

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 4/25/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, April 26 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for those who are hungry. Speak to God about those who lack enough to eat and ask God to show you ways that you can be of assistance to them. Pray for the courage and trust to risk doing more for others*

When I was an early teen and I was upset with my father over something he would consistently do in dealing with me, I would tell my mother, expecting her to then talk to my father. I thought that would solve the situation to my satisfaction and without me having to confront my father. Now either my mother didn't talk to my father, which I doubt, or she talked to him and he chose not to change, or she disagreed with my wishes and supported my father, though she never told me. In any case, my dad didn't change, my expectations were not met, and I was disappointed and frustrated.

What do you do when your wishes don't meet reality? What options do you have when you want something to be different, but you don't have the power or the position to change it? How can you deal with circumstances when you try to get them to change, but little happens to meet your hopes? Well, there is a thing that can help, at least with your perspective about frustrating situations, called the "Milk Carton Rule," explained by Justin Bariso. The Milk Carton Rule is based on a real-life example of a couple I will call Sylvia and Murray (not their real names).

Every morning, Sylvia gets up early for work, makes coffee, adds some milk, and then runs off to work leaving the milk carton on the counter. A couple hours later, her husband Murray comes into the kitchen and finds the now warm milk carton on the counter. This upsets and frustrates Murray no end, and though he has discussed the issue with Sylvia, she continues to follow the same routine. This has gone on for ten years and it makes Murray even feel that Sylvia doesn't love him.

What's odd however is that, though Sylvia has done this thousands of times, Murray is still expects a different outcome each morning, and when it is the same, he is upset and disappointed in her behavior. Yet, why does this surprise him? Murray is basing his expectation on what he wants, rather than on the history of what she has done. How might his feelings change if he based his expectation on what Sylvia actually did, instead of what he wanted her to do? Probably he would have less anger and might be more likely to find a different solution.

People do not try to solve problems they think should not exist. Murray will not try to think of other ways to get cold milk for his breakfast (like buying his own carton of milk) so long as he believes his wife should behave differently. Yet, by realizing that reality isn't always the way we want it, we can focus on solving the problem, instead of repeating the cycle of frustration and anger.

The Milk Carton Rule simply says: "Instead of dwelling on what you can't change, focus on what you can." This can be very helpful in our families, work, neighborhoods, or even at church where there may be behaviors by individuals or corporate practices that are not what you want or expect. Rather than regularly being annoyed or disappointed by circumstances that never seem to change the way you would like, take some time to brainstorm ideas that would allow you to feel more comfortable or turn

your focus toward those things that bring you joy or satisfaction. Obviously, there are situations where you lack the power or ability to reach a different result, but even just recognizing this can free you to let go of some of the negative feelings about the circumstances.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey