

“Every Life Has a Story”

by Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2019, distributed on November 26, 2019

Every person you meet has a story. Pause and consider the various people you see today--at work, in the store, on the street, in your family. Chick Fil-A produced a short video of a moment in one of its stores, identifying the hidden “story” of several individuals as the camera panned. You can find that video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtnEiOo84Wo&t=13s>

You daily influence the lives of every one of your team members. Do you know what each person’s story had been when you entered his or her life? Do you know what your influence is now? Imagine their stories five years from now. Will they be better off because of your presence in their lives? Ask yourself, “What could I do today, or this week, or in the next few weeks that would cause each person to look back with gratitude for the investment I’ve made in them?”

What is your story? You’re creating it every day, you know. Are you making the choices that will deliver a story for which you can be grateful when you look back five years from now? If not, what changes would you like to make? What’s keeping you from making the adjustments?

I was in a group session recently where the instructor suggested I reflect on my life and condense it down to three words. Why? So that when I have a chance to tell my story, I won’t fumble around--instead, I’ll have a simple outline which I can expand to whatever depth the time and situation allow. Doing so was a challenge. I encourage you to give it a try.

Would you like an example? Okay, here’s my story. Insecurity. Choices. Striving. Serving.

I realize it’s more than three words. I couldn’t decide which word to leave out.

What does it mean? Well, for my story, I put it together chronologically. Yours doesn’t have to be. It’s what came up for me when I reflected on my life. “Insecurity” represents an underlying paradigm during my first seventeen years. “Choices” represents the next dozen years (though that word continues as a big descriptor even to the point of choosing today to share this article!).

“Striving” represents the next thirty years--marriage, fatherhood, and career. And “serving” is the choice I’ve made for the recent past, the present, and my anticipated future.

My objective is to stimulate you to reflect on your own story, not to tell you mine. You can’t change the past, yet you can learn from it--from both your failures and your successes! Reflecting on your past can increase your connection with each member of your team.

Every team member has a past, which somehow led him or her to join and then contribute in some way to your operation. Some team members don’t know their desired futures. Some, however, have an aspirational vision. How well do you know each team member’s story?

You can serve them better if you understand their backgrounds. A great way to initiate the dialogue is to ask, “Why do you work?” and “Why do you work HERE?” (Please look up the article with that title on my website (address below) for some thoughts about what to expect!)

If you ask, no one will offer a three-word story. Most individuals, when you genuinely listen with care in your eyes and voice, will be delighted by your interest! You will learn so many ways to connect with that person, and you will discover new ways to serve your team.

Dennis Hooper helps Atlanta organizations enhance the quality and depth of its leaders. Over 400 leadership articles are on his website, www.buildingfutureleaders.com/article-archives. Call Dennis at 404-575-3050 or send him an email at dennis@buildingfutureleaders.com.