

2nd Opinion: Lessons learned 'the hard way'

January 6, 2012

Instead of year-end analyses and new-year resolutions, I prefer to share important lessons I have learned. Most came the hard way. That's the first lesson: The easy way rarely leads anywhere worth going.

Here are others as we begin a new year:

- Make your bed and wash the dishes. Take pride in doing the basics well.
- If you make a mess, clean it up.
- Trust your gut.
- Seek justice, not revenge.
- Tell the truth, even when it's inconvenient.
- If the cashier gives you too much change, give back what isn't yours.
- Embrace your uniqueness; don't rush to conform.
- Be as beautiful, handsome, successful and skilled as you can be, and don't listen when others set standards and boundaries that only serve them.
- Listen first; speak second.
- Don't tell anyone to "shut up," especially a child.
- Don't let someone pay you less than you are worth. Don't demand more than you are worth.
- Enjoy work.
- Don't go along with the crowd.
- Not every argument is worth having. Look up facts, and be kind toward opinions.
- Being right counts for little. Getting your way counts for little. Being generous counts for everything.
- Dream unceasingly. What you see in front of you is never all that can

be.

- Change isn't your enemy. People who resist change to protect their privileges are the enemy.
- Light and darkness are always at war. Your life is what they fight over.
- When a preacher tells you what you want to hear, stop listening.
- Politicians and cowards aren't to be trusted.
- Eat simply, live simply, love extravagantly.
- Soldiers fight wars that politicians declare. Respect and support the troops, and then choose better leaders.
- When teachers and bankers earn what they truly contribute to society, it will be a better world.
- A healthy society protects the vulnerable. A corrupt society allows dark forces to prey on the vulnerable. We live in the latter, and it's time to fix it.
- Praying to God is wise. Scripting God's response is foolish.
- When people quote Scripture and the Constitution in pursuit of power, your freedom is at risk.
- People want jobs, not handouts. People want respect, not pity. People want freedom, not comfort.
- Owning a black robe doesn't confer wisdom on a judge or a preacher; just look at the Supreme Court.
- If someone criticizes you for voicing an opinion that they don't like, voice it again. And again. The sky won't fall on either of you.
- The greatest rock 'n' roll songs of all time are those that made your heart sing.
- Always be reinventing the wheel. Always pursue change for the sake of change.
- Be curious about what lies around the next corner.
- Read stories to children. Then buy them books.

Tom Ehrich is a writer, church consultant, author of Just Wondering, Jesus

and founder of the Church Wellness Project. His website is www.morningwalkmedia.com. (RNS)