

Today I find myself thinking about relationships. Not necessarily romantic relationships but relationships of all sorts. I suppose I'm feeling a little nostalgic...thinking back over the relationships I've had with various people and how each has impacted my life.

In church last weekend, my pastor spoke of how each of us sets sail in life and when we interact with others we are like a breeze that affects the courses of those with whom we interact. Sometimes we are like a soft breeze, gently and subtly moving someone...but our effect on that person is definitive whether we perceive it or not.

Sometimes we are like a violent storm, literally picking someone up and putting them in a different place.

In my lifetime, I have been both and I have experienced both from those people that have come into my life...and as I sat there on Sunday listening to my pastor's sermon, this one idea--not even the focal point of his words--struck me full force. What an important responsibility to know I am able to affect the lives of others with my words and actions! I would never presume to be so important. I would never think myself significant enough to do such a thing...yet I can look back and see the many things I have done--both good and bad--that could have had a profound effect on those who have been a part of my life.

For those times that I think I may have had a positive influence, I am thankful. But it is the times that have not been so positive that seem to haunt me...those times when I failed to understand that what I said or did could profoundly affect another person. Big things like marrying someone I wasn't sure I wanted to marry or little things like letting my mind wander when someone was sharing something with me...or even smaller things like letting someone know they are valuable to me.

I think of people who are no longer in my life because of things I've said or done or simply because we failed to make the required effort to sustain our relationships with one another and I find myself saddened because I had assumed, at some point, that those people would always be around and so I didn't fully experience the time that I was given. I think about how quickly things can change...one moment you are the best of friends and, without warning, something pulls you apart...one morning a guy gets up, kisses his family good-bye like he does every day--not knowing that he will be killed that day on the way to work...

I suppose that one of the terrifying things about relationships is how quickly they can change...yet how important it is that we not walk on eggshells constantly or live in fear of even having relationships because of that volatility.

What it should do, though, is make us more aware of how we treat those who are in our lives. It should make us conscientious of the fact that our time with any given person is limited...even if it is for a lifetime...and that it will eventually end and that knowledge should make us want to experience every experience as fully as we can.

That we should "turn towards" those people in our lives as often as we can--and it is certainly impossible to do so all the time--but to be aware of how we inter-relate with each other and perhaps, to some degree, living as many moments as

we can as though they were to be our last...or at least our last with this particular person. After all, would you go to bed angry at someone if you knew you would die in your sleep? Would you break a promise you made to someone if it were their last day on Earth? Would you spend your time bickering or ignoring those you value if you knew you would never see them after that day?

How would you spend your time with any given person if they had a terminal illness and it was their last day? Who would you choose to spend your time with if you knew your end was at hand and how would you let them know - for the last time - how much they mean to you?

How is it that we get so busy, so caught up in ourselves and our own world that we fail to appreciate those who are placed in our lives and the impact we can have on them? Why is it that we assume things will go on as we are used to for the rest of our lives?

We are constantly going through seasons...some good and some bad...and every season ends to start a new one.

Why, then, does it seem I sleep through each season...waking up to find it has changed and wondering what happened? It is my hope that I can wake up, get off my butt, and learn to be a light in the lives of those with whom I am blessed in my life...the grogginess has a strong hold and I find it difficult to pay attention...but I feel inspired. It is my hope not to lose another friend or alienate another person because I am inconsiderate or immature in my words or actions...because I am complacent or believe that nothing I say or do will bear significance on the lives of others. We are all inter-related...God put us here to offer strength and support and to care for one another...let us not become blind to our purpose here or live our lives in sleep.