



The Journey Towards Those Paths Which Hold Your Heart.

Dr. Ed Poole, Founder & President
3108 S. Route 59 Suite 124-213
Naperville, IL 60564
630.674.4480 • 630.364.3929fax

Lessons
For Your Journey, Inc.

THE LESSON GUY

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WELCOME TO THE LESSON GUY!

I want to welcome you to the very first issue of my newsletter, THE LESSON GUY. The newsletter will be published quarterly on the first day of May, August, November, and February. Each issue will include stories, lessons learned from our stories, and updates from THE LESSON GUY. The stories will share insights from both personal and organizational growth. It is very important to share through our stories the many connections between our personal and organizational lives.

I'm very excited to be launching my newsletter. The idea of communicating with all of you, and encouraging you to share with me, has been a "work in progress" for a long time.

I hope you enjoy reading THE LESSON GUY. The newsletter will be informative and helpful to you each day of your personal and professional lives. If you have any thoughts or feedback, please send me an email. I will look forward to hearing from you.



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SITTIN' ON THE PORCH AT THE CROSSROADS

This section of the newsletter uses a combination of the titles of my two books. Each issue will contain stories and lessons from these two books. **ADDITIONALLY**, I want to include **YOUR** stories and the lessons you've learned from your own stories.

I want to invite you to share your stories and lessons for one main reason: The story of any one of us is, in part, the story of all of us. My lessons are not your lessons and vice versa. However, every single person who has talked with me about my books has said, "Ed, I could identify so much of my own life in yours." I am very certain that, as you read my books and this newsletter, you, too, will find insights into your own life journeys. In turn others will find part of their stories in your ongoing

journey. I encourage each of you to share your stories and lessons learned from the stories. The stories and lessons can reflect any part of your life: personal, professional, spiritual, times of joy or times of sorrow.

Each article should be no more than 200 words. Please submit your stories to me by the 15th of the month prior to an issue of the newsletter.

SITTIN' ON THE PORCH AT THE CROSSROADS will be one of the most important sections of each newsletter. It may take some courage on your part to share your stories. I encourage you to step out of your comfort zone and share.

"What I want

I can't have.

What I don't need

I can have in abundance."

Words and music by: L. Robert Anderson

One cold, gray spring morning before the caffeine hit my bloodstream I wrote the statement above.

Did this ever happen to you? You're single, you're looking and you're eager. You meet a vulnerable, beautiful woman with an Annie Oakley heart and a Jane Fonda smile. Seven digit numbers change hands on napkins. She calls you, you freak, and you meet. You call her, she meets you and you freak. You finish each others sentences...you like the same lines in the same movies for the same reason and more – motorcycles, oysters and Neil Young on my guitar...it doesn't get any better than that! There's just one catch... she's married. She says her husband abandoned her and their two boys five months ago and he is living with his girlfriend in North Carolina. No way is their "marriage" gonna last. I'm here for a reason.

As I saw her more frequently, I came to believe that God had placed me in the center of her life at the perfect time. He had picked out the perfect match for me and surely His divine grace and justice would prevail. In time it would be clear to the both of us that the footprints of our souls were one-in-the-same. But the joy of

the journey was at times overwhelming for me. It had been seventeen years since I last told a girl I loved her. I was becoming consumed with this woman.

We would meet three to four times a week. Conversations were so engaging we rarely noticed our surroundings. I had a keen sense of humor and could easily make her laugh...and when she laughed, I loved... right to the core of my soul. The many shared emotions and connections we had in the past and the present were almost kaleidoscopic in nature. I often thought it would take three friends and two old girlfriends to equal what we had and I praised God for this.

Seven months had passed since I first met her. I had just returned from a trip to Florida and called her to meet...usual place, usual time. She said she had to make dinner for her family. I asked if "family" meant her husband too. He was back! Apparently he had returned the day before I got back from Florida and brought a large suitcase full of contrition with him. She wanted a normal family environment again..."but we could be friends." The sting of those five words nearly made me collapse.

So what do I do? When he was gone she loved me. Do I wait for him to bail on her again? Will he? Do I stay away and move on? Will a sharp bitterness toward God prevail? Or maybe I simply call him. What would you do? As of the date I write this there has been no contact. I have come to believe that the mystery of her and what might have been will haunt me for the rest of my life.

Sometime later, after the caffeine had successfully made its way through my

bloodstream, I wrote: The temptation of pursuing a relationship one can't have is a futility that in time will only serve to poison and scar the emotional psyche of the human spirit.

THOUGHTS FROM THE LESSON GUY...

The story submitted by L. Robert Anderson took courage to share. There is a reason he took advantage of this opportunity to share his story with you. As in all of our stories there are lessons to be learned. While reading this story, you may find many different lessons emerge. The lessons are unique to each individual and therefore one needs to take from the story what pertains to him or her. Putting your story into words allows you to reflect upon it and pull those lessons that are applicable. This will allow you to gain knowledge and move in whatever direction you need to.

Like many of our stories, Robert's is a blend of happiness, joy, grief, and reality. At this point it seems Robert's lesson is the title of his story: "What I want I can't have. What I don't need I can have in abundance." He doesn't know for sure if this is the lesson that will remain as time goes on. We neither have control over what God has in mind for us, nor His timing for when we learn our lessons. Learning lessons is an ongoing adventure. It is apparent to me his friend came into his life for a reason. If God is saying she has served His reason for their friendship, Robert's current lesson will be his final learning. If, however, God has allowed their paths to cross for a season or a lifetime, eventually he will learn other lessons.

