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Tippets/Lee

THE NEVERENDING STORY

Once upon a time there was a girl who was a little bit lost in the world. She had big dreams and aspirations, but she wasn't quite sure what to do with them. All her life she had been able to accomplish nearly anything she set out to do without much question. However, the monotony of easy success led her to move far from home in the hopes of immersing herself in something different and changing the pace of her life. When she finally settled into her new home, she quickly found that her problems had followed her. She had trouble encountering the challenges she expected to find. It looked as if there was no escaping the world she tried to leave behind. No matter where she lived, life had its normal ups and downs with nothing more exciting to offer. Even in completely different surroundings, she found that she was confident enough in herself, albeit a little shy when it came to interacting with others. She knew things could be much more interesting and fulfilling, she need only to find the means to make them that way.

Later, when she became involved in a certain class, she found herself thinking that it would be just like all the others. She really was getting tired of trying to find things she was really passionate about. She had previously been involved in things she was told she should be involved in rather than things she wanted to do. She took classes that were required, not ones she necessarily found interesting, but as luck would have it, this class didn't turn out to be quite as she expected. Because the class was focused on leadership and she didn't technically

consider herself a leader (more a doer who was able to find others to help), she was not sure if she belonged. This was a challenge in itself, and she liked that.

As far as monotony was concerned, this course she happened to be taking was far from consistent with her other classes. She was able to interact with her peers and ultimately learn to be comfortable around them. The lectures were interesting and varied where other teachers might have found a constant method of instruction. She found herself more and more interested in this leadership concept and was actually taking the material to heart. So when it came to choosing a task to undertake on her own, she found herself equipped with many tools to tackle it. Once at a lack for means to make life challenging, she was soon able to find that this class was gearing her up for an interesting adventure.

She wanted to do something for her peers. To make a difference for people like her who had moved away from home only to find a serious flaw. In addition to her initial troubles finding ways to make her life more meaningful, she also noticed a general lack of community in this new place. It was somewhat devastating to her that camaraderie was scarce when it came to her school and its city. Sports, horse racing, and drinking seemed to be the only bond many people shared and their complete dominance in an otherwise diverse community disgusted her. Intuitively, this girl had something she wanted to take on. With her newfound focus, she set off to accomplish something she recognized wouldn't be easy.

In planning and carrying out her project, her naiveté and ambitions sometimes got the best of her. She planned big and was under the impression that it would all work out some way or another. Of course she was setting herself for a huge devastation as she continually built on the complexity of this already huge undertaking. She thrived on the encouragement she received and worked in full force right up to the point where reality struck. Meeting with some

individuals she had a lot of respect for was the only thing that could make her see that she wasn't going to accomplish exactly what she set out to do. It was an amazing feeling she had never quite experienced. While somewhere in the back of her head, she knew the truth, but she refused to acknowledge it.

This first real failure struck her hard. She wasn't sure how to stay composed, but she was driven to keep it together and make something out of the work she had done. She really wanted to do something about the community relations, especially because they would affect herself, her friends, and her peers for years to come as they continued their educations. There was also credibility to think about. She didn't want to give the people she had been working with the impression that she or other college students trying to make a difference would not follow through. She talked to everyone she knew, made some adjustments, and went from there.

When her project was finally over, she had mixed feelings. She was elated that it was done and that she would not have to worry about it anymore, but she also noticed that it wasn't as successful as she hoped. This was a problem. It meant that there was a lot more work to do in the future, if things really were going to change. So again, she considered her options. She looked at possible causes of failure, and again she went back to the people she knew. She talked to her peers, and after thanking participants and supporters, she asked for feedback. She planned to keep in touch with those who could help her as well as individuals working on similar undertakings that she could help. She wanted to make a difference and was determined to do so. She just realized that it might take a while.

In all of her work she realized that she could be a leader. She didn't just do things, but got others to work with her to get something done. They weren't just helping her, but also themselves and others. Along the way, she learned a little more about how to read others. How

best to appeal to their needs while, at the same time, getting them to assist with her task at hand. Working on her project, it didn't take long for her to find out that not all people conduct themselves in the same manner or share the same interests. While it was easy for her to assume that every person she approached would be as excited as she was about what she was doing, it wasn't always the case. She learned that people are either interested, can become interested, or simply do not wish to participate in certain things.

The things this girl was taking in inside the classroom had to be applied to her experiences outside. Otherwise, she would have gotten nowhere. The passion she felt she was missing early on came quickly to her when she was working on her project. That passion soon allowed her to show others that she truly cared about what she was doing and why it would be good for them to care about it too. The different types of people she encountered were not always people who shared her demeanor, but she found that this must be overcome in order to get things done. She had to heed others' advice for the best outcome because her personal opinion and aspirations were minuscule when it came to the big picture.

Her experiences brought to light so many concepts for her, but reinforced familiar ones as well. Hard work and determination were not strangers to this girl, yet with this project, she was introduced to new levels of them. The importance of manners was also heavily conveyed. On some days, she would have to interact with others who for some reason or another were simply not pleasant. She realized how much of a difference this made with all of her other dealings on the same day. It was then that she resolved to be as courteous as possible whenever possible to anyone she might cross paths with. Learning new things was great, but taking those lessons along with previous ones and practicing them was a key fundamental.

Taking this class definitely altered the perspective of this girl. Nonetheless, she realized the lessons learned in leadership and life can never be taught at once. It would take years to become the person she wanted to be, and perhaps by then she would want something different altogether. That wasn't the point though. The point was that she wasn't going to change her life in one move. If measured in moves, she would have to look at the world she was creating for herself like a chess games. It would consist of a few calculated choices accompanied by luck and discipline. The ability to anticipate and be flexible would be crucial too. She would have to learn from mistakes and learn from accomplishments. She could be a leader as long as she could grow as an individual, she could be a leader as long as she could understand others, and she could be a leader as long as she could continue to learn.