

AGAIN, AGAIN AND AGAIN

Most things that we do or hear over and over again become ingrained / imprinted in our mind.

Also, there are things we **don't** do or hear often enough.

For example: there was this old Mennonite farmer who confessed, "I love my wife so much,.... that I almost told her so."

Some things are worth saying...and.. worth repeating.

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There is power in repetition.

Doing / Saying something over and over again usually gets results.

As they say, "The squeaky wheel gets the grease."

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At a very early age, a child learns that parents can be worn down by relentless begging or screaming. Admit it or not, we teach our children to pester us by giving in.

Badgering/ persistence usually works. It can be annoying, and even more so if the begging is for selfish reasons. Yet, repetitive petitions can also reveal importance and urgency. It can convincingly show one's sincere devotion and commitment.

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In the Genesis text, Abraham, again and again asked God to reconsider,..... because it was important to Abraham. It was personal. He knew people in Sodom

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This is a fascinating story about Abraham dickering with God, and God being persuaded to take a different position.

Was God worn down by the begging or did it simply reveal how significant the issue was for Abraham????

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Over the centuries, Christians have been told again and again that homosexuality was the reason Sodom was destroyed.

That interpretation was ingrained in Christian dogma, even though it contradicts the reason stated in the Bible.

*I suppose we do selective reading.???*

Ezekiel 16:49 clearly states Sodom's sin was inhospitality, quoting, "This was the guilt...of Sodom ...[they] had pride, excess of food,...but did not aid the poor and needy." The sin of Sodom was greed and haughty selfishness.

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What we hear, what we do and what we say again and again.... affects us. It conditions and alters us.

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Nevertheless, we CAN change habits. We can change patterns.

We can question cultural rhetoric.

We don't have to remain "conditioned" /a victim to old programming.

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In the Luke passage, an astute disciple asks Jesus for a better way to pray in public.  
He realized that the common public prayers, many said every day, were empty and mostly meaningless.

So, Jesus presented to him what we call the "Lord's Prayer."

Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is shorter than Matthew's --the one we usually use. It's simpler and bit more intimate. Both versions begin with the personal, possessive third person reference to Abba-- Our beloved parent....or literally "daddy".

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After presenting The prayer Jesus tells the parable of the Insistent Friend.  
This is a story about a man who wakes up his neighbour, and convinces his resisting neighbour to get out of bed and come to his aid.  
The man is persistent because his need to help someone is important, and he finally gets the results he seeks.  
The perseverance worked.

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Repetition is powerfully affective, and not only for the sake of persuasion.  
Repeated actions-- experiences and/or words can alter who we are and how we think. Repetition gets registered as important, even though the message may not be important.

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Advertizing is an example. The key to successful marketing / advertizing is getting the message received over and over again.  
The repetition works. It becomes branded into our thoughts as if it's important.  
Hearing /doing something again, again and again causes it to stick /imprint in our brains, and unfortunately, this often overwhelms our filters for what is rational and true.

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Once imprinted in our brains,..... it's there..... for a long time.

A little test:  
What is the breakfast of champions? -- [Wheaties.]

This one goes back to the 1960s: Who puts a tiger in your tank?  
[Esso]

How about: "melts in your mouth not in your hands" -- [M&Ms]  
Things go better with...[Coke]  
A simple phrase as.....You deserve a break today.....is now welded to? [McDonald's.]

For those raised on a farm: Nothing runs like a....???? [ deer, John Deere.]  
Always Fresh? [Tim Hortons]. Even though it's not anymore.

Finish this one, and it has nothing to do about girls: A diamond is -- [forever].  
DeBeers started that ad slogan in 1948.

And last the example: "Just do it".....??? [Nike.]

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We are **not** too alarmed by surrendering memory cells to consumer products; however, we should be when political leaders use the same method to manipulate emotions & thoughts; it's called propaganda.  
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In the summer of 2002, George W. Bush began repeating, over and over, "Saddam Hussein has Weapons of Mass Destruction."

Regardless of the fact that UN inspectors adamantly asserted that Iraq not longer had such weapons, the repeated message from the government that he did have WMD, Stuck. People were convinced NOT by sound facts and reasoning, but merely by repetition. Over 90% of Americans supported the invasion of Iraq.  
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And, it happens in our country, too.

