



FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



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CNS/DEBBIE HILL

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BENEFITS: Students look at books in the library Sept. 8 in the Nazareth Sisters school in Haifa, Israel. When Israel's Ministry of Education ranked its top 277 schools, eight of the nation's 47 Christian schools were on the list.

Write Your Own Story

Imagine a scenario where answering one question correctly could win you untold riches. The challenge is simple: "From a box of DVDs featuring movies you've never seen or heard of, can you pick one that's good?"



The question sounds easy. But, how do you choose? Do you pick based on lead actor?

That's not a guarantee for success. Even the most popular stars in the history of cinema have bad roles on their resume.

What about by director? Many consider Steven Spielberg one of the best directors, but even he has a few films that are unwatchable.

In truth, if you needed to select a good unknown movie, there's only one guideline for success – choose an original Pixar film (some sequels are spotty).

If you doubt me, consider this. According to Rotten Tomatoes, film critics say "Cars" is the worst Pixar movie, yet three-quarters of all reviews were positive.

What makes Pixar movies consistently good? Emma Coats knows the answer, or at least a large part of it. Emma used to work as a storyboard artist for Pixar; a storyboard artist draws scene ideas while a script is being written.

A few years ago, Emma tweeted a list of 22 writing tips learned over her years working at Pixar. While not official Pixar rules, they're based on her Pixar experiences. The rules are easy to find online, but I'd like to highlight three.

To me, they're not just guidelines for writing a good story, they're guidelines for being a good person.

Emma's first rule is universal: "You admire a character for trying more than for success."

What makes Dory in "Finding Nemo" and "Finding Dory" so popular? Is it because she's successful? Of course not. She's a character with no long-term memory. Dory is popular because she continually overcomes her

limitations.

We see this sort of popularity every day. Admiration is rarely based on the end result; most of the time it's based on the effort necessary to reach the achievement.

Think about the people you most admire. Do you look up to them for what they accomplished or how they accomplished it?

Never giving up is a core value for good people. They rarely know the end of the path they're following, but they know they won't get there unless they make good choices.

Emma's fifth rule is all about which choices to make. She says, "Simply. Focus. Combine characters. Hop over detours. You'll feel like you're losing valuable stuff, but it sets you free."

Obviously, combining characters is writing specific, but the rest isn't. When you're overwhelmed, simplify. Don't get paralyzed by what you feel you can't do.

Instead, focus on what you can do. Help when you can. Once you start making progress, you'll feel less overwhelmed.

Accomplishing small goals when faced with larger tasks sometimes feels counterproductive. How can you find success by ignoring what needs to be done?

Emma's 17th rule basically says don't worry about it: "No work is ever wasted. If it's not working, let go and move on – it'll come back around to be useful later."

To put that rule another way, have faith. What doesn't go your way now almost always directly leads to something better in the future. Focus less on what you want and more on what those around you need.

In the end, all these rules – those I listed and those I didn't – simplify to a two-word rule of my own. It's advice I fully believe, but often find difficult to follow.

My rule? Be patient. With that motto, who knows, maybe one day someone will offer me untold riches if I can pick a guaranteed good movie from a box filled with unknown titles.

— Erick Rommel

(This column is part of the CNS columns package.)

Re-Launching the Idle Faith

As summer winds to a close, I often jokingly say that I'm counting the days until school starts while mediating arguments and dealing with restless teenagers.

As a teacher, I love the fact that I get to stay home with my kids during the summer. We stay busy with day trips, dance and football practices and jaunts to my sister's pool, but at times, it seems that the kids are restless when a day of "there's nothing on the calendar" arrives.



The busyness that consumes our society has unfortunately become the norm, and I am a guilty culprit. If I am free from grading or writing, I create a project around the house. From painting the deck and planting flowers to cleaning out closets, the urge to accomplish something is gnawing away at me during my free time. My children have picked up on this and find themselves wanting to make plans for every minute of the day.

What's missing is time for relaxation and reflection in our lives. By staying busy with physical tasks, we miss out on opportunities for reflecting, praying and focusing on our faith. While many of us take time for nightly prayers or blessings at meals, do we really ever etch out time in our day to reflect on our faith besides weekly Masses?

The focus of our busyness drive

should be to make time for these peaceful moments, take time to show God that he is a priority and set an example for our children.

Although I'm not one for sitting still, I have found a way to compromise and make time for reflection. This week, I bought a bike. It has been at least 10 years since I've hit the pavement, but I challenged myself to up my fitness goals and find some "me" time. What I have found is that while riding my bike through the neighborhood or on the local trails, I am making time for reflection. My thoughts are running rampant while the breeze blows in my face, and I've made it a goal to ponder my faith while pumping the pedals.

While riding my bike, I've been able to think long and hard about my family, my goals, my blessings and most of all, my faith. I've worked out a mental plan about how to be more involved in my faith community, how to put others first and how to be a better person in all that I do. These plans are a work in progress, but without making time to reflect, they would still be lost in the busyness that surrounds life.

My bike is just a tool to fuel my faith. I just need to make sure it doesn't remain idle so I can practice what I preach.

— Shannon Philpott

Shannon Philpott is a freelance writer and college journalism instructor, but most of all a mother of two teens. You can see her work at www.shannonphilpott.com.



LIZ QUIRIN

SERVICE: Deacons in the Diocese of Belleville offer a day of service during this Jubilee Year of Mercy. On this day, they do some much needed maintenance at the Hospitality

House in Chester where families of those incarcerated can stay when visiting their relatives who are at one of Menard's facilities. The deacons painted and did yard work.

Fresh Take: a way to look at faith from a different perspective

This is an online-only page dedicated to young adult Catholics, their interests, their needs, their challenges and their faith.

We want to give young adults something to "chew on," to think about when they're looking for something more than an on-line horoscope or the

latest star news.

This page offers columns we believe will interest our young adults. Let us know.

Email us at cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org with questions, suggestions or for more information.

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