

Angels On Our Shoulders

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As with all of you who received the \$100 envelope last fall, I too have struggled with making the right choice in regards to its use. Never before has \$100 weighed so heavily on my mind. How could an amount that was less than any singular monthly bill of my own have any appreciable impact on the multitude of needs that surrounded me? It seemed that at every turn I encountered a worthwhile cause or fantastic program, or desperately needy person that would fit the bill, but I continued to struggle.

Recalling The Parable of the 3 Servants [Matthew Chapter 25: Verse 14] I didn't want to be the third servant, whose fear of making a wrong choice froze him into inaction. You've heard the quote - "The best thing to do is the RIGHT thing, the next best thing to do is the WRONG thing but the worst thing to do is NOTHING". So, looking to several of my SHEROS for guidance, I prayed for Eleanor Roosevelt, Maya Angelou and Suzi Orman to step up and guide me. With that group leading me, certainly I would find the heart and soul and courage to stand in the light before YOU today.

Months passed, possible solutions came and went, all good in their own way, but they just weren't the right fit for me until - I heard two stories. The first was the video that Lance Barton recently put out about the Northern Neck Food Bank. In it, he shared his own story of how he was originally a recipient of food at a food pantry here in White Stone. Much like The Parable of the Lost Son [Luke Chapter 15: Verse 11] Lance had made some poor choices along life's road and found himself in desperate circumstances. So following the old saying "Children need love and attention when they least deserve it", 14 families of that church collected \$5000 to send Lance through a detox/rehab program to give him another chance. Lance states that the simple acknowledgement of him as a human being made a tremendous impact on his motivation to succeed. Lance returned and the rest is a happy history. Certainly a good investment with a fantastic return.

Weeks passed and the second story came to me. A neighbor was telling me of a homeless couple here in White Stone. The couple started coming to the Food Pantry at the WSBC Community Friendship House. Eventually they began helping at the Food Pantry and through conversations they were able to find jobs and a place to live. Time passed and over the year[s] this couple were witness to the gentle strength of the people connected to the WSBC and to the courage and fortitude of the people who came to the Food Pantry every week. With nothing material to give, they were grateful to be able to share hope, love and encouragement with one another.

More time passed and the once homeless couple saw themselves in a different light. They had been accepted into a community, found a place of value as they were able to fill a need. They looked around and recognized a common thread in the couples they had

met. They saw the many years of courage and unconditional love that kept these longtime marriages afloat during good times and bad. They saw the seed of hope for those same qualities within their own relationship. They wanted to be married.

Hearing this, a small group of the WSBC congregation decided to give the couple a wedding. They found a wedding dress for the bride, and a dress for her bridesmaid, and a suit for the groom. The ceremony was attended by a few family members and friends and was followed by a reception with a lovely buffet and wedding gifts at the Friendship House. ***A church member even lent the couple their car and paid for a 2 day honeymoon! As I sat and listened, I was astounded by the unconditional love and support these people were able to extend.

So that story sealed the deal for me. It gave me a direction for my task. It might be the RIGHT thing, it might be the WRONG thing but it is SOMETHING that I hope will produce a wonderful emotional return on the investment.

I took the \$100 - Ben Franklin and inserted him into a FIRST ANNIVERSARY CARD, in which Ben Franklin invited himself to celebrate the couple's first anniversary in 2015. *As you know, Old Ben wasn't much of a husband, but he certainly knew about parties and celebrations! It is my hope that by this anonymous gift, the couple will always feel that they continue to have "angels" on their shoulders in the future. I signed the card simply, "When two hearts in love unite, the yoke is easy, the burden light".

Thank you to all my angels past and present who have helped by their good examples of unconditional love.