

Dad's Workbench

There's A Tool for That

"There's a tool for that." I can't tell you how many times I heard my Dad say that. And in the oddity of life, no matter what task we had to do there was a tool for it; not just some tool but a specific tool. Someone, somewhere, at some time had faced whatever challenge we were facing and had designed a tool to get it done with a fair amount of ease and a significantly reduced amount of frustration and stress. The fact that "there was a tool for that" regardless of what I was doing told me that there were some pretty creative people out there, and that I wasn't the first one to face whatever challenge I was facing.

For a kid, I didn't really want to take the time to look for a specific tool. It seemed much more expedient to simply grab something a whole lot more common, like a wrench or a hammer or a screwdriver or a saw and force it to work. I also found out that there's nothing like power tools because they can rip and tear and screw and unscrew faster than you can imagine. You use that kind of power and you don't really need that specific tool because that stuff will blow through the job one way or another. So who needs the right tool?

As you might imagine, two things would typically happen. Either I'd get the job done, but not nearly as fast or clean or professional as it might have gotten done if I'd had the patience to get the right tool. Or I'd totally blow the job and destroy a bunch of things along the way, leaving me wondering what my aversion to getting the right tool was all about. The fact that "there's a tool for that" can be wonderful if you find it and use it, or it can be completely frustrating if you ignore it and blow through a job to the destruction of the job.

The Tool of Recognizing There's a Tool

In living out our lives, I think we need to recognize that whatever we come up against, "there's a tool for that." Sometimes we don't think there is any tool; that there's no resource to deal with or engage whatever's facing us. We assume that our only recourse is to grab whatever tool that's lying around us and get to work. Sadly, we're sometimes not astute enough to effectively discern the challenges around us and then carefully find the tool to deal with it. Rather, we often assume that no such tool exists; that the real challenge of it all is to take what we have and have at it. We think that it's really all about being creative and innovative; of pulling together our assorted array of mismatched tools and figuring out how to apply them to something that none of them are really designed for.

The Tool of Creativity

Sometimes life is like that. Indeed, sometimes life demands the fullest exercise of our creativity. At times circumstances will leave us with monumental challenges and only a handful of the most primitive tools to deal with them. We will all stand in places and have events transpire that are immeasurably bigger than the handful of sordid and banged up tools we've got to deal with them. In these instances the tool that we use is our creativity. One of the greatest tools that we have is the ability to take our personal resources and use them in a manner that makes the sum total of them much greater than what any of them could achieve or be individually. Our creativity allows us to see not what our resources are, but what they could be if used creatively and in unique combination with each other. Creativity is the ability to expand on those tools which by themselves are limited by their own designs. Creativity means that nothing needs to be only what it is, but that things can

2 - Craig D. Lounsbrough, LPC

be much more if they are used in a manner that's not quite as obvious as the obvious.

The Tool of Determination

Harriett Beecher Stowe wrote, "When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you could not hold on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn." Determination is not stubbornness. Rather it is the belief that something is going to happen if we push it and press it far enough. Determination is a tool that causes us to drive our situation beyond what appears to be a conclusion or a failure or a dead-end. The tool of determination is exercised understanding that stubbornness is simply bullheadedness for the sake of being bullheaded. Determination is much more strategic than that. The tool of determination recognizes that persistence is the not exercise of futility, but an understanding that additional pressure rightly exerted can move what seems to be immovable.

The Tool of Faith

Patrick Overton wrote that when pushed to the brink, "faith is knowing one of two things will happen: there will be something solid to stand on or you will be taught to fly." Faith is believing in something that you can't see and standing in the belief that something exists despite your inability to perceive it. With the whole concept of faith, we can rest in the fact that our challenges are not bound by whatever limits them or whatever limits us. We can engage our challenges with an eye set firmly on what we're facing while concurrently realizing that what we see is not all that there is. Faith recognizes that there's more than what we perceive and that we have the ability to engage whatever that is. Faith then is a tool that dramatically expands the scope of what we can do and enlarges the possibilities.

The Tool of Wisdom

Wisdom is often defined as the application of knowledge. Many people have knowledge, but they're not knowledgeable in the application of it. We can be book-smart and street-smart and just plain smart. Yet, we can be stupid in the application of our smartness. Wisdom is the manner in which we carefully discern the challenges before us and then wisely draw from our knowledge base. Wisdom also freely recognizes that we may not have nearly enough information in the first place, and that at times we must put our efforts on hold and search out whatever information we need to make the right decisions. Wisdom demands that wisdom itself never be short-changed, abruptly utilized or applied in some sort of arrogance that makes wisdom something else altogether. It is a precious tool.

So Many Tools

There are so many tools at our disposal. Sadly, we're often not introspective enough to really discover the tools inherent within us, or we're too busy to care. Indeed, the tools are there. Somewhere inside of us "there's a tool for that" or there's a tool to create a tool. We come marvelously equipped with the ability to be equipped in a way that there will always "be a tool for that." And so, you may want to take a tool inventory and see what's inside of you. You'll likely be quite surprised. As Dad said, "there's a tool for that."