



Go Back to Your Foundation

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

Most of us have values that we try to live by. We acquired our values very early in life, often before we can remember. Usually values are passed on by parents, but there are other sources such as the church, school, or a close relative. Values usually remain with us throughout our lives, changing very little, if at all. Our experiences in life will color how we view the values, but they normally do not change.

In 2010, I heard an inspirational speech by the great Wintley Phipps. If you don't recognize the name, you would recognize his golden baritone voice singing religious songs like "Amazing Grace." Wintley gave the keynote address at the National Speakers Association Convention in Orlando Florida. The title of his speech was "The HPLP Gene." The whole hour was devoted to convincing us that we each have a Gene called "Helping People Live their Potential."

He recounted numerous stories from his life where his "heroes" taught him great lessons and how those things became his foundation as he caught the HPLP Gene. If you are interested in listening to this excellent speech, it is available for free on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8bW5s2-nZ8>

His main point is that those people who pay it forward are living the life that God intended for us, and that behavior will provide us huge rewards in life. Even if nobody remembers us, "History will record that there lived a man, there lived a woman who had the Gene: The Helping People Live Their Potential Gene."

One vivid story I recall was about a skyscraper in New York City. At one point the building developed a serious crack on the 62nd floor. They called for the Structural Engineer to come in and figure out what was causing this problem before serious damage was done. When the building owner came in and went to the 62nd floor, he could not find the engineer. They told the owner, "Oh no - he is not here; he is down in the 6th basement."

When the owner got to the 6th basement, he asked the engineer what he was doing down there because the problem was on the 62nd floor. The engineer told him, "The crack may be on the 62nd floor, but your problem is down here in the 6th basement."

Apparently, one of the guards for the building wanted to build a garage but did not have the money for materials. So, every day before going home, he would go down to the 6th basement and chisel a brick out of the foundation to take home in his bag. After he had done this for several years, a crack appeared on the 62nd floor.

Wintley told the audience that when things are not working right in our lives, we should not be looking for the cause on the 62nd floor. "Go back to your foundation! Go back to the HPLP Gene and make sure you are helping people live their potential."

Whether individuals or organizations, we need to heed the advice of Wintley Phipps. When things seem wrong in our lives, we need to go back to our foundation, back to our values, and make sure we are living up to the lessons we learned early in life. Personally, I think the world would be a much better place if every individual actually wrote out his or her values and every organization did the same thing. Much more powerful than writing them, however, is to be absolutely fanatical about living those values every single day.

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