

## A Life's Lesson

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Sponsored by Fremont Rotary Club

The Four-Way Test consists of four simple questions. Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? With the questions being so simple, what makes them so hard to follow? Maybe it's because people don't think before they act. It can be easy to let the people around you slip your mind. I have realized that I need to think before I act and ask myself, *how will my actions affect my life to come and the people around me?* Remembering the Four-Way Test throughout my day can help to ensure that most of my day will have a positive outcome. I have been subconsciously practicing the Four-Way Test because of the Focolare Movement.

The purpose of the movement is to unite the entire world using God. This is very important to me because it gives me so many opportunities to make a difference in other peoples' lives. The Focolare Movement is a perfect example of how the Four-Way Test can be demonstrated. I have answered all four questions while reflecting on a service retreat for teenagers involved in the movement. The retreat took place in downtown Chicago surrounded by towering skyscrapers and bustling people. As eighty teenagers loaded into an already crowded bus I decided that it was more important for others to have a seat than me. I willingly stood, thinking about how amazing it felt to be selfless. Everyone carried bags of clothes, toiletries, and food. We arrived at the city and I immediately felt out of place with everyone around me being either extremely rich or extremely poor. Men in black suits walked through the streets as if they

owned the city while glaring at the homeless. The homeless carried everything they owned in one bag and were often sitting on old cardboard or a dirty blanket. Many of them had dirt covered faces and worn clothes. I used to think that everyone who was homeless didn't want to support themselves by getting a job and just wanted to live on the streets. People started to line up for food and clothes. I carried a garbage bag full of pants and set it down under a train platform along with everyone else. I sorted the pants by size and was ready for an amazing experience.

The first man who made his way up to me was much kinder than I was expecting. Although he looked rough on the outside he was soft and loving on the inside. I asked what size of pants he wore and handed him a pair of sweatpants and jeans. The man smiled with the few teeth he had and showed me that he wasn't that different from me by starting an everyday conversation. He was so grateful for a mere two pairs of pants and moved down along the line. I then thought that every person I would meet that day would be just like that man until I met the next man. He seemed nice. I asked what size of pants he needed as I gazed into his dark brown eyes. I noticed a teardrop tattoo under his right eye meaning that he has either spent a long time in prison, attempted rape or murder, or was successful with rape or murder. I automatically assumed that he was a bad man who had no capability of being kind, but I realized that I needed to look past this. He was able to talk to me in a friendly way which made me realize that I needed to focus less on his past and more about the present. The man was kind, and that was all that mattered.

In the first few minutes of the service retreat I had discovered an answer to the Four-Way Test. I was able to answer "is it the truth?" No, it wasn't the truth. I didn't know the truth about

homeless people and made assumptions that were incorrect leading me to think that everyone who would come for food and clothes was apathetic and didn't care about supporting themselves or applying for jobs. Was I telling myself the truth? No, and even after meeting one homeless man I still didn't tell myself the truth. It took two men to show me the real truth about people who have been displaced in Chicago. As I have learned, it is always better to learn the truth before assuming things that are incorrect.

I soon learned another answer to the Four-Way Test. "Is it fair to all concerned?" A kind lady with a walker named Caroline just wanted to talk with me and another girl. She talked about the subway, the city, and her story. We had a normal conversation like I had know her from a previous time. Why would someone who was so kind be in such a horrible situation? It was upsetting because I didn't understand how it was possible for some of the nicest people I have ever met to be living in terrible conditions. Is it fair for Caroline to be living on the streets while I have food on the table, a roof over my head, and warm clothes on my back? Was it fair for me to have to watch so many people suffer with only limited things I could do for them? No. I could only give clothes and food while what I got in return did more than actions and words combined. I had learned that people a little different than me can not only be a friend, but also teach me life lessons.

The next question of the Four-Way Test I had learned was "will it build good will and better friendships?" I went into the retreat knowing about ten to twenty people. I wasn't very open to talking to new people at first, but people I had talked to while handing out pants showed me that it was easy to make friends. That night I played a game with my existing friends and ended up playing with most people on the retreat. It is incredible how one day can teach you a lesson

so important that you end up making over fifty new friends from all over the Midwest United States. It says a lot when you can even make friends with homeless men and women. I was also able to build on my existing relationships from past friends by helping each other stay safe while learning valuable lessons at the same time. We had to have other people wherever we went due to crime in the city. There was a man who was arrested right across from where we were because he had drugs with him and was intoxicated in a public area. Having friends is important for safety as much as it is to have fun. The question “will it build good will and better friendships” was definitely able to be answered with yes.

