

January 2004

Dear friend;

2003 was a wonderful year filled with so many lessons. It was particularly difficult for me physically and ended with my losing my left leg to a below the knee amputation. Actually I was relieved to get rid of it because it had been causing so much pain. The big lesson was that chronic pain infects the whole family and I have to be careful not to be an old depressed grouch with an abrasive personality.

Given that context I hope you find this year's "proverbs" enjoyable. My 2004 be the best year of your life.

Lou

# 150 PROVERBS Goal 150(150) 2465(2615)

## Character (10)

1. Excuses reflect a person's character.
2. Excuses often reveal what a person thinks of your character.
3. A man may be emotionally and physically beaten, but as long as there is faith he can't be spiritually beaten.
4. Virtue has so many hidden blessings and flaws bring so many obvious curses. How come I like my flaws so much?
5. I was taught that my reputation was the true measure of my wealth. I wish I understood that younger, but it takes growing older to come to terms with it.
6. Be bold enough to do the right thing and do it with humility
7. Pristine character creates boldness and humility while flawed character creates boldness and arrogance.
8. Pope John Paul II is now showing the church how to die. For the once dynamic here is no dignity in the act of dying with Parkinsonism, but in the act of the acceptance of the suffering.
9. Just when I think I know everything there is to know about character, I learn something else. That's related to one of my character flaws.
10. Strength of will, to resist other's opinions or the so called everyday wisdom, is the great bulwark that will defend your character and grow your wisdom.

## Wisdom (10)

1. A thought about building a complete human: Build your character with wisdom, you heart with understanding and your intellect with knowledge.
2. Wisdom is the sweetest nectar the soul can sip.
3. I noticed that the more secrets I knew of my patients the more precious their confidentiality became and more wisdom people believed I had. Funny, though, keeping my mouth shut has always made me seem wiser.
4. I wish I had the wisdom to turn medical suffering to redemptive suffering.
5. When I was foolish and immature I craved being taken seriously. Now that I am older I wish people would take me so seriously.
6. On an intellectual level I know that every interpersonal problem can be responded to with love... and the outcome is better.... spiritually.
7. Imparting wisdom to the young is a life long task.
8. I get a kick out of naturally talented individuals who think their talents mean they are wise too.
9. Simple people with no great market "value" and a great capacity for love are more likely to be wise than the most intelligent or gifted "personality."
10. God grant me the wisdom to live my life with joy in spite of how it looks from my human point of view.

## Love (10)

1. My anger makes me angrier and my love make me peaceful. If I could just keep the focus on love life would be so much easier.
2. My illness exhausted my family emotionally. They had to run on love, and I got to count my blessings.
3. I hate being sick. I feel like I let the family down. Yet the truth is the family bends over to pick me up.
4. Pain and love can coexist as long as there is no fear with the pain.
5. I've listened to Mother Teresa talk about suffering and participating in the Passion, now that I've been in pain for months I think the issue is using the pain as a trigger to love.
6. I usually fail to be more loving when I'm in pain. I hope it doesn't take a lot longer to learn this lesson.
7. A sign of Loving others as God loves you is graciousness in the face of offensive and intolerant people.
8. Love requires offering hope. Love without hope can only pretend to be true love.
9. The ultimate sign of love, hope and charity is a firm belief in eternal life with those you love.
10. After nearly two decades of knowing Barbara I'm starting to understand just how wonderful she really is... cool eh?
11. The deepening of love in a committed relationship is an endless, joyful exploration of both the relationship with my spouse and my relationship with God.

## Faith-God (12)

1. Understanding what God is trying to create in the world around you is the ultimate challenge. It requires eyes of love and hands of compassion.
2. Faith leaves us with the inevitability of accepting spiritual gifts.
3. Gifts of spirit kindle faith as much as faith kindles the gift.
4. Acceptance of a spiritual gift requires humility and faith. The humility to get out of God's way and the faith to believe you can.
5. Wisdom is not just knowing what God wills for me, but also the wisdom to do it in spite of myself.
6. I found myself angry with God until I remembered what Mother Teresa had said about suffering. Suddenly it made sense. I still suffer though.
7. I think I fail most of the tests that God sends me. I fail partially or miserably, and so I need forgiveness and redemption.
8. Times have been tough physically, but there is a part of me that tenaciously hangs on to my faith in God. In the quiet between the screaming of my pain I realize that it's God hanging on to His Child.
9. My pain talks loudest when I feel sorry for myself for what I can't do.
10. Patience is waiting on the Lord.
11. Impatience is a lack of faith in God and faith in our ego's plans.
12. Just before Surgery I got anxious. I started to question my faith, not in God but my ability to deal with the amputation with a good attitude.

## Family (12)

1. I wish I had the patience of a saint rather than the patience of a sinner, with my children.
2. Dinner and family are like bread and butter, one makes the other even more wonderful.
3. Sacrifice to keep the family together is the most rewarding thing I can do.
4. There is no family life for a selfish man.
5. It's a great satisfaction to see the oldest son move out with a good job, chance for fast track advancement, new car and great hope for the future.
6. Every success by any member of the family strengthens the hope for the whole family.
7. The great lesson in life is always how to live as a family. It is the foundation of our civil society. Without love there is no family and no civil society.
8. My family has been contaminated by my illness and my attitude. I need to protect them from my pain and my suffering and only show them my love and joy.
9. It's been a hard year and the only thing that makes it better is to take the focus off me and keep it on the family.
10. I can't believe how much my foot has put my family through. I wish I could spare them the inconvenience and make their lives easier. Maybe I should just work on being more pleasant.
11. My attitude is an infusion of spiritual energy into my family. I have a divine obligation to be positive, supportive and uplifting.
12. I think my amputation was harder emotionally on my wife than me. So perhaps her response to my successful recovery will be more rewarding for her. That would be my gift to her next year.

## Children (11)

1. There is great joy in watching one of my son's make a wise decision.
2. The primary wise choice a child can learn to make is to live an honest life.
3. Teaching children gratitude has to be done gently. They go through stages of entitlement and shame as they develop.
4. Gratitude grows as a child learns to give.
5. Teen agers and sarcasm has got to be hormonal. Just as the older ones seem to be letting go of it nicely the younger ones are picking up the mantle.
6. My wife is always trying to get me to lower my voice when I'm angry with the boys. The other day I did it just to appease her and they heard every word.
7. Raising kids doesn't really have goals as much as processes.
8. We need to teach our children to hope and set real goals that stretch them and help them grow.
9. I love to watch the kids get a sense of the gifts that God has given them.
10. I have to put on a brave front for my children so that when they face illness or surgery they will have faith in their doctors. It's much harder this time around.
11. I see stubbornness in one of my kids and it bothers me until I realize that he can use it to be a success and to avoid evil if I guide him right.

## Self-Development (10)

1. I've been working on CME and marveling at how knowledge in every field keeps growing. It is a basic part of the human condition to strive for understanding.

2. Pain makes patience weak
3. Pain causes me to reflect. I know it's supposed to be a sensory warning to help us deal with reality, but it's also an emotional warning.
4. I'm grouchy when I'm in pain. I think that's proof enough that I'm not a saint. My family didn't even need that proof.
5. Is there wisdom in suffering? Ask me later, my leg is in too much pain.
6. Discipline and routine make self development seem so much easier. It isn't, really, it just organizes the energy of willingness.
7. Working on myself while I'm in pain requires me to ignore the pain and focus on others.
8. They say that pain tolerance increases as one gets older, and also that there is no gain without pain. How come as I get older I avoid the pain of self development?
9. How I face adversity rubs off on my kids. The boys need a strong example to be strong me.
10. I have some fear and trepidation about the discipline my recovery is going to require. Discipline didn't used to frighten me. I've gotten older and softer. I need to change that.

## Relationships-Friendships (10)

1. The sweetest kiss from a friend is honesty.
2. Sweet loving talk brews respect and admiration and slanderous sarcasm breeds mistrust and disrespect
3. So many friends were so helpful when I was sick. It's a delight that can be enjoyed even when I feel rotten. It's still a delight.
4. Most of the time we can tell those who love or hate us, but more importantly we can always tell who we love or hate.
5. Does a liar who says he lies to protect the ones he loves really love them?
6. We are taught that self-reliance is the highest goal and yet friendship and working together is so much sweeter.
7. Your soul is reflected in the hearts of your friends.
8. You can sharpen your intellect on the tough core of another's intellect, not on the mush of inferior thinkers.
9. The other day I realized that I was avoiding my friends since I got sick. Part of me doesn't want to expose them to my negative attitude when I'm in pain. Another part misses them.
10. I haven't been reaching out to my friends because of the chronic pain. I've been embarrassed about how crappy my attitude has been. I need to look at that.

## Health (10)

1. I'm going for an operation and experiencing a little trepidation. That's a sure sign of lack of faith.
2. The chronic pain of the last few weeks has been a constant annoyance. The worst part isn't my pain, but what I inflict on others with my attitude.
3. I've been in pain so long that sometimes it feels normal. That's scary. I don't even hope for relief.
4. I am convinced most illness is either genetic or dietary.
5. Health has more influence on wealth than we imagine.
6. I've found another great natural simile for alcoholism and addiction... a dog returning to it's vomit. Seems natural to the dog.

7. Addictions are so insatiable that only God can fill that thirst.
8. I have become quieter on the surface, but my body is in so much pain that it is shouting all the time. When will I get quiet inside and out?
9. My attention used to be on my mind and my thinking, but lately it has been on my ankle. I guess it means I've descended to lower levels of consciousness?
10. Just before my amputation I came to realize how much more attached to my foot everyone else was than I.

