

1. Elephant and Friends

A lonely elephant wandered the forest looking for friends. She came across a monkey and asked, "Will you be my friend, monkey?" "You are too big and cannot swing on trees as I do. So I cannot be your friend", said the monkey.

The elephant then came across a rabbit and asked him if she could be his friend. "You are too big to fit inside my burrow. You cannot be my friend", replied the rabbit.

Then the elephant met a frog and asked if she could be her friend. The frog said "You are too big and heavy. You cannot jump like me. I am sorry, but you cannot be my friend".

The elephant asked a fox, and he got the same reply, that he was too big. The next day, all the animals in the forest were running in fear. The elephant stopped a bear and asked what was happening and was told that a tiger has been attacking all the animals.

The elephant wanted to save the other weak animals and went to the tiger and said "Please sir, leave my friends

alone. Do not eat them". The tiger didn't listen and asked the elephant to mind her own business. Seeing no other way to solve the problem, the elephant kicked the tiger and scared it away.

She then went back to the others and told them what happened. Listening how the elephant saved their lives, the animals agreed in unison, "You are just the right size to be our friend".

2. Good Company, Bad Company

Two parrots built a nest in a banyan tree. They lived with their two young ones, which they took good care of. The mother and the father parrot went out to gather food in the morning and came back home by evening. One day, when the parents were away, the young parrots were taken by a cruel hunter.

One of the birds managed to escape and flew away from the hunter. He ended up at a hermitage and grew up listening to kind words and compassion. The hunter put the other parrot in a cage, and soon it learned a few words and phrases. The hunter and his family were crude and didn't care much about kind words.

One day, a passerby was resting outside the hunter's hut. Sensing someone outside, the parrot said, "Fool, why are you here? Fool! Leave! I'll cut your throat". Scared, the traveler went away, and on his journey, he reached the hermitage where the other parrot was. The parrot at the

hermitage spoke, "Welcome traveler. You are free to stay here as long as you want".

Surprised, the traveler told the parrot that he came across a similar parrot elsewhere and it was very cruel. How is it that you are so kind?" The parrot replied, "That must be my brother. I live with sages, and my brother lives with hunters. I learned the sage's language, and my brother learned the hunter's language. Thus, the company we keep decides who we will be".

3. Making a Difference

My friend was walking down a deserted Mexican beach at sunset. As he walked along, he began to see another man in the distance. As he grew nearer, he noticed that the local native kept leaning down, picking something up and throwing it out into the water. Time and again he kept hurling things out into the ocean. As my friend approached even closer, he noticed that the man was picking up starfish that had washed up on the beach, and, one at a time, he was throwing them back into the water. My friend was puzzled.

He approached the man and said. "Good evening, friend. I was wondering what you are doing."

"I'm throwing these starfish back into the ocean. You see its low tide right now and all of these starfish have been washed up onto the shore. If I don't throw them back into the sea, they'll die up here from lack of oxygen."

"I understand," my friend replied, "but there must be

thousands of starfish on this beach. You can't possibly get to all of them. There are simply too many. And don't you realize this is probably happening on hundreds of beaches all up and down this coast. Can't you see that you can't possibly make a difference?"

The local native smiled, bent down and picked up yet another starfish, and as he threw it back into the sea, he replied, "Made a difference to that one!"

4. Building Your House

An elderly carpenter was ready to retire. He told his employer-contractor of his plans to leave the house-building business to live a more leisurely life with his wife and enjoy his extended family. He would miss the paycheck each week, but he wanted to retire. They could get by.

The contractor was sorry to see his good worker go and asked if he could build just one more house as a personal favor. The carpenter said yes, but over time it was easy to see that his heart was not in his work. He resorted to shoddy workmanship and used inferior materials. It was an unfortunate way to end a dedicated career.

When the carpenter finished his work, his employer came to inspect the house. Then he handed the front-door key to the carpenter and said, "This is your house... my gift to you."

The carpenter was shocked!

What a shame! If he had only known he was building his own house, he would have done it all so differently.

So it is with us. We build our lives, a day at a time, often putting less than our best into the building. Then, with a shock, we realize we have to live in the house we have built.

If we could do it over, we would do it much differently. But, you cannot go back. You are the carpenter, and every day you hammer a nail, place a board, or erect a wall. Someone once said, "Life is a do-it-yourself project." Your attitude, and the choices you make today, helps build the "house" you will live in tomorrow. Therefore, build wisely!

5. Love and Time

Once upon a time, there was an island where all the feelings lived: Happiness, Sadness, Knowledge, and all of the others, including Love. One day it was announced to the feelings that the island would sink, so all constructed boats and left. Except for Love.

Love was the only one who stayed. Love wanted to hold out until the last possible moment. When the island had almost sunk, Love decided to ask for help.

Richness was passing by Love in a grand boat. Love said, "Richness, can you take me with you?" Richness answered, "No, I can't. There is a lot of gold and silver in my boat. There is no place here for you."

Love decided to ask Vanity who was also passing by in a beautiful vessel. "Vanity, please help me!" "I can't help you, Love. You are all wet and might damage my boat," Vanity answered.

Sadness was close by so Love asked, "Sadness, let me

go with you." "Oh . . . Love, I am so sad that I need to be by myself!" Happiness passed by Love, too, but she was so happy that she did not even hear when Love called her.

Suddenly, there was a voice, "Come, Love, I will take you." It was an elder. So blessed and overjoyed, Love even forgot to ask the elder where they were going. When they arrived at dry land, the elder went his own way. Realizing how much was owed the elder, Love asked Knowledge, another elder, "Who helped me?"

"It was Time," Knowledge answered.

"Time?" asked Love. "But why did Time help me?" Knowledge smiled with deep wisdom and answered, "Because only Time is capable of understanding how valuable Love is."

6. The Clever Boy

A man with his donkey carrying two sacks of wheat was on his way to the market. After a little while he was tired and they rested under a tree. When he woke up from his nap, he could not see the donkey and started searching for the donkey everywhere. On the way he met a boy, he asked the boy, "Have you seen my donkey?" The boy asked, "Is the donkey's left eye blind, his right foot lame and is he carrying a load of wheat?" The man was happy and said, "Yes, exactly! Where have you seen it?" the boy answered "I haven't seen it." This made the man very angry and he took the boy to the village chief for punishment.

The judge asked, "Dear boy, if you had not seen the donkey, how could you describe it?" The boy answered, "I saw the tracks of a donkey and the right and left tracks were different. From this I understood that the donkey that passed there was limping. And the grass on the right side

of the road was eaten but the grass on the left was not. From that I understood that his left eye was blind. There were wheat seeds scattered on the ground and I understood that he must have been carrying a load of wheat. The judge understood the boy's cleverness and told the man that he was mistaken about the boy.

7. Words and Actions Should Be the Same

There once was a boy who loved sweets. He always asked for sweets from his father. His father was a poor man and he could not afford sweets. The little boy did not understand this, and he demanded sweets all the time.

The boy's father thought hard about how to stop the child from asking for so many sweets. There was a very holy man living nearby. The boy's father had an idea. He decided to take the boy to the great man who might be able to persuade the child to stop asking for sweets all the time.

The boy and his father went to the great man. The father said to him, "O great saint, could you tell my son to stop asking for sweets which I cannot afford?" The great man was in difficulty because he liked sweets himself. How could he demand the boy to give up asking for sweets? The holy man told the