

Another Perspective

Written by Lori Pankonin, The Imperial Republican

Adults can learn valuable lessons from youth

Are you smarter than a fifth-grader? After seeing an episode of this series, I quickly realized I didn't care to have my intelligence compared to that of a child on national TV. Oh my. The series challenges adult contestants with questions from textbooks of first- through fifth-graders.

This past weekend, I was amazed by a comment from one of the graduating high school seniors written in early elementary years. An assignment started with something like, "Spring is a time for new beginnings. What would you like to learn this spring?"

Estimated to be in fourth-grade at the time, this young man wrote (in very impressive cursive penmanship) that he would like to learn to divide four-digit numbers with the divisor being a one-digit number. Not the typical spring-time aspirations of a kid.

You might expect something more like I'd like to learn to fly a kite or hit a home run. Of course this well-rounded honor student probably had desires for kites and home runs as well. Sure makes me respect motivated young minds.

I recently found myself intrigued with my 8-year-old grandson's ability to achieve a victory that I still can't quite conquer. It involved staying out of a situation which might cause temptation that you're not strong enough to resist.

We had been to an impressive Disney on Ice performance in Denver and headed to the mall for a brief shopping spree. Upon arriving, Austin's dad told Austin not to ask for anything. Jeff then turned to me and asked me not to buy the kids anything. Me? Buy the grandkids something? Whatever made him think I'd have such an inkling?

Thank heavens the mall had an inviting play area for the kids as the other adults were off to shop. It was quite crowded so I was thankful that the area had a half wall surrounding it with only one exit. It was hard to keep all three kids in sight since there were things to crawl through

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and they're each at different challenge levels.

Here came security officers to clear the area as it was time to sanitize. Interesting. Seems like that's more of an after-hours procedure but I did appreciate the cleanliness attempt. On with the shoes and goodbye to Bugs Bunny and the other large character statues.

So now what? We had mall strollers for the two girls. Austin could push one which would help us all stick together. I had brought a sticker book for car time, and once we placed stickers on a page earlier in the trip, Tayvin was ready to color the rest. No colors.

So I suggested that we look for a toy store to get some colors or markers. Not for the kids, of course, but for me. And I'd share.

"NO!!!" was Austin's immediate response as he put his hands to his head. "Not a toy store! I'll want EVERYTHING!"

Wow! Now how's that for impressive?! His Dad told him not to ask for anything, and he knew the toy store temptation would be too painful. So don't go there. It's that simple.

We soon met up with Bunka (as the kids call their grandpa). We were heading back to our group meeting spot when Russ wandered into a Sony store. We followed. Austin saw a DVD he'd like to watch and asked his grandpa if he could get it. No.

"Get me out of here!" Austin said as he pushed the stroller toward the door. "I'll keep wanting to buy something." Again, he chose to avoid further temptation.

Why can't I figure that out when it comes to opening the refrigerator or cupboard when I'm not even hungry? Why don't adults who are in deep debt avoid going shopping when they'll definitely be tempted to buy? Why don't folks who are stressed because they have so much to accomplish avoid getting on the Internet for hours of Facebook or unnecessary surfing time?

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Why do people who aren't strong swimmers think they're going to go after something in deep water when it puts them at risk? Why do sun-sensitive folks spend hours in blazing sunshine when their skin specialist has preached that sun exposure can be life threatening? Why do students sit in front of the TV for hours when homework deadlines are looming?

We all have some gnawing temptation that leads us in a wrong direction. If only we could learn from an eight-year-old and say, NO! I can't go there!

Thanks for the lesson, Austin.

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