

A TOWN CALLED CHAMBERLAIN
A Toastmaster Presentation
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INTRODUCTION

How often do you find yourself beginning sentences with “if only” or “I wish?” Have you ever found yourself in a rut with no real clue how to climb out? So stuck that there are no answers because you don’t even know the questions?

We are the sum total of our experiences, and those experiences affect our every decision, relationship and creative endeavor. Many of the limits we encounter we place on ourselves. This brings me to my story.

A TOWN CALLED CHAMBERLAIN

In the world of Deep Space 7, a man sits in a corner of Quark’s Place. He sips purple Andaluthian liquor and stares at a small orb. Quark, the owner and bartender, intrigued, walks over and sits down.

“What is that?” Quark said.

The stranger peers at Quark through hooded eyes and says, “It’s a basketball, only smaller.”

“It is very unusual.” Quark said. “Where did you get it?”

“From my home town.” the stranger said. “It’s a long story.”

“It’s quiet here and I have the time.” Quark said.

The stranger sipped his drink, looked at Quark and then into his memory.

“Many years ago,” he said, “a man named Xavier played pro New-Age Basketball. He was a good player, but an even better strategist. He could master the moves, but he liked to plan them even more. The interchange between zone and man-to-man with a double high post was one of his favorites. He also designed an electronic system that monitored play, eliminating the need for referees.

“He took his ideas to the coaches, but they wouldn’t listen. He went to the owners, but they were much too busy. He pitched it to the New-Age Basketball Association. They couldn’t be bothered. When the referees heard about the electronic system, afraid for their jobs, they wouldn’t let him play.

“Disgusted, Xavier left the league and established a small town, well off the main road, high in the Southern Mountains, On Earth’s the northern hemisphere. He called it Chamberlain, after Wilt Chamberlain, considered by many to be the father of New-Age Basketball.

“It was in Chamberlain that he began teaching and playing basketball, his way. Players from all over the galaxy came to learn. Some stayed and made it their home, others left. Those

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who stayed lived, breathed, talked and studied basketball. Everyone belonged to a league and played every day. There were indoor/outdoor basketball courts every twenty houses or so. There was never a wait and there was always a game. At night, everyone would gather at the town hall, to watch the inter-galactic games. Chamberlain soon devised its own broadcasting center and televised the local court games. After a while, people only watched themselves and lost touch with universe outside Chamberlain.

“Decades passed and eventually Xavier died, an old and happy man. To his credit, many generations followed the game he had developed. For everyone in Chamberlain, it was a perfect life, in a perfect town that time forgot.

“And then, one day, a traveler crashed near the town. He was rescued and nursed to back to health. The first day he could, he walked around Chamberlain and watched a few games. At dinner that evening, he asked why everyone was playing New-Age Basketball in the ancient tradition. His hosts were confused. The traveler explained that the basketball he knew was much faster, better, fairer and much more interesting to play and to watch. When word got out, the townpeople’s reaction was swift. The traveler was immediately escorted to the edge of the town, wished a safe journey and told to never return.”

“Were you that man?” Quark said.

“No,” the stranger said. “But, I am the only one who followed him. And, I have not returned home nor played basketball since.

“I’m surprised the townspeople weren’t more curious,” Quark said.

“That is why I left.” the man answered. “The traveler knew something that threatened their way of life. They were afraid. They were not stupid, but they were ignorant of the changes outside their town, outside their experience. Change would have corrupted their utopia. Everyone fit in and knew their place in the scheme of things. It is what they wanted and they were happy. I wanted more.”

Before Quark could ask another question, the stranger finished his drink, stood up, put the orb in his pouch and left.

CONCLUSION

Like the townspeople and the stranger, we face changes and choices every day. Our personal and professional growth expands only if we choose to take advantage of new information, ideas, opportunities and situations. And, if we do, we learn that the ongoing mental, emotional and physical stimulation is the primary difference between being alive and living.

Choose living!

Thank you.