

Saskatchewan Prayer Breakfast 2010
Wednesday April 14, 2010
Jack Toth, Guest Speaker

Your Honours,
Chief Justice,
Distinguished Platform Guests,

It is a pleasure to have an opportunity to address this room of notable guests. If only my high school teachers could see me now, they might have difficulty believing their eyes.

I am very conscious of having the Speaker of the House in our midst and understand that, at times, he can be strict as he carries out his duties. So I assure you, I will do everything possible to avoid being asked to leave the room.

In the few moments we have together today, I will endeavour to tell you my story trusting that it will do two things:

- * build your faith, and
- * inspire you to invest all you are able into the lives of the people around you, especially our youth.

I will share some of the stories of my childhood with you. I ask you to “hear my heart” in these stories. I was raised in a home by parents who wanted the best for me and who did their best. The parenting skills my parents had were far advanced over their parents, and I am absolutely grateful for the love my parents and family had for me, even though there were times I didn’t recognize it. I am grateful for the relationship I was able to develop with my parents before their passing, a relationship I will always treasure.

1. The Walls We Put Up

- Mom standing at the stove and me at kitchen table. She was yelling at me because I couldn’t remember my spelling.
- Wall of Stupidity – Fear of Failure – Fear of Rejection
- Writing with ink all over my face to make the grade four kids laugh
- Smell of the soap – sure it was used to disinfect hog barns, and me; I was staring in the mirror and feeling so stupid.

- The day my hopes for academics died. I brought a Math test home with 92%. Mom, looking at it, said, “Why did you get those questions wrong?”
- At that moment, internally, I believed that the dream of achievement would always be beyond me, and something inside me died.
- In grade 10, the principal handed back an Algebra test, on which was written in luminescent red ink, “Jack – I just don’t understand why you don’t do better!”

- I wanted to scream, “Don’t you understand? When you put a test on my desk, my mind goes blank!”
- We were a strong faith family, something I am so grateful for; I believe, ultimately, it was because of God’s hand on my life that somewhere, deep inside, there was a need to believe that God could make something of my life.
- However, for quite a long period of time, I didn’t feel it and ultimately came to the place, at 16 yrs of age in April 1976, where I felt like I was unlovable to God, so I also must be unlovable to others. If that was the case, I must be a waste of air.
- I remember being 16, and sitting on the bed with gun on my lap.
- Coming out of that, I share with you some of the things I have discovered that I want to pass on.

2. Inside of Everyone, Even Me, are the Gifts and Abilities of Greatness

- It took me a long time to believe that when God said He created people in His image, He meant me.
- It also meant that I had to do some serious work on how I viewed God. Was he the judgemental God, always watching for how I was going to mess up so He could get me again? Or was He, in fact, a loving Father who created me in His image, and offered a way for me to become His child and experience the life He has available for me?
- When I began to believe God was a loving Father who wanted the best for me, I began to change on the inside.

3. If Everyone has Gifts and Abilities of Greatness Within, How will I Respond?

- As I began to come to the realization that, perhaps, I purposely was designed for greatness, internally I began to develop a desire to work with youth, to help them not get to the place I had been.
- I took a diploma program at Eston College with the goal of becoming a youth minister.
- After a few years of working and being in business with my brother Pat (there are five Toth brothers altogether), I became a youth pastor. In the meantime, I also got married to the most wonderful lady. We have now been married for 28 years and have 3 sons.
- For ten years, I was a youth pastor. At about the six year mark, I was asked to volunteer at the junior high school to which the students in our community were bussed.
- I absolutely enjoyed that time, and through that experience, had many experiences with youth that really marked me: coaching the track team, and learning what encouragement could do.

