

An Inability to Do Nothing: A Reflection on the Traveler's Gift

Andy Andrews writes interesting characters in *The Traveler's Gift*. One of them, a Union officer fighting to save Gettysburg against formidable odds, swears he will keep fighting.

"I am only a stubborn man, Ponder. That is my greatest advantage in this fight. I have deep within me the inability to do nothing."

And, of course, if one cannot do nothing, one must do something.

I like to say that tenaciousness and naivete are my greatest strength. I don't know what I can't do, so I keep trying until I succeed at doing it, and then I'm told, "People don't do it that way. You can't just. . ."

Well, of course you can. I did, didn't I?

I think what sets successful people and creative people apart is that we don't know when to stop, because we believe that we'll stop when we're done, and for us "done" is success.

The key to true success is perseverance. You don't win, at whatever you're doing, by saying, "I'll just sit here on the curb and see what happens, and maybe I'll join the fight."

Either you'll get trampled, or you'll get left behind when the crowd moves on, when they "press toward the mark," as the apostle Paul said and the Civil War Colonel said to David Ponder.

It's not particularly politically correct to say that if you want to succeed, you have to get up off your butt, get out of your bed, stop spending all day in front of the television or on the phone, and work for what you want.

I'm not that old, but I find it absolutely amazing that telling someone they should work for what they want could in any way be conceived of as negative.

I'm going to tell you now. If you want to get your dream, I can tell you how, in five steps.

Step 1. Decide what one dream or part of a dream you're going after right now.

Step 2. Get started. Do something right now to pursue that dream.

Step 3. Do something else.

Step 4. Hold in your mind what you want and settle for nothing else.

Step 5. Rinse and repeat as needed.

An innate ability to do nothing translates into an innate drive to do something. If you make sure that something is the *right* something, you'll be 90% to the accomplishment of your goal.

Stubbornness may not always be attractive; it can have its ugly side. I really prefer the word tenacious, but I also am fond of "pigheaded."

People who reach their goals, don't give up on their goals. They may die face-down three feet from the goal, but they'll be facing the goal when they die of exhaustion, not shot in the back running from the threats guiding the goal.

If you know how to do nothing, and you're good at it, I suggest that you might choose to take lessons in not being able to do nothing. It's a much more useful skill, and you'll find much more to do, if you're doing.

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