The final question: “will it be beneficial to all concerned” has a clear answer; yes. Not only did everyone learn valuable lessons about society, but we also learned how to be magnanimous toward people who are different from us. When we came together to have a discussion at the end of the night we each talked about our experiences with certain people. One girl even explained a song that a homeless man made up about her. Everyone in need was able to get warm clothes on a freezing night while I, along with many others, learned life lessons about making assumptions, being judgemental, and helping others. It was a very beneficial retreat to everyone involved.

My retreat with the Focolare has been a wonderful opportunity to ask myself the questions of the Four-Way Test. I went into the retreat answering most questions with no and came out of it being able to answer most questions with yes. I have been able to display this in my community and at home trying to remember the kind people who deserved a better life than barely surviving on the streets. The simple questions of the Four-Way test may see hard to answer positively, but with just one experience your whole entire attitude can change. Now I

know to think before I act and remember that I need to be thankful for what I have. I remember to think about how my actions will affect those around me. Will it make a positive or negative effect on my community? To live happier you must remember the Four-Way Test. You can discover more about it yourself than ever imaginable while learning important lessons at the same time. You can find out your weaknesses and work at them to become a better person. How are you affecting those around you? Ask yourself four simple questions and your life can be changed.

Submitted by Daniel Kurek

Sponsored by Bucyrus Rotary Club

Life is all about choices. Morals act as compasses to guide us throughout our lives, helping us decide right from wrong, truth from lies, and how to make hard decisions. However, like a magnet disrupts a compass, there are many interferences throughout our lives that corrupts our morals. The “Four-Way Test” helps us straighten our moral compasses so that our actions are true and just. Each question is important and meaningful. Choices can be difficult, but the “Four-Way Test” helps everyone to navigate through them and make the best decision.

Is it TRUTH? This is the first question of the “Four-Way Test”, and it is meaningful because trustworthiness is a person’s most important trait. Trustworthiness and honesty builds relationships amongst people. Making decisions and actions that are not true destroy these relationships. Just look at Herbert J. Taylor, the man that created the “Four-Way Test”. When Herbert J. Taylor went back to remodel his company so that it was honest, he dedicated himself and his coworkers to making an honest relationship between themselves, as well as between his company and his customers. The greatest way to achieve success is through honesty and trust.

Is it FAIR to ALL concerned? This is the second question of the “Four-Way Test”, and it goes along with the previous question in the sense that it aims to build relationships between people. Being fair to people means that you consider the thoughts and feelings of everyone that is related to a decision. You have to be equal to all, no matter how large or small his or her

role is. Imagine if you worked in a factory in the nineteenth century. The work conditions were horrendous, the pay was minimal, and there were frequent dangers of dying. If your boss increased the work day from 10 hours a day to 12 hours, that would be good for the company and the company's executives, but it is not fair to the workers. To gain the trust of people and to build relationships, you must be fair and polite to everyone.

Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS? This is the third question of the "Four-Way Test". Making friends is an essential part of life, and doing things for not just your friends but for everyone is very important. Friends have your back in tough situations. They can give support to you when you need it, lift your spirits, make you laugh, and can help you out in many other ways. Doing things for other people that you may not know or are not acquainted with is also important. Just because someone doesn't speak up does not mean they are necessarily alright or don't need help. Doing things that benefit all improves society. This does not just build your reputation but also creates new relationships and better friendships which is something we all need.

Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned? This is the final question of the "Four-Way Test. Being fair and being beneficial to people are two different things. Being fair means giving everyone an equal opportunity. Being beneficial means working to help people to bring a positive change to themselves and their lives. To make new friends, you must be willing to sacrifice time and effort to help them. Being beneficial to everyone also means that you must

think about how any decision or action you make will affect everyone. You must remember that everyone is important, no matter who they are. Everyone in life needs help, and helping one person at a time is the key to making a positive difference in the world.

