

# The Foundation™

## EIGHT HABITS OF OUR HEART

*by Clifton L. Taulbert*

All over the world, we sometimes stop and ponder our human journey and the role that each of us play in making this journey the best one possible. In so doing, we have to first look at ourselves and do an inventory of how we have embraced the opportunities of creating and sustaining good relationships along the way. After all, the laughter, the joy, the tears, the sadness, and the triumphs will center our conversations—the life of the people living in our midst. Our presence matters in the lives of others! This was so important to me when growing up as young man on the Mississippi Delta. I needed caring and visionary people committed to my future. I was fortunate! Such people showed up, ordinary people just like us. My world was marred by the impact of legal segregation and all it entailed, but that reality was not able to stand against the intentional unselfishness I encountered. Their unselfishness made my journey possible. They were employing timeless and universal principles to shift my perspective, my thinking and my behavior. Now nearly a half-century later, their actions have become the stories that I share

worldwide: The Eight Habits of the Heart. Though I first saw them lived out on the Mississippi Delta, I now know them to be timeless and universal: Nurturing Attitude, Responsibility, Dependability, Friendship, Brotherhood-Sisterhood, High Expectations, Courage and Hope.

These are the Eight Habits of OUR Heart. They come alive through our daily commitment to the well-being of others. They are indeed universal. I recall when speaking at an international conference several years ago, prior to the reconciliation between Northern and Southern Ireland. Standing in the midst of mayors from both sides of the conflict, we found ourselves in tears as we realized that these habits, when embraced and lived out, could indeed change our perspective of ourselves and of others. They are powerful! As a young boy, these habits had no names in particular. They were simply the people down the street who stepped up and became extraordinary leaders. For me, it was my Uncle Cleve, the entrepreneur Ice Man who hired



me to work for him when I was thirteen. He cared about my future. He demanded much of me. And over time, I demanded much of myself. Let me take you back to the world of my youth and to the people and the circumstances where I first experienced this unprecedented level of intentional unselfishness. They thought I mattered. You see, when we think OTHERS matter, everything changes for the better.

I first experienced these Eight Habits of OUR Heart while growing up in the Mississippi Delta during the era of legal segregation—a time of turbulence in our country. However, it was in that time period that I also witnessed NURTURING ATTITUDE—the habit that has to do with the unselfish use of time. Because of unselfish people of all races and ages who gave their time to ensure that this nation would live up to its creed, we have reason to celebrate today. If we embrace this habit of the heart, we continue the process of preserving and celebrating our shared humanity.

During that same time period, I witnessed RESPONSIBILITY and DEPENDABILITY come alive. I saw ordinary people—people without assets to preserve and without academic or social credentials come to the rescue of our nation. It was as if they heard Paul Revere's alarm to the nation being born. It was as if they were at Gettysburg when President Lincoln called for the citizen to become the endurance of this nation. These two habits have to do with empowering others and with keeping our word. Our nation needed both at the time of great turbulence and still does today. As we watch the events of the world unfold around us, such habits are still needed.

When I first experienced the habit of FRIENDSHIP, my world was rather small and mostly filled with people I had known all my life, but somehow their small acts of kindness were showing me what would be expected of me as my world grew. And my, my has it grown! Somehow this habit defines our country—a place where the world seeks to come and taste what we often take for granted. This habit is about binding people together during all the times of their lives—somehow

