



by
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want
free
stuff?

The best things in life really are free.

free stuff—ya gotta love it. I get such a kick out of my kids hollering, “Look, Dad! Free stuff!” Somehow free stuff seems to be better than stuff we pay for.

Consider the water glass that is half full or half empty, based on your perception. What do you see? Look carefully; not with your eyes, but with your understanding. Is it half empty or is it half full?

Remove your spectacles, polish the lenses of your perception, and look again. The glass is completely full. In fact, it's overflowing. It's only half full of water, *but it is filled the rest of the way with air*—the most precious life-sustaining element on the planet. Without it, you would die in minutes. Air is free. And so is sunshine, the most powerful source of energy in our vast solar system that fills our days with radiance.

What do you need for your happiness and success as an individual, a speaker or an author? Which of those are free?

Ideas? Free. Inspiration? Free. Energy? Free. Determination? Free. The really good stuff is free stuff!

How about opportunity? It's also free and, like air and sunshine, we are immersed in the glorious abundance of it.

You may argue that you have to work for some of these. That is true. It's like digging for water in the desert. But they are already within you. Like a handful of perfect deep purple wild blackberries,

a cup of fresh water from a clear mountain stream, or an idea buried deep within your mind, they are free for the taking.

Some argue that if it's free, you get what you pay for. No, the saying is if it's *cheap*, you get what you pay for. Don't confuse cheap with free.

Love is free. Friendship is free. Life—the greatest of all gifts—is free.

Be receptive to these free gifts and respect and preserve them, like keeping our source of water and air unpolluted and treating friends and loved ones, including our audiences with love and respect.

What is most important to you? The love of your spouse? Free. A hug from a grandchild? Free. A crayon-scrawled picture of a bright yellow sun from your little girl, drawn just for you when you are grumpy? Free. Your dog's happy greeting? Always free.

How about a friend's hand on your shoulder while you weep? The applause of your friends when you win? Compassionate silence from your audience when you totally forget your thoughts and stand there feeling like a fool? How about the inspiration that suddenly flows into you, transforming that awkward moment into a poignant transition of your message to a whole new level? All priceless, yet free.

The camaraderie of your classmates or co-workers? The warm reception of a great crowd? How about the kindness of strangers? All are free.

the kindness of strangers

When I travel, I receive the greatest free stuff on the planet: the kindness of strangers. As a result of a farming accident, I am paralyzed, a quadriplegic. Limo, taxi and shuttle drivers and airlines employees handle my bags, lift me out of vehicles, position me carefully in my wheelchair and ensure I reach my destination. Hotel employees make certain that I have everything I need. They transfer me to the bed (I can't transfer myself if the bed is more than four inches above the wheel height of my chair). They make sure my computer is plugged in and my communications are handy and operational. They check in on me periodically to be sure I am all right.

Professionals go out of their way to accommodate me and so do perfect strangers. My freedom depends on the kindness of strangers. I travel around the world and don't worry about getting stuck anywhere. Whether I'm in a movie theater, restaurant or sports stadium, or I'm in New York, New Hampshire, Africa or Alaska, there is always someone ready to help.

Usually.

For my first real family outing since my paralyzing accident, we went to a popular amusement park. The kids rode every ride as many times as possible, and got along well except for sibling meltdowns due to over stimulation, too much cotton candy and too many chocolate-covered bananas.

My own meltdown occurred when the park staff refused to help me back into my wheelchair after a ride. It appears that someone in management was concerned about potential liability if they were to drop me and hurt me (as if I would feel a thing).

My wife and kids got off the ride, but I sat in stunned silence. I was too heavy for my wife and two small boys to lift. I was angry. Furious. *Seething!* I was also embarrassed and humiliated. It seemed indeed such a small, small world run by small, small minds.

And then, without being asked, three perfect strangers stepped forward and transferred my 170-lb. pound frame to my wheelchair. They were "perfectly" wonderful, kind and considerate helpful strangers, giving me perfect free stuff: love and support.

This incident attracted unnecessary attention to my disability, but these three kind souls saved me from an embarrassing situation.



A recording of Hymas's 2010 NSA Convention general session presentation, "Imagine ...Who Needs Legs When You Have Wings?" is available for purchase at www.softconference.com/MyNSA/am.asp.

do unto others ...

Have you ever asked yourself what someone with a disability might need or want? Next time you see someone struggle with a task that is not difficult for you, ask if you can be of service. If someone is having a hard time with a curb or a door, ask if you can help, just as you would if you saw someone struggling with an armload of groceries. Put yourself in the position of a physically challenged person and do the same thing you would want someone to do for you. Assist in any way you can, then smile and move on.

Learning to accept and even depend on the kindness and generosity of others was a big step for me, but necessary for my personal progress. I live a full and "independent" life today, and look forward to many "independent" tomorrows. Free stuff – the kindness of strangers, their love and support – has set me free.

Support staff costs you wages, but the support of your staff is free. You hire employees, consultants, executives and you pay for their time and expertise, but what about their love, loyalty, dedication and support? They are all free.

Now, back to that glass. It's full and overflowing with life and an abundance of free stuff. Listen, learn, love and serve. Know that everything that gains you true success is free. You cannot buy that which is priceless.



Speaker and wheelchair-athlete Chad Hymas, CSP, is one of the 10 most inspirational people in the world, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. He founded Chad Hymas Communications, Inc., and spoke at 220 events last year on five continents in four countries. Visit www.chadhymas.com.

