

AGAIN, AGAIN AND AGAIN

There are some things that we do or hear over and over again.
They become ingrained / imprinted in our mind.

Then, there are things we don't do or hear often enough.
For example: there was this old Mennonite man who confessed, I love my wife so much,.... that I almost told her so.
Some things are worth repeating.

There is power in repetition.
Doing / Saying something over and over again usually gets results.
As they say, "The squeaky wheel gets the grease."

At a very early age, a child learns that parents can be worn down by relentless begging or screaming.
Admit it or not, we teach our children to beg by giving in.
And, that embedded pattern remains into adulthood. It's part of our behaviour.

?? How many of you have called more than once to complain about something,... such as about road conditions or the internet? []
(Why wasn't one call enough?)

Harassment is not the only aspect to repetitive petitions.
Repetition can also reveal importance.

In the Genesis text, Abraham, again and again asked God to reconsider,..... because it was important to Abraham. He knew people in Sodom

This is a fascinating story about Abraham dickering with God, and God being persuaded to a different position.

Was God worn down by the begging or did it simply reveal how significant the issue was for Abraham????

Over the centuries, Christians have been told again and again that homosexuality was the reason Sodom was destroyed.

That interpretation has become ingrained in Christian dogma; however, that is not the reason stated in the Bible.

Ezekiel 16:49 clearly states Sodom's sin was inhospitality, quoting, "This was the guilt...of Sodom ...[they] had pride, excess of food,...but did not aid the poor and needy."

What we hear, what we do and what we say again and again.... affects us. It conditions and alters us.

Nevertheless, we CAN change habits.
We can question cultural rhetoric.
We don't have to remain "conditioned" /a victim to old programming.

In the Luke passage, an astute disciple asks Jesus for a better way to pray in public.
He realized that the common public prayers, many said every day, were empty and mostly meaningless.

So, Jesus presented to him what we call the "Lord's Prayer."

Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is shorter than Matthew's --the one we usually use.
It's simpler and bit more intimate.

After presenting The prayer Jesus tells the parable of the Insistent Friend.

For ease of understanding, I'll give the two friends names.
The one surprised by midnight guests will be Bob.
The friend awakened will be Tom.

Bob suddenly finds himself with house guests, which would have been fairly common. Travels frequently avoided the hot middle of the day.
In addition, no matter who the guest was, hospitality to all travellers was a "must" in that culture, and as you recall inhospitality was Sodom's deplorable sin.

Bob rushes to Tom's house to borrow some food so he can feed his guests.
The two were good friends. They could be honest, even blunt with each other.
Bob knocks on Tom's door.
Tom yells out the window, "Go away Bob. Don't knock again. My kids are all in bed asleep, and I was too, just moments ago."

However, Bob keeps pounding on the door, and his perseverance informs Tom that Bob's night time interruption is important.
So, because of the repetition, Bob responded. He got up and gave Bob some food for his midnight guests.

Repetition is powerfully affective, and not only for the sake of persuasion.
Repeated actions, experiences and words can alter who we are and how we think. Repetition gets registered as important, but the message may not be.

For example, the key to successful marketing / advertizing is getting the message received over and over again.
And, it works.
Hearing sometimes again, again and again causes it to stick in our brains, and unfortunately, often, without proper, rational filtering.

Once imprinted in our brains,..... it's there..... for a long time.

What is the breakfast of champions? -- Wheaties.

This one goes back to the 1960s: Who puts a tiger in your tank?
Esso

How about: "melts in your mouth not in your hands" -- M&Ms

A simple phrase as.....You deserve a break today.....is now welded to McDonald's.

Nothing runs like a.....???? deer..... John Deere.

I AM Canadian..... Molson can't really say that anymore, but we still remember it.
Finish this one: A diamond is -- [forever]. DeBeers started that ad slogan in 1948.

And last the example: "Just do it".....??? Nike.

We are not too alarmed by surrendering memory cells to consumer products; however, when a government uses the same method, called propaganda,..... we should be concerned. Yet, most people are not.

In the summer of 2002, George W. Bush began repeating, over and over, Saddam Hussein has Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Regardless to the fact that UN inspectors adamantly asserted that Iraq not longer had such weapons, the repeated message from the government that he did, Stuck. People were convinced NOT by facts and reasoning, but merely by repetition.

Even after none were found, after the US invasion, over 30% of Americans still believed Saddam had them and was a threat.

They were, what is sometimes called, "Brain washed."

Recently, our government spent \$330,000 to see if we approved of their \$113 million propaganda campaign--the grandiose Action Plan ads. Those beautifully crafted ads promote the government's agenda. The survey revealed that the majority of Canadians did NOT like the ads. So, the government's marketing people accurately decided that they better run more of those ads.....because, obviously, the repetition had not been significant enough to change our way of thinking. Once we hear it again, and again and again,..... we'll come around.

Repetition works; it's powerful.....even when it is more subtle and less apparent.

Mass media, including news outlets, adhere to the corporate state's message and mantra. If they don't, they'd lose funding and/or decision makers would be fired. The corporate state seeks to protect the powerful and the current system that keeps them powerful.

Some examples of the corporate state's message:

Protestors are bad; they are anarchists.

Peacemakers are naive.

You can have whatever you desire, if you work hard enough.

Don't change the fossil fuel based system or the economy will suffer, and you will suffer, too.

In addition, there are hidden messages in what we are constantly being feed in the media, and by what is ignored.

Such as, entertainment, sports and the birth of a British baby are far more important than, Japanese radioactive leaks into the environment,or the frightfully rapid melting of the arctic ice cap,..... or..... other affects of global warming..... or... how pharmaceutical companies refuse to invest in drugs that would save millions of lives in Africa, because the cash profit is too low..... or... the worsening condition of our prisons and prisoners.....or the extreme waste in military spending, and so on.

Daily, hourly we are given fluff.

Bland, meaningless messages are repeated in the media,.....and they are making us....bland and less meaningful.

Nevertheless, we are not helpless; we can counter the onslaught.

The same strategy of repetition can change things.

A few years ago, a friend called me in distress.

He shared that his mother-in-law came to visit for 2 months, and that he had responded very poorly to her invasive presence.

During the first week or so, he complained to his wife about her and was even quite terse and rude to his mother-in-law.

He was in the third week of her visit, and was realizing that she wasn't so awful, after all. Yet, his wife was livid with him because of his repeated remarks and behaviour, and his mother-in-law was cool toward him, too.

He asked me what to say or what to do to reverse the situation.

He truly wanted to make amends, but all attempts were rebuffed.

He was trying to be nice, but they didn't believe him.

I advised him to say, over and over again, things like: "You have a wonderful mother. I'm really glad she's visiting with us. I really appreciate her advise; she quite insightful."

He was skeptical about my suggestion, but didn't have anything to lose by trying. So, he did. He said simple, complimentary statements over and over again."

After a month, all was wonderful, and the debacle of the first couple weeks was erased / forgotten. Repetition is powerful.

So, talk back to TV commercials. Say out loud, Cameco does NOT know what is best for First Nations people.

Take back to the TV show or the movie, good guys killing bad guys is still wrong. Violence never solves problems.

Undo the programming. Repeat good, well informed messages, and always ask probing questions, such as why would new jobs in renewal energy sector be bad for the economy?

In addition, counter the negative messages with healthy food for the soul.
Memorize Bible verses. We used to do that all the time.
Implant good stuff!

Read the Bible and other inspiring books daily to balance out all the other information entering the brain.

And, undo negative comments and negative messages with words of love, peace and compassion.
Work to transform yourself..... and the world, over and over again.

To be sure, there are other reasons why Jesus suggested that we keep knocking on the door / that we keep petitioning God in prayer.

Constantly and repeatedly beseeching God seems like nagging or begging God, as if we need to wear God down so we'll get what we want. But, that is not the reason for diligently persevering in prayer.

When Katherine comes to me with a huge, very important need--something that I MUST buy for her / something she absolutely has to have.

I usually tell her to wait..... a week..... or a month..... or six months.

She doesn't like that requirement; however, time sorts out what truly is essential from a passing fad....or a fleeting need.

Likewise,..... repetition in prayer helps us to discern what is truly important from what is not.
If something is really important, then we are more than willing to pray constantly about it.

God is not making us pay dues.

God is helping us to grow in understanding..... and...trust.

We don't give up on people we trust.

Frequent prayers to God demonstrates our faith..... and helps our faith grow, too.

Also, I think there is another aspect to prayer, and that is love energy.

I have litany of prayers for people I repeat every day because I believe prayers are like rays of love, and my rays of love are combined with God's and surround the subject in the prayer with love like doting angels.

Repetition is powerful,..... in many ways,..... and it can be powerfully good.....or not.

A final word: we are not alone in our faith journey.

The Lord's Prayer was intended to be said and repeatedly said out loud. It is a public prayer.

Repetition is magnified when done collectively.

The benediction will be repeating the Lord's Prayer again, as printed in the hymn book.
We need to say and hear those words again and again.

The message is important:
OUR dear loving God, worthy of our trust and love.
May your way prevail. May there be peace on earth.

Take away all anxiety. We are taught to worry, but we trust you'll provide what we need for today.

We are all involved in mercy and forgiveness or we are not at all forgiven.
Grace is a way of being.

And, we acknowledge that we are weak and need help in keeping away from temptation..... and harmful messages.

Guide us to truth.
Amen.