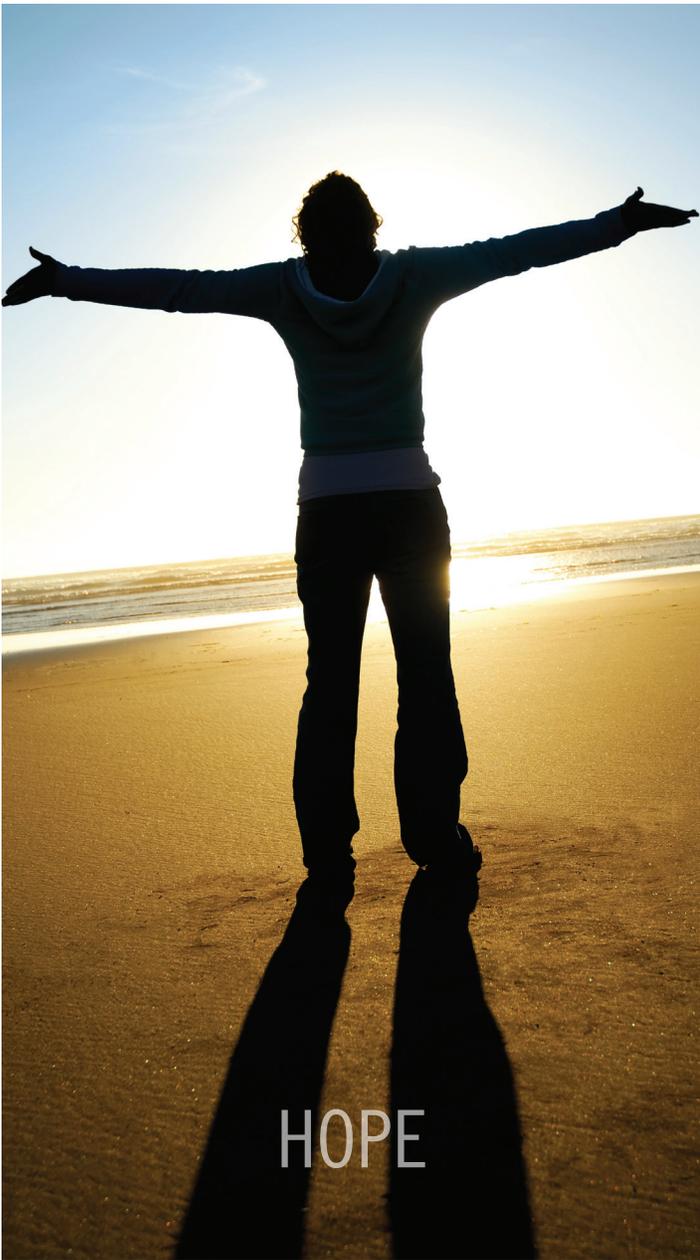


finding a way to make one nation out of so many. This habit is even more critical today as the world has become more and more dependent upon each other. Technology has brought us within earshot of each other. We are no longer strangers-but fellow travelers along our human journey together.

We can go even further. We can take friendship to the level of BROTHERHOOD/SISTERHOOD. It's possible. I saw it in my hometown-a place where the rules of separatism seemed to have been written in indelible ink. I saw tables stretched for me. We have the capacity to make the pangs of our birth worthwhile. This is what America has been for the world-a stretched table. It's about not being comfortable being comfortable. Reach beyond comfortable! Extend a

welcome to others. Everybody matters! We must all keep our personal torches burning brightly so that others can find their way to our welcoming door.

As I write these thoughts, I cannot help but also think about the generations who will follow us and what they will think and do to celebrate our human journey. As I think about them, I think about the importance of this next habit of the heart-HIGH EXPECTATIONS. To have High Expectations for others is so critical because our expectations will dictate and direct our actions toward them. Our nation, as do all nations, needs every young person to embrace their role as citizen-trustees of their respective countries. But it starts with me-believing that others can and will be successful and then telling them so. Had I not experienced such a



habit of the heart: COURAGE. This is the bedrock of our Democracy and Democracy all over the world, the ability of ordinary citizens to step up and become the Courage needed to be the positive difference being sought. We must look deeply within ourselves and around us to determine what is right and when convinced...Stand Up. This is Courage. I have a life because of the Courage of others.

The Eighth Habit of OUR Heart is HOPE. It's all about-believing in tomorrow, going beyond what we see because we have learned to see with the eyes of our hearts. It's about believing that the impossible is possible. It's about committing ourselves to the task of making the world around us a better place in which to live, work, play and dream. Hope is a person, just like the elders who dreamed for me and just like you and me. Our voice and our touch give substance to the HOPE that lives in our heart. Remember, the future of our nation and that of the world depends upon such an unselfish embrace. The Eight Habits of the Heart are not held captive by race, gender or geography. All they need are human hearts in which to dwell and live out their immense potential all over the world.



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habit while growing up, I am not sure the disposition of my life. Then HIGH EXPECTATIONS for others is a gift that will not come from the hard assets of our lives, but from our hearts.

During the Revolutionary War in America, individuals bravely thought they could create a new world. During the Civil War, individuals bravely thought they could change our world. During the Civil Rights Movement, they bravely thought they could change my world. What did they all have in common? They had this