No one knows where life will take them. There are so many vines and changes in the road to success that some people will get stuck in the mud. However, the “Four-Way Test” causes people to look outside of themselves and help others to find that success. By answering “Yes” to all of the questions in the “Four-Way Test”, you are showing your acts are positive and will help everyone. This, in the end, will make a change for the better. While life is about success, there is a difference between personal success and a success as a whole. Some people find personal success by skipping the questions in the “Four-Way Test” and may cheat or lie to get power and wealth. However, by finding success for everyone, you may or may not be famous or rich, but in the end, you would have made the right choice. This decision leads to the greatest wealth of all, friendship.

Submitted by Analei Jackson

Sponsored by Lima Rotary Club

I don't want people to look at the world and see hate and death, only hope, life, and happiness. The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched, they must be felt with the heart. We're so blinded by the bad, we can't even start to comprehend the good. I can't rewrite the book the world has started, but I can fight for a happy ending. I'm not writing this essay just to benefit myself, but I want to change the hearts and souls of ordinary people. I must be the change that we wish to see in the world. I'm going back in history and find the things that have reverberated a transformation throughout the world.

I perceive honesty to be truth, that's the first part of the 4-Way test. It's hard for me to grasp truth, but I think Nelson Mandela gives the word full meaning. A powerful role model and courageous hero, Nelson Mandela, did not fight with violence, but truth. He spent his life fighting for freedom for South Africa's colored population. When Mandela grew up, blacks had little say in how South Africa's government was run and held the nation's most perilous jobs. In 1944, Nelson began fighting for blacks to have the same human rights as whites. Soon, the South African government made new laws keeping whites and blacks apart. They were not permitted to attend school together or marry. Mandela inspired young people to speak out against apartheid. Through the use of truth, Mandela inspired nations to justly understand inequality. In 1962, Nelson Mandela, age 46, was sentenced to life in prison. He never deviated from the truth. After 27 years in prison, Mandela was freed. Peace and change had started to

spread throughout Africa. Later, he was elected South Africa's first black president and won the Noble Peace Prize. I can only imagine the kind of truth Mandela must have held within himself and I can only pray, that one day, I can hold the truth of a nation through my actions.

Fairness is one that everyone understands at a different level, that's the next question the Rotary presents. You cannot be fair to others without first being fair to yourself. Martin Luther King Jr. was an activist who became the most visible spokesperson and leader in the Civil Rights Movement. He fought against "the chains of segregation" (King). Martin is famous for tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs. Martin saw the inequality between blacks and white and received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial discrimination through nonviolent resistance. He epitomizes fairness when he stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and said, "I have a dream that. . . we will be transformed into an oasis of freedom." King never stopped facing injustices in his pursuit of fairness. If King had stopped fighting, my freedom and pride for being part African American would be non-existent. My hope is that learning about Martin Luther King Jr. will help me see the colors of all races with equality.

Friendship is something we all take for granted. This is the next question in the 4-way test. A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out. Although the next man's name has been forgotten in history, his actions have not. Maximillian Kolbe was a Polish priest arrested twice for offering shelter to Jewish and Polish refugees during the Holocaust. When Kolbe was caught again, hiding exiles, he was sent to Auschwitz death camp. At the camp, Kolbe willingly traded places with a complete stranger condemned to death. Kolbe's

readiness to help anyone no matter who they are is astonishing. This selflessness has united people of the world. I need to first learn about people. I can't expect everyone to be the same as me. It's the only way I can become a proper friend to anyone. Just remember what you judge on the exterior of an individual, does not always reveal the interior of their heart.

Often people who try to benefit others are not reciprocated. "Is it beneficial to all concerned" is shown through William Tyndale's life. William, a gifted scholar with moral character, translated the bible from Hebrew and Greek into common English. At that time, this was forbidden. There were those who thirsted for the Truth of the Bible, however the Church tried to prevent this act by only allowing priests this privilege. William loved the religion he was a part of and wanted ordinary man to have the capability of grasping the kind of knowledge he acquired. William allowed a lot of people to have a chance to try something new. Although he led a lot of people to new faith, he was betrayed, turned in, and strangled. I need to try to benefit others before thinking about myself, even when the cost is significant.

This 4-Way test allowed me to open my eyes and mind a little wider. I realized by using fairness, truth, better friendships, and benefiting others, I can change the world. Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life. Tip toe if you must, but take that step. It's the only way the world will end up better. The ones who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones that triumph.