



ADJUST TO THINGS BEYOND YOUR CONTROL



*You have to accept whatever comes,
and the only important thing is that you meet it
with courage and with the best you have to give.*

—Eleanor Roosevelt



In the early 1830s a train of Conestoga wagons rolled through the Cumberland Gap from Virginia into Kentucky. They turned south along the Cumberland Plateau into Tennessee and planned to turn west at Monterey to Nashville. From there, they would go west to Texas.

A young widow with several children drove one of the wagons in the train. After her husband died, her brother in east Texas had sent word that he would help her raise the children if she could just get them to Texas.

The wagon train stopped for the night in a valley just north of Monterey, Tennessee, a few miles from the Kentucky border. A friendly farmer let the widow and her boys spend the night in the haymow of his barn. But the next morning, one of the little boys had the measles.

The wagon master, trying to do his job, told the mother she

had two options: she could stay with the boy, or she could leave him—but he announced that no sick boy could go with the wagon train, for he would surely infect the other pioneers. The widow knew that if she stayed, another wagon train they could join might not come along for months and months. After intense agonizing, the widow decided to leave the little boy with the farmer, promising to return for him as soon as she got her other little ones settled in Texas. But she never came back. Some speculate that she died. Others believe she could not manage the trip back to Tennessee. We'll probably never know why the mother didn't return for her son.

That little boy was my (Les Sr.'s) great-grandfather. And he has left an invaluable legacy to our family.



*If you don't like something, change it.
If you can't change it, change your attitude.
Don't complain.*

—Maya Angelou



Great-Grandfather fought in the Confederacy during the Civil War. His leg was shot off in battle. When the army released him at Murfreesboro, he had to hobble the last 65 miles home on a pair of crutches. What a tortuous journey!

Our family letters from that time, plus all the other bits of information I have gleaned, have revealed that he was a religious man known for loving his family—especially his two boys. One of those sons was my grandfather. I read one of the letters Great-Grandfather wrote from an army hospital where they cut off his leg without giving him the benefit of anesthesia. That upbeat letter to his wife, now in the State Library Archives of Tennessee, told her to hug their two little boys for him and to let them know he'd be coming home. Three years after he returned home, he died.

James Parrott left a legacy that has been handed from generation to generation in our family. This inheritance has nothing to do with money but has everything to do with attitude. Jim, as the family called him, knew the value of adjusting to circumstances beyond his control, and he did his best to pass this quality to his sons. After all, they saw him live the attitudes he encouraged. Jim had every reason to complain and blame others because he grew up without a mom or dad. He could have justifiably grumbled about the results of the war on his life.

Instead, he rose above his challenges. He was known for having an adjustable attitude that softened the jolts he encountered. My father learned this character quality from his father, and I have learned it from my father. This is a quality I have long prized and have tried to pass along to my three sons.



*The last of the human freedoms
is to choose one's attitudes.*

—Viktor Frankl



We encourage you to pass along this character quality, this capacity to adjust to things beyond your control, to your children. This is an essential ingredient—perhaps one of the main ingredients—for helping our kids experience the lives we want them to live.

What “Adjusting to Situations Beyond Your Control” Means

“The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life,” writes pastor Chuck Swindoll in his 1981 book *Improving Your Serve*. “Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill.”