- I developed leadership classes for the school, which ultimately became the HEROES program for which our organization, Impact Society, is known today.
- The signal event that pushed me over the edge, though, is Jennifer's story.
- It was through this experience that I determined that it was not only my responsibility, but my privilege to dedicate my life to waking up people, especially our youth, to the purpose they are designed for. At Impact Society, we say we believe we can make the teen and preteen years transformational and not just tough. How do we do this? We do it by introducing youth to someone new: THEMSELVES – the person within that they didn't believe existed, or didn't understand how to develop.
- In 1994, Collette and I took a significant step of faith to leave our full-time employment at the church where I had been employed for ten years, and begin the organization we lead today: Impact Society. Impact Society specializes in Evidence-Based Strength-Focused Experiential Education programs proven to build resilience in the participants.
- The premise of every program we lead is this. (In reality, it is my story of discovery.) Every program follows this process: Build Confidence, Character, and Integrity – in that order.
- Water – Gifts, Abilities, Desire to Succeed
- Walls – Everyone encounters challenges that cause us to react in different ways. We put up walls to protect our gifts and abilities.
(demonstration with bottled water and cardboard walls)
- Focus on Gifts and Abilities first. These are the traits that lead us to discover the ultimate purpose we are designed and created for.
- HEROES programs are utilized primarily in junior high classrooms as a resource for the health curriculum. Delivery takes 12-14 hours. Our most recently released scientific evidence shows that the ability of students to feel and to care increases significantly after being involved in the HEROES Program. Students become much more confident and are able to resist negative behaviour patterns. Planning and decision-making skills increase significantly, as do family communication, school involvement, positive peer relationships, and the importance of achievement.
- HEROES 1 Youth understand and develop strengths
- HEROES 2 Youth understand how to live from their strengths
- HEROES 3 Youth understand how to lead from their strengths

- There are also school assembly and programs for young offenders, facilitated in partnership with the local police force.
- As well, there is a parenting program called “HEROES at Home”.

4. My Challenge For You Today

- What is your story? What are the gifts and abilities that you have that give you the capacity to impact positively the world around you? I genuinely believe that it is God’s heartfelt desire for each of us to have a positive impact.
- What is our self talk? Is it demeaning or uplifting?
- What is our other talk? Is it enriching and encouraging?
- What are our actions to others, whether it be at our places of work, government, or homes?
- I am convinced that we cannot treat each other with less respect and discipline than we would expect of a kindergarten class and also expect that our children will mature with healthy respect for self and others.

5. What is your purpose and are you living it?

- Many years ago, I dreamed that if we were very successful, we would have impacted 8,000 youth.
- To date, we have surpassed the 50 thousand mark and our influence is growing significantly.
- We help youth see what’s already inside – their gifts, abilities, and a desire to succeed. We help them find answers and make choices based on inner strengths and new dreams.
- It gives me great pleasure today to announce a new partnership with the Regina Food Bank. They will be starting a pilot HEROES program this year to work with 100 young people who need it the most. This is partially sponsored by TransCanada Corporation but I know Wayne Hellquist would be thrilled to have some local businesses come on board as sponsors of this initiative.
- It has also been our privilege to have Robyn and Christina Reghr, two great Sask. People, partner with Impact Society to enable our influence to expand significantly.
- What can you do today that will inspire, build the confidence, character, integrity, hope, passion, and purpose of our youth in this province and in our nation?

- An illustration from the scriptures that has highly impacted the way I see Jesus occurs in the New Testament book of John, the 13th Chapter. We are told that Jesus took a basin of water and washed his disciples' feet.
- This is the Jesus I have learned to see. It has helped me in my journey of moving from religion to faith. I believe that this was Jesus' last, private, one-on-one intimate conversation with each disciple. What did he say?
- As I have thought about this, here is what I believe Jesus spoke into the hearts of his followers. I believe he spoke into Peter's strength, John's tenderness, and Thomas' inquisitiveness. Jesus spoke from his heart to each of these.
- What is he saying to us today? Here is what I believe ...
- To the mayors of your cities, as you sit in your offices wondering what you can do for the youth who are troubled; to the provincial leaders, as you wonder how you will lead with wisdom; to the teachers who wonder what can they do to help students who have such challenged lives; to all parents and leaders, I believe He is saying today, "Just depend on me. I will give you the wisdom you need for each situation." Jesus speaks from His heart to each of us today. Now, because He says this to us, how will we respond to others?
- This, to me, is the greatest outcome faith can have in any of our lives. It enables us to see every person with the gifts and abilities God has designed and created within them, and because of that, we will always be people who breathe life to others.
- If faith brings life to me, I must bring life to others.

- In conclusion I ask you to
 - see yourself from your gifts and abilities, not your walls and failures, because in everyone, yes in everyone, even you, are the gifts and abilities of greatness;
 - determine to respond by building your own gifts and abilities, living with character and integrity, so you can inspire the gifts and abilities of those around you, especially our youth – gifts and abilities of greatness exist in everyone;
 - determine to rise to the opportunity of using your story to help recognize your purpose and live it out with passion;
 - remember that the true power of faith equips us to speak life into the lives of all with whom we come in contact; this is the ultimate example of a living faith;
 - join us in this journey. We are like-minded people who can come together. Let's build the lives of all people, especially our youth, so one day we can see our communities filled with people who have confidence, hope, self-esteem, responsibility, passion, respect, character, integrity, and significance.
 - I can see it. I invite you to join us in the journey.