

“Philosophical Ponderings” Series

“Associate with people who are likely to improve you.”

Seneca

Benefits of strong family, social relationships, and spiritual support groups have been documented in hundreds of studies. Association with people who provide strong friendships and family bonds enjoy significantly greater emotional well-being, better psychological and physical health, and even increased longevity. Seneca’s suggestion to “Associate with People who are likely to improve you.” is on target for our overall positive feelings inside us.

Last week I shared time and memories with my brother. In addition to enjoying a one-on-one week with him, the high 60s and light breeze of Cheyenne Wyoming weather after three-digit heat was rewarding and inspiring. I was three when Bill left our home in Kingsmill. I was six when he married Ila...one of my favorite inspirers. I am who I am much because of my two brothers and their families and our combined families. And now I can honestly say I was and still am inspired by you and others at Martin UMC.

At the age of ten, I watched as Bill, his wife Ila, and the first three of my nieces and nephews drove over the Santa Fe Railroad tracks less than 100 yards from my childhood home in Kingsmill. Crossing the tracks was the beginning of years of very limited visits with my parents, grandparents, our brother EJay and his family, and me and mine. Bill and his family left that day to start a life of serving God in a Peruvian jungle village, in Afghanistan during the Russian invasion, and finally in St. Petersburg Russia. Although they are not the only ones who inspired me, I know my desire to teach increased due to their influence. I encourage you to think of those who changed or directed your life. Write their name on a tablet, place your hand on the list, and pray to God giving thanks for their presence in your life

The truth is you and I receive positive feedback from people we know well and often from those who acknowledge us in social, professional, and incidental settings around our sphere of living. Often it is the neighbors we nod hello to, the barista who knows our name and can fill our order by heart, an occasional work-out partner at the gym; even our hairdresser or barber, and the list goes on. Who are your friends and acquaintances most likely to improve you?

It is impossible to mention all the difference makers in my life. Professors that guided me toward human behavioral research and biblical teachings at TCU and Perkins Theological Seminary are memorable and significant leaders in my life. They will always be remembered as the shapers of my career. Reverend Mike Young and pastors I have been honored to work with in the Central Texas Conference helped shape my desire to continue serving God throughout the years.

I thank you all for your personal contribution to me and each other, and I challenge you to identify people in your life who did and continue to improve you. Pray for them in return. God bless you and every person you deem to be your influencers.

Peace Always

Ted