

LIVING THE GREAT LIFE

BY Thaddeus Lawrence

“SOMETIMES

their brains can cause a mental restlessness, tempting them to take on too much” was the description of my Chinese Horoscope in a Feng Shui book I was browsing at a local bookstore.

“Oh no, here we go again” I sighed. This was sounding all too familiar and I could hear my Dad’s voice entreating me to “Slow down, son”.

Perhaps I have allowed our modern culture’s definition of greatness to cloud my thinking. It is a culture which associates success with

more, bigger and faster. And we bust our chops so as to be the best. That is to say, to be great.

If there was a graphical representation of my mental state, it would probably look like an upward sloping curve that gets steeper and steeper as I go up it.

As I head higher up that curve the definition of greatness changes. What seemed like a death defying, psychotic sporting endeavour in the past now looks like a Sunday walk in the park; what appeared to be a purposeful, poignant

accomplishment of a compelling vision is now an ordinary, mundane slide into mediocrity.

So I enter a spiral of escalation. The Law of Escalation, so to speak, is that the closer I get to my goal, the more it seems that I should have picked something harder. The more I achieve success, the more it seems I should have accomplished something grander.

Instead of writing an article, I should be creating entire tomes. In place of running a standard marathon, I should be charging barefoot across the Siberian Tundra.

Having just recently completed a series of workshops, I am going through a middle-of-the-year self evaluation on who I have been and what I have done for my participants and the associated question of whether I am truly living a life of passion and purpose.

I suppose I am experiencing a crisis of sorts at an age that is past quarter-life but not yet midlife.

Fortunately a part of my work involves children and youths and it is they who, through their magnanimity and propensity to give and love, have been my teachers, surprising me with fitting reminders that I am still making a difference.

Many of these gestures have come from unexpected quarters – students to whom I felt I had not paid adequate attention or whom I perceived had not acquired ample value from my trainings.

Even the reticent ones have found time and space in their hearts to tell me, through homemade notes; on Facebook wall; via sms or verbally, that as far as they are concerned, I have been a meaningful part of their journey.

These kids are teaching me an important lesson that greatness is not necessarily found in monumental feats or earth shattering accomplishments but in the little things and those tiny, special moments that we share.

I am learning that it is those little things that are indeed the big things; that in the seemingly insignificant lies the significant; and that if I would only stop and look, I would see beauty all around me.

I am also learning that it is who I am that is inspiring, not what I do. And it is by continuing to believe in what I do and being purposeful in making a difference to their lives that defines a life of greatness.

Mother Teresa hit the nail on its head when she said “In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love”. 🙏