**Mastery - Stories & Illustrations**

**At times you may feel it’s the end of the world. Just remember that what the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly. *(Martha Beck)***

**Mexican-American actor Edward James Olmos grew up poor in East Los Angeles. Eleven family members lived in three rooms that included a kitchen with a dirt floor. His parents divorced when he was seven. Today he visits kids in jails. Says Olmos: “I tell them we’re all given a choice. Some people say they didn’t have a choice. They’re poor or brown or crippled. They had no parents. Well, you can use any one of those excuses to keep your life from growing. Or you can say, ‘Okay, this is where I am, but I’m not going to let it stop me. Instead, I’m gonna turn it around and make it my strength.’” That’s what I did. *(Tom Seligson, in Parade magazine)***

**The drama of a circus is mastery; mastery over our most primitive fears – of height, of wild animals, of being too small in a threatening world – mastery over the pallor and dinginess of our everyday lives. Perhaps the purest drama available to secular man, the circus persuades us that our limitations can be overcome, that the savagery of the world can be tamed, and that all we need to soar to where we dream of going is strength and determination. *(Carll Tucker, in Saturday Review)***

**A football coach was asked, “How do you keep your spirits up when your team is losing?” He simply shrugged his shoulders and replied, “I’m the kind of guy who, if I fell into a mud puddle, would feel in my pockets for fish! Searching for the good and thanking God when times look dark may seem like looking for fish in a mud puddle. Discovering blessings in the midst of hard times is a concept too difficult for many to grasp. Yet, the Bible text above says that “in Christ Jesus” we are to give thanks in all circumstances. (*Jan Brunette, in Portals of Prayer)***

### On December 9, 1914, the great Edison Industries of West Orange were practically destroyed by fire. Mr. Edison lost two million dollars that night and much of his life's work went up in flames. “My heart ached for him.” Charles Edison (Thomas's son) told me. “He was 67--no longer a young man--and everything was going up in flames. He spotted me. ‘Charles,’ he shouted, ‘where's your mother?’ ‘I don't know Dad,’ I said. ‘Find her,’ he bade me. Bring her here. She will never see anything like this again as long as she lives.’” The next morning, walking about the charred embers of all his hopes and dreams, ****Thomas Edison**** said, “There is great value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Thank God we can start new.” (Norman Vincent Peale, in Favorite Stories of Positive Faith)

**In 1952, Edmund Hillary attempted to climb Mount Everest, the highest mountain then know to humans--29,000 feet straight up. A few weeks after his failed attempt, he was asked to address a group in England. Hillary walked to the edge of the stage, made a fist and pointed at a picture of the mountain. He said in a loud voice, “Mount Everest, you beat me the first time, but I’ll beat you the next time because you’ve grown all you are going to grow . . . but I’m still growing!” On May 29, only one year later, Edmund Hillary succeeded in becoming the first man to climb Mount Everest. *(Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, A 2nd Helping of Chicken Soup, p. 256)***

**In December 1862 a critic in Abraham Lincoln’s cabinet, Senatorial critics egged on by Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase demanded that the president fire Secretary of State William Seward. At the ensuing showdown, thanks to Lincoln’s adroit maneuvering, Chase was forced to take back much of what he had told the senators in secret. This left an embarrassed Chase no alternative but to tender his own resignation, something Seward had already offered. Lincoln was exultant. “Now, I can ride,” he exclaimed, “I have a pumpkin in each end of my bag.” As a matter of fact, he refused both resignations – having established his mastery over both men. *(Bob Dole, in Great Presidential Wit, p. 34)***