## Leadership (10)

1. Wartime leadership requires the vision and will to resist mass hysteria, fear and trepidation.
2. Unwillingness to fight must not be done to aid and comfort the enemy, but to live up to God's expectations of us.
3. Unwillingness to fight to defend our children is the ultimate selfishness.
4. Courage feels a lot like fear except there is a positive outlook and action.
5. The exception to a rule means the rule is false. The exception to an ideal means the exception is false.
6. All leaders need helpers. They need to nourish the dreams, belief, and faith of those who help. They nourish with their integrity.
7. Leadership often requires the skills of a group therapist.
8. Choosing when to retreat is more difficult for a leader than when to attack.
9. Leaders who respect life conquer with love and hope rather than fear.
10. Being a nice guy doesn't mean you're being a good leader, but being a nice makes being a good leader nicer.

## Time (11)

1. Patience should only be worn thin polishing other virtues.
2. When I'm sick I feel like I'm wasting my time and should be doing something productive.
3. When I'm in pain I feel like I must be doing something wrong. I'm glad Jesus didn't think that way on the cross. None of us would be saved.
4. Being sick this time gave me time to reevaluate. All that "lost time" was really "found time."
5. I was worried I wouldn't have enough time to write my proverbs this year because I lost about six weeks. It was great incubation for more ideas.
6. When I get pumped up about what good stuff tomorrow will bring I usually forget to notice today's blessings.
7. I know time is precious and yet I still waste it doing less than precious things.
8. I think we are given a certain amount of time by God so that we can see how much love we can fill it with.
9. I waste so much time obsessing about mistakes that I don't leave enough time to make more.
10. I wish I had back a few of the minutes I wasted worrying. It's actually hours... No day's. They really add up and yet as far as their effectiveness they add up to nothing.
11. Taking time to pray makes life seem to go at a slower and more tolerable pace.
12. Severe post operative pain left me feeling like time was standing still and I was stuck in hell.

## Prosperity & Success (11)

1. Buy into your own vision of success or something better from God.. It's as simple as that.
2. Never buy another's vision of success without total trust that the other person means well for you.
3. Future generations count on us to succeed as a foundation for their success.
4. Success begets success if the next generation understand that it is responsible for the one to come not simply benefiting from the past.
5. Teaching that prosperity is possible is part of the American Dream. We need to teach our children to dream
6. I used to fight so hard to be prosperous. Now the struggle is to be loving to my family. It's my primary goal.
7. Poor and honest is far greater than rich and dishonest, and much more difficult too.
8. I may have sold another book. The thrill of potential prosperity has given way to trust in God's goodness, with each one I see.
9. The habit of saving creates a profound sense of prosperity and goes a long way to creating material wealth.
10. Prosperity is psychological before it is material.
11. Christmas, sitting at the dinner table with all the boys at home and relatives filling the house gave me a feeling a such prosperity. Success measured by family unity is beyond any concept of wealth.

## Work & Service (11)

1. I did a talk for the Little sisters of the poor. The visit to the house was more of a blessing to me than my talk to them.
2. I tried to write while I was recovering. It was amazing how little I got done. Who said I couldn't be unrealistic?
3. Feeling productive allows my soul to sing it's own special song.
4. Creative ventures, like sculpting, writing and painting require a deep desire to express one's soul, especially if you're not being paid for it.
5. Writing used to be so tough, but now it seems so simple, not easy, just simple.
6. Contributing to the overall good is almost as important to following your inner call. They should harmonize at some level
7. Evil's great love is to oppress the weak. Goodness loves to protect and nurture the weak.
8. By examining how I treat those who are less fortunate than me I can see the evidence of my own goodness.
9. To work and to be creative is the key to joy at work.
10. When the novelty of treating certain diseases wears off the key to loving the work is to see the uniqueness of each patient.
11. Dealing with disappointment is sometimes difficult, but today was easy. I was focusing on hope in a number of other areas of my life and the disappointment didn't amount to much.

## Happiness & Joy (11)

1. The winds of war blow and I find it difficult to be happy. Better I pray for the son's of America and a quick finish to the fight.
2. When I woke up from surgery the pain of the broken bone was gone. I was smiling. Weird how relative things are.
3. Is frustration a clear sign that happiness is still a goal?
4. A grudge is lead to the soul.
5. I was about as joyful as I could be with a lot of pain. The joy was only there when I got my attention off my own body and onto someone else's soul.
6. The kids gave me over-wrapped presents this year for my birthday. They had more fun watching me unwrap than I had with the gifts... better to give than receive.
7. My friend is so sad that his life's work has been discredited by someone else. His response is depression. He has become the poorest of the poor emotionally. He is Jesus in disguise.
8. Being blameless is essential to happiness. Being forgiven is the way to joy
9. Anticipating surgery has left me with less joy. It's because there is less hope. Hope springs from faith and joy from hope.
10. Now that I have faith that He isn't giving me more than I can handle I am more joyful, though I still am not looking forward to the recovery period.
11. The pain has left me negative and withdrawn for months, but the amputation has liberated me. It was like letting go of an anchor I had been dragging.