

December 6, 2005

This morning I leapt from my bed, an hour and a half ahead of schedule in a rush of adrenaline. I had been dreaming. The joy and triumph I experienced in my dream was still with me. In my dream I was again listening to my former student, Lisa Irion, read from the 'Chicken Soup for the Teen-Age Soul' book that EBLI instructor, Nora Chahbazi, had provided for her in the demonstration she gave at our local U.S.A. High School. Lisa was glowing with pride and confidence as she read fluently from the selection Nora had given her.

I had worked with Lisa in the Reading Room of our small rural school from Kindergarten until she finished up in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Lisa was a beautiful girl, both inside and out. She had a positive attitude, a kind heart, and remained unaffected, even throughout the awkward middle-school years. Yet she always struggled with reading.

The selection Lisa was reading from was a powerful one and it had played again for me in my dream. The gist of the story was this: A man approached a sage asking him what he must do to find knowledge. The sage, to demonstrate, told him to first wade into the ocean. As he did so, the sage followed and plunged the man's head under the waves until he was gasping for air. Then, suddenly, he released him, sputtering and choking, barely alive. 'Now, tell me,' said the sage when the man could finally respond. 'What was it that you wanted most when you were being restrained under the water?' 'Why', heaved the man, 'I wanted nothing so much as to breathe.' 'Yes,' replied the sage, 'and that is exactly how you will find knowledge....when you want it as badly as you wanted that breath of air.'

I knew when I awoke that I had found a beautiful truth in my dream. I knew how badly I wanted that knowledge that EBLI training can provide. I wanted it as much as I wanted to breathe, with my whole being.

I want to use this wonderful knowledge to help my students. I want to give them the gift of literacy. I want them to glow with pride and confidence when they find the keys to success in reading like Lisa did. I want to pass this knowledge on because I see that it really does work. I want to help make this world a little bit better place when I leave it than when I entered it.

I lost my oldest son almost two years ago, just after Christmas. It broke my heart and almost broke my spirit. My son was especially close to me because he was vulnerable. He struggled too, not like Lisa and my other students with reading, but with a devastating mental illness. He fought fear and loneliness throughout most of his short life-span.

One thing that the illness didn't rob my son of, however, was his compassion and humanity. Justice and fair-play were everything to him, and he always championed the under-dog. He loved to listen to the little stories I would tell him about the fun I had with my students. He cared about them too....and I was proud of him for his concern.

I know he is proud of me now too, when I use my time and talents to help kids who struggle in reading. I feel close to him when I help. It heals the pain of his loss and gives me a good feeling, the knowledge that there is a purpose in this life, and that we are here for a reason: to help each other.

I was deeply touched when I read of the Bryant family's tragic loss and the reason for the Joseph Thomas Bryant Memorial Scholarship. I felt a strong connection to the Bryant family because I know that we are both in the process of healing after great pain in our lives. I think that even now, God is stretching out His loving hand to show us the way as we draw strength and inspiration from the love we have for our (His) children.

Sincerely,  
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