**Two men looked out the prison bars. One saw mud, the other saw stars. *(Victor Hugo)***

**A parable is told of a farmer who owned an old mule. The mule fell into the farmer's well. The farmer heard the mule “braying” -- or -- whatever mules do when they fall into wells. After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the mule, but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead, he called his neighbors together and told them what had happened, and enlisted them to help haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery. Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But as the farmer and his neighbors continued shoveling and the dirt hit his back a thought struck him. It suddenly dawned on him that every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back. HE SHOULD SHAKE IT OFF AND STEP UP! This he did, blow after blow. “Shake it off and step up...shake it off and step up...shake it off and step up!” he repeated to encourage himself. No matter how painful the blows, or distressing the situation seemed, the old mule fought “panic” and just kept right on SHAKING IT OFF AND STEPPING UP! You're right! It wasn't long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, stepped triumphantly over the wall of that well! What seemed like it would bury him, actually blessed him. All because of the manner in which he handled his adversity. (S.C.U.C.A. Regional Reporter)**

### She was old in years but young in spirit. Although she got around on crutches and in a wheelchair, she was a dynamo. She ran a highly successful real estate business, served on the town council, and regularly helped charitable causes in various capacities. One day a new friend asked what had put her in the wheelchair. “Infantile ****paralysis****,” she replied. “In the beginning, I was almost completely paralyzed.” “It's obviously still a serious disability,” said the friend. “How do you cope, how do you do all the things you do?” “Ah!” she said with a smile, “the paralysis never touched my heart or my head.” (Bits & Pieces)

**Matthew Henry, the famous scholar, was once accosted by thieves and robbed of his purse. He wrote these words in his diary: “Let me be thankful first, because I was never robbed before; second, because, although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed." (Church of Ireland)**

**Fanny Crosby, the famous blind songwriter, was only six weeks old when she developed a minor eye inflammation. The doctor who treated her was careless, and his treatment caused her to become permanently blind.  However, Fanny Crosby harbored no bitterness against the physician. She forgave him and turned her blindness into a gift rather than a handicap. In fact, she once said of him, “If I could meet that doctor now, I would thank him over and over for making me blind.” She felt that her blindness helped her write the hymns that flowed so prolifically from her pen. Fanny Crosby wrote more than eight thousand songs. *(Glenn Van Ekeren)***

**While he was in office, he was one of the most unpopular presidents to ever serve the United States. He was ridiculed in public print, accused of being power mad, and called a tyrant by one leading newspaper editor of the day. Some said he used the office of President just to gain favor and become rich, and critics didn’t ever like the parties he gave. On and on it went. His Secretary of State resigned in disagreement over foreign policy. Two of his Cabinet members quit and formed an opposing political party to fight him. There were riots in the streets, and congress refused to give him an army to enforce the law. Everyone felt the United States was on the brink of a full-scale civil war. Predictably, scores of newspapers and many American patriots demanded his immediate resignation. He ultimately declared, “I would rather be in the grave, than in the Presidency.” This was the man on whom later was conferred the highest honor possible, the undying title, the Father of his country. That’s right: George Washington. *(Derric Johnson, in The Wonder of America, p. 84)***

**Playwright Tennessee Williams was enraged when his play “Me, Vasha” was not chosen in a class competition at Washington University where he was enrolled in English XVI. The teacher recalled that Williams denounced the judges’ choices and their intelligence. *(Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, A 1st Helping of Chicken Soup, p. 230)***

### Schroeder: “What's that?” Lucy: “Ice water! When we ****win**** the championship, we'll pour it over our manager's head. I've seen them do it at football games.” Schroeder: “We're never going to win a championship. We can't even win a game!” Lucy: “That's all right, but I can't wait forever.” Lucy then pours the bucket of ice water over Charlie Brown's head. Schroeder: “Are you out of your mind? Charlie Brown is going to hate you for the rest of your life!” Charlie Brown: “Did we win!” (Charles Schulz, in Peanuts comic strip)

**A humorous story is told about two men named Sam and Jed who determined they could become wealthy by hunting wolves. In their part of the country a $5,000 bounty was offered for each wolf captured alive. Day and night the two partners searched mountains and forests seeking their valuable prey. Exhausted one night, they fell asleep dreaming of their potential fortune. Suddenly, Sam awoke to see that they were surrounded by about fifty wolves with flaming eyes and bared teeth. Sam gently nudged his friend and said: “Jed, wake up! We’re rich!” *Victor M. Parachin, in Unity magazine)***

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