THE SYMBOL FOR MY JOURNEY

Located in the left-hand corner of my company's logo you will find the symbol of a labyrinth. This symbol is a very important metaphor for the journey I've been on the last ten years. A labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates our journey toward wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. At its most basic level, the labyrinth represents the journey toward the center of our deepest self and back out again into the world. It is a metaphor for my life's journey, a symbol that creates a sacred space and place and takes me out of my ego to that which is within.

All labyrinths start along an inner path. While traveling this inner path, I was led outward and then back toward the center. After reaching the center, I retraced my path to the outer part of the labyrinth. The path of this sacred journey represents my hope for life itself – the magical and mysterious synchronicity I seek between my inner and outer self.

Every labyrinth wherever found in any part of the world, has the constant structure I just described and which you see on my logo. However, each labyrinth has its own unique look in its distinctive setting. I walked many labyrinths in different parts of the country while writing *LESSONS FROM THE CROSSROADS*. Even though each had an identical structure, it also looked very different because of the setting in which I found it: the hills of Brown County, Indiana; along the Riverwalk in Naperville, Illinois; the Cenacle Spirituality and Retreat Center in Warrenville, Illinois; and Ghost Ranch, New Mexico. It is important to me that

you recognize the symbol and its importance in my life.

The labyrinth represents the reclaiming of my authentic path, the connection of my inner self with my outer world – just as the porch represents an understanding of how to manage changes in my life.

PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL STORYTELLING

Everyone has a story. Have the patience to listen and the wisdom to learn.

Stories have been part of our culture since the beginning of all time. The earliest records known to man indicate tribes sat around their campfires and told the stories that allowed their culture to be passed on from generation to generation. Everyone sitting around those tribal fires had the patience to listen and the wisdom to learn.

The book Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery shares this important thought about storytelling: “When we tell about our lives, we give shape to the events we have lived; they take on a pattern and new dimensions of meaning. Telling our stories is an act of healing – the beginning of all forms of systemic change.”

Every person, and organization, has stories it tells about itself – stories that explain the past, tell what is important and capture identity and aspirations. Some of these stories repeat endless cycles of non-accomplishment, others tell takes of great adventures and enormous achievements.

We are inevitably storytellers, weaving together selected bits of the complex flow of life into some semblance of coherence. Human beings are meaning-making creatures. Our mood, our past experiences, our culture, our gender, our beliefs are just some of the filters through which we sift the data of our lives and select our stories. This filtering process exists in organizations as well. What we pay attention to shapes the stories we tell and the stories we’ve been told shape what we pay attention to.

Some of the questions we have as leaders are: What is presently true for this organization, team, or individual? What is not yet realized? Where is the tension between what is and what could be? In The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook Peter Senge said, “Language is the medium through which we create new understanding and new realities as we begin to talk about them.”

Like the fish that can’t see the water, we don’t always know where our deepest motivations lie. There is a profound deepening of our own experience when we hear it as a story. Telling the group’s story makes each individual story everyone else’s as well.

Organizations need to hear their leaders tell stories. These stories must be about both the successes and the failures of the company. Sharing stories about failures gives permission to others to try new processes, fail, and then learn from their failures. Whether or not a leader is viewed as charismatic, if she or he does not have the ability to acknowledge and connect others’ deepest feelings and longings, and in so doing, invite them into a shared story, she or he cannot truly lead. It is the ability

to create an essential, communal, multiplied wonder, and in so doing, allow each person to see his or her own potential part in a great story that is at the heart of great storytelling – and great leadership!

Storytelling is the best approach we can use to understand where we've been, where we are right now, and collectively create the vision for where we want to go.

LESSONS LEARNED ALONG MY JOURNEY

Each issue will include thoughts from the 31 Lessons in my two books, LESSONS FROM THE PORCH and LESSONS FROM THE CROSSROADS.

LESSON #15, The Porch

"I designed some beautiful masks while on the porch."

While on the porch, I became a master craftsman at designing masks for my life – masks that made for both comedy and tragedy. I had a mask for everything I did and for every role I played – husband, father, son, educator, neighbor, and community member. Wearing my masks kept others from knowing who I really was, and more importantly kept me from knowing who I was. I did not know how to be transparent. I was afraid others would see the real me. I also feared I would find the real me. My masks became a defensive symbol to hide behind, much like the false storefronts in the old Western movies. When we looked behind the propped-up wall, nothing was there.

When who we are depends on our external validation, we betray ourselves. While wearing our masks, others cannot see through, and we come up wanting.

LESSON #4, The Crossroads

"Our memories provide common threads for findin' home."

Findin' home includes my memories of the physical places I've lived, *a function of geography*, and my meaning of faith I discover in my portable home, *a function of my soul*. The changing winds swirling about me reminded me to come home to myself, to try to become who I truly am and struggle to reclaim my soul. Those winds also showed me common threads among those memories.

The memories present themselves as common threads and themes that connect *all* the stories I heard while on my retreats. I found some part of myself imbedded within each story. The gift of these memories helped me reclaim my authentic path out of the crossroads. I saw that life itself is a confluence of all those parts that define who we are. Still, because each of us discovers different connections, our lives differ.

THE LESSON GUY'S Upcoming Events

- April 27: Radio Interview with Mike Buchanan on station KBIZ, Ottumwa, Iowa
- May 9: Radio Interview with Elaine Lawson on station WILO, Logansport, Indiana

REMINDER: SUBMIT YOUR STORY FOR THE AUGUST NEWSLETTER BY JULY 15!

