

****The 80-20 Rule (A Parable)****

This is not a story about any one person. It is a parable drawn from experiences in life. I am not trying to accuse anyone. I simply want to pass along some wisdom that life has taught me.

Imagine a father and a young girl working together in a garden.

They are planting pickle beets, and the afternoon sun is beginning to lean toward evening. The father knows the ice-cream truck will come down the street at three o'clock. Looking at the row, he realizes they have just enough time to finish it.

So he says, "Run into the garage and grab the hoe and come back. If we finish this row before three o'clock, we can get ice cream when the truck comes."

The little girl runs toward the garage.

Twenty minutes pass.

The father stops working and scratches his head. "Where did that little girl get off to?" he wonders.

He walks to the garage and finds her sitting on the floor. Barbie dolls and toys are scattered around her. The hoe is still leaning in the corner.

The father reminds her gently, "We've got to finish that row before three o'clock. The ice-cream truck will be here."

The little girl jumps up, stomps her feet, folds her arms, and says, "I'm not going to—and you can't make me."

Soon the bells of the ice-cream truck ring down the street.

The row of pickle beets is still unfinished.

And the little girl blames her father for why she didn't get ice cream.

Life can sometimes feel like that.

It is a little like a big mule pulling a plow in a field. The mule understands the work has to be done. The row must be finished.

Meanwhile a little pony runs and dances in the grass nearby. She jumps and kicks and enjoys the sunshine. There is nothing wrong with that. The mule even enjoys watching her play. She is full of life, and he thinks the world of her.

She is the apple of his eye.

But the mule also knows something important.

At some point, the pony must learn how to pull the plow too.

So the question becomes this:

Does the mule carry the load forever while the pony dances in the field?

Or are there moments when the pony must step beside the mule and help pull the plow?

There is something important in this lesson that I must admit.

I understand the problem. I understand the puzzle. But I do not pretend to have the wisdom to tell every husband and wife, every mom and dad, exactly how to solve it.

As you have seen in many of these stories, my life shaped me to be very task-oriented. I lean toward discipline, structure, and finishing the row before the ice-cream truck arrives.

But I have also seen the other side. I have seen children raised with almost no discipline at all, and that path can be just as damaging.

Somewhere between those two worlds is a balance every family must find.

We often build strongholds around our position and defend them fiercely. A wise person learns to tear those walls down.

Moms and dads, help your children not build those strongholds too early.

Husbands and wives, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Look for the bridge that brings you together.

Do not draw lines in the sand that allow the enemy to gain a foothold.

****Nuggets of Wisdom****

* Discipline and joy are both necessary in a home. Too much of one without the other leaves something important missing.

* Strongholds form when we defend our side instead of seeking understanding. Wisdom tears down walls and builds bridges.

* Children should learn that work often comes before reward, and

finishing the task makes the celebration sweeter.

* In marriage and family, compromise and humility protect relationships far better than stubbornness.

****Proverbs****

"By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established." – Proverbs 24:3

"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it." – Proverbs 22:6

"Pride leads to conflict, but those who take advice are wise." – Proverbs 13:10