

The Wind Beneath Your Wings

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From 'Soaring With Eagles' by Bill Newman. Today we are going to venture into the realm of the eagle – one of the most magnificent and awesome creatures of God's creation.

Few creatures have inspired man to the same extent as the eagle. The bird rarely fails to stir the adrenaline of anyone who has observed it soaring aloft with its awesome profile, its huge wingspan, its legendary boldness, its mastery of flight, its fierce staring eyes and, above all, its apparent command of the thermal currents. Throughout the world the eagle has long been accepted as a symbol of valour, boldness, majesty, nobility and invincibility. Even among its opponents, the eagle is accepted as an exciting bird. In fact it would be fair to state that the eagle has no peer in the animal kingdom except, perhaps, the lion – the king of beasts. As we observe the eagle with its ability to soar effortlessly on thermal currents higher than any other bird, even in the face of a fierce storm, as we observe its strength, boldness, courage, endurance, determination and patience combined with tenderness and faithfulness we can learn much about life – how it can be fulfilling, rewarding and exciting.

Learn to soar. The eagle is an aerodynamic marvel, a perfect flying machine, well able to maintain flight for lengthy periods without undue exertion. In fact it can remain completely motionless except for an occasional flip of the wing tips to counter wind currents. In conditions in which it would be difficult for a man to stand, an eagle can hover as steady as a rock, the wing-tips moving constantly and automatically to make adjustments for the air currents. Early in the morning in the

Australian outback, while most birds get in a flap about flying, the eagle waits patiently for the sun to warm the earth sufficiently for the thermal currents to rise. On these thermals the eagle will soar effortlessly into the sky and remain there for hours on end. The eagle instinctively understands and has developed its own strengths and has learned to adapt to the conditions in order to use the laws of nature to its advantage. By doing this it can fly higher than any other bird. We too need to recognize our natural abilities, talents, strengths (and limitations), develop these and use them to gain success in our endeavours. But we also need to have an honest appraisal of our abilities and potential – be true to ourselves. *Rise above adversity.* The eagle has learned to rise above its circumstances. In the face of a fierce storm, when other birds head for shelter, the eagle will brace itself against the wind and use the force of the storm to soar even higher than ever. How do you react in adverse circumstances? Disappointment, failure, loss or grief, do you get in a flap, squawk and complain, bury your head in the sand?

Do you run for cover or do you face your circumstances with courage, integrity and allow them to strengthen and develop your character? Strive for excellence. Eagles are birds of the light. They hunt, feed and fly by day. They are remarkably clean birds, preferring to kill their own prey rather than feed on the decaying and rotting flesh that attracts crows, vultures and other scavengers. Eagles want the best in life, not the rubbish. They have high personal standards.

Do you? Do you have high standards of honesty, integrity, trust? Do you strive for excellence in everything that you do, or do you settle for second best? Have you the vision of an eagle? Eagles have two sets of eyelids to protect their extremely keen sight. One set is used while the bird is stationery, the second set of translucent membranes drops over the eyes in flight.

These not only protect the eyes from the on-rushing air, but also from trees, bushes, and even its prey.

Eagles have remarkably developed eyesight which includes both sideways and binocular vision. An eagle soaring hundreds of metres above the ground can detect the movement of a tiny field mouse. Its eyes adjust quickly and accurately with depth of field and focus. Its scope of vision is 275 degrees, enabling the bird to observe either side and gain perspective of anything approaching from the rear as well. Eagles possess the ability to distinguish colours (unusual in the animal kingdom) with far greater clarity than humans, which makes them much more aware of the beauty of the earth. An eagle's eyes are set far apart on each side of its head, allowing depth perception – highly advantageous when judging heights and distances. However, the eagle's eyes are not fully developed at birth, but develop with maturity. How's your vision? Do you have a vision for the person that you can become or what you can achieve in life or are you short sighted? Are you learning to view things from a variety of perspectives, to see beyond the superficial to the deeper issues, to see the inner beauty of people and life? We need to develop a clear vision of who we are and where we are going. The eagle shows how to focus. Once the eagle locates its prey the bird develops singleness of mind and purpose. From that moment on every part of its powerful body is locked into line with the focus of those keen eyes. Once locked onto that quarry, the eagle will use everything it possesses to achieve its goal, giving all in the pursuit. Nothing will cause it to deviate from its course. Do you have that kind of focus in achieving your goals? Don't let anything – obstacles, criticism, circumstances or other people – distract you from pursuing your dreams. Keep focused on your goals in life.

An eagle has goals and perseverance. An eagle's nest is an

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feat.

Usually

perched high in the mountains, on the face of a sheer cliff or rock wall or the highest tree around, the nest is located in the most remote, unattainable spot the bird can find. The nest can be so huge that it will support two grown men. The nest itself can weigh in excess of two tonnes. Each stick, piece of cloth, clothing or paper has to be carried to this remote building site – a monumental task. The bird has a blueprint for the nest and nothing deters it from bringing that blueprint into reality. In the face of storms, fires, blizzards – no matter how many times the nest is destroyed, the eagle continues. He presses on towards the mark, never looking back to past failures. You will never see a partly completed eagle's nest. He always finishes the job. The eagle always succeeds because he has that inner picture, that goal, imprinted deeply within him, and so he presses on again and again with perseverance and patience until that picture becomes a reality. We need that vision, that picture of the person we want to be or what we want to achieve, and then the perseverance to continue on until we accomplish our goal.

Enjoy life. Eagles indulge themselves in the very joy and thrill of living. They often soar and wheel about in the sky, diving and zooming through the clouds for the sheer joy and pleasure of flying. There needs to be balance in life. In the midst of learning to soar, rising above adversity, striving for excellence, developing a vision for our lives, remaining focused and persevering towards reaching our goals, we must maintain a sense of humour and regularly set aside times to relax and enjoy life. Our world today is on an endless search for real joy and happiness. Ask anyone what they want most in life and most will reply – *"I want to be happy"*. But happiness is not a station you arrive at, but the way you travel. King George V of

England said, "The secret of happiness is not doing what one likes, but in liking what one has to do."

Here are a few practical ways to help you maintain real joy and happiness.

1. Count your blessings. We live in a country with so many advantages over most other places – rich in natural beauty, resources, freedom, peace, security, political stability and the tremendous opportunities that all these things bring. Be grateful, thankful for these blessings and be willing to share your 'wealth' with those who are in genuine need. Be generous to others.
2. Learn to live in the 'now'. Don't be so obsessed with the future that you forget to live now. Enjoy your family, friends. Make the most of opportunities to develop meaningful, lasting relationships with your family. Do things together that will provide pleasant lifetime memories.
3. Learn to serve others, help others. Be willing to share your 'wealth' with those who are in genuine need. Be generous to others.
4. Joy and happiness are a choice. We can choose to be miserable, we can choose to allow worry and fear to dominate our lives, or we can make a deliberate choice for joy and happiness. Life is a challenge. Tackle it with joy. That joy will be the secret of your strength.

As you can see, the eagle is a magnificent, inspiring bird. I hope that in some way, what I have shared with you today about the eagle and about life has been helpful and encouraging.

Comment

Seldom have I read a paper that has had such a great influence on me as this one. I have found it incredibly uplifting and a

MUST for sharing with family and friends. We have so much to be thankful for!!!! Have a wonderful Day & God Bless

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