In 2013, our government spent \$330,000 to see if we approved of their \$113 million propaganda campaign--the grandiose Action Plan ads. Those beautifully crafted ads promoted the government's agenda. The survey revealed that the majority of Canadians did NOT like the ads.

So, the government's marketing people accurately decided that they better run more of those ads.....because, obviously, the repetition had not been significant enough to change our way of thinking. Hearing it again, and again and again,..... works.  
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Repetition is effective; it's powerful.....even when it is more subtle and less apparent.  
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Benefactors of hyper capitalism are keen to repeatedly remind us that the Economy is the top priority. This messages comes to us from many sources, and it asserts that if we mess with the current economy, then disaster will happen. And, that declaration is absurd.

The economy is not more important than nurturing life, ...  
it's not more important than nature... or ...healing....or forgiveness...  
Besides, the economy doesn't have to be based on greed and extraction.  
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Another less noticed repeated message comes from our worst enemy.  
Which is too often ourselves--what we say to ourselves.

What sort of things do we keep telling ourselves? Are they positive messages? ??? They're likely negative. If you tell yourself something, enough times, you'll believe it,....regardless if it's true.  
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Moreover, what sort of things do we keep telling our children, and how are those messages being imprinted in their minds?  
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Think about all the repeated messages that you hear each and every day,...in media.... in movies,.... from others..... from yourselves.

Contemplate/ analyze what is feeding your brain / what is being branded into your thoughts.  
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Daily, hourly we are given fluff.

Bland, meaningless messages are repeated in the media and through our cell phones,.....and they are making us....bland and less meaningful.

Nevertheless, we are not helpless; we can counter the onslaught.  
The same strategy of repeating, repeating life giving messages, can change our thoughts.... can change us.

Counter the negative messages with healthy food for the soul.  
Memorize Bible verses or other uplifting quotations.  
We used to do that all the time.  
Implant good stuff!

Read the Bible and other inspiring books daily to balance out all the other toxic, information entering the brain.

Undo negative comments and negative messages with words of encouragement, hope, love, peace and compassion.  
Work to transform yourself..... and the world, over and over again.

And, stop reading about Donald Trump. It's a macabre fascination, and besides you likely can't vote in the States anyway.

Go for a walk.....listen to birds..... or meet nice people collecting Pokemon creatures.  
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Back to the Luke text:

Jesus presented the illustration on persistence and then commented about knocking on the door in order to receive.  
This is not a lesson on how to nag or be a pest.

To be sure, there is a good reason why Jesus suggested that we keep knocking on the door / that we keep petitioning God in prayer.

Constantly and repeatedly beseeching God seems like nagging or begging God, as if we need to wear God down so we'll get what we want. But, that is not the reason for diligently persevering in prayer.  
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Persistence reveals devotion and commitment.

For example:

When Katherine was younger, she'd come to me asking/begging me to get her something she deemed essential / something she "just had to have."

I would usually tell her to wait...a week... or a month...or six months.

She didn't like that requirement; however, time sorts out what truly is essential from a passing fad...or a fleeting obsession.

Likewise,..... repetition in prayer helps us to discern what is truly important from what is not.

If something is really important, then we are more than willing to pray constantly about it.

God is not making us pay dues.

God is helping us to grow in understanding..... and...trust.

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We don't give up on people we trust.

Frequent prayers to God demonstrates our faith..... and helps our faith grow, too,....and it shapes our life focus.

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Repetition is powerful,..... in many ways,..... and it can be powerfully good.....or not.

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Two final comments:

One, The Lord's Prayer was intended to be spoken, and it's best when repeatedly said out loud. It is a public prayer.

Repetition is magnified when done collectively.

We will repeat the Lord's prayer during the congregational prayer.

Also, the Luke text ends with the instructions on how to receive God's Spirit.

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I've often heard, "I want to be more spiritual" or.. "the church should show us how to be spirit filled."

Well,.....it's right here: Simply ask God,.....and if we are sincere and committed in our desire to be more spiritual, then we will keep asking God, again, and again, and again.

And, in so doing, our lives will be transformed.