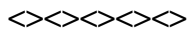




“I’ll never get through this chapter,” I used to think, “let alone the whole book.” I would read each sentence word by word, focusing on each part, but completely unaware of the larger meaning.

Now the way I read books, that is to say, my sense of time now is like speed reading—still missing some of the details, but mostly skimming through. The chapter go by flying, and the book is done too soon. And even though I know the plot, and even some of the details of the plot, I am often left to wonder what it was really about. I am not sure what it all means.

After the ball dropped the other night, someone asked, “Do you feel different now that it is 2008?” I had to respond that in a way I do. I feel that something is gone, my reality is something less. Something is missing, something is lost. I feel somehow disconnected. Perhaps it is the passing of time in the same way that a fast moving train passes, and creates a wind as it charges by, and then it is gone.



Sometimes what we remember is not factual; that is, what we remember happening did not actually happen. Nevertheless, what we remember is what is true. Things are true when they become part of the building material of our lives. What ends up being important may not be the details, the tiny and simple facts of the matter. What is significant is the truth of the matter.

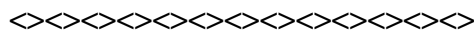
Look back over the facts of your life. What really counts is what all that facts mean, which is the truth of the matter, and which is all that you probably need to pay attention to.

You can undoubtedly recall a dream which you had sometime in your life—perhaps a long time ago—and the dream has somehow, over the years, solidified into the truth. Now what you recall cannot be absolutely determined to be the facts of the matter. But it may still be the truth.

I would like to offer another ritual this morning, actually it’s a reading which I have given more than once on the first Sunday of the New Year. It’s related to the short message printed in your order of service: *“If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed.”*

Specifically, it begins with the ancient Dakota tribal wisdom says that when you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount. However, in organizations like governments, hospitals, large companies, school districts, and churches, for God’s sake, we often try other strategies. These can include the following:

- \* Buying a stronger whip.
- \* Changing riders.
- \* Saying things like "this is the way we always have ridden this horse."
- \* Appointing a committee to study the horse.
- \* Arranging to visit other sites to see how they ride dead horses.
- \* Increasing the standards to ride dead horses.
- \* Appointing a tiger team to revive the dead horse.
- \* Creating a training session to increase our riding ability.
- \* Comparing the state of dead horses in today's environment.
- \* Pass a resolution declaring that "this horse is not dead."
- \* Blaming the horse's parents.
- \* Harnessing several dead horses together for increased speed.
- \* Declaring that, "No horse is too dead to beat."
- \* Providing additional funding to increase the horse's performance.
- \* Declare the horse is "better, faster, and cheaper" dead.
- \* Form a quality circle to find uses for dead horses.
- \* Revisit the performance requirements for horses.
- \* Say this horse was procured with cost as an independent variable.
- \* Promote the dead horse to a supervisory position.



May it be on this New Year’s beginning that we can recognize the direction we’re headed, while being assured that’s truly where we want to go.

Amen.