade so that you'll be able to support yourself now and when you finish your time in the service.”

Needless to say, my mother had a few words with that lady when I told her what happened.

So, what happened to this guy with an average IQ? Well, I decided I wanted to go to college. So, my mother said, "You go to college if you want to."

So I went to college. Would you believe I crammed a four-year education into five? But, I graduated; not just graduated with a Bachelor's degree, I actually graduated with a commission in the army after completing the requirements for ROTC.

This is kind of different for a guy with just an average IQ. But I kept thinking, "I can do more." Well, the army thought I could do more too and sent me to Vietnam with a rifle in my hand. Then when I returned, I was encouraged to stay active in the reserves. Well, over the course of 30 years, I actually stayed in the army reserves and retired as a lieutenant colonel.

Before I went to Vietnam I wanted to be a disc jockey. I was going to be famous. My mother, on the other hand, responded to that statement by saying, "Okay, well that's fine. But get an education degree anyway. You can do anything you want to but have the education training just in case you change your mind."

When I returned from a year in combat, I realized why I had that education degree. It was so simple. I found my love in the classroom teaching young men and woman about how to face life. And forty-five years later, I retired from a career in teaching. So this average IQ person went on to receive three master's degrees and two doctorates to strengthen my credentials as a teacher.

So what did I learn? I should never let other people limit my thinking. And I am the one who must set my goals. And, third, I can accomplish those goals.

Let me remind you of the words of a little song that was written several years ago.

"I am a promise. I am a possibility;
I am a promise with a capital 'P';
I am a great big bundle of potentiality."

I think the crux of this whole thing is that we need to constantly be looking not just outward to what's going on and responding, but also inside and recognize that "I have promised myself my dreams." So therein, I think, lies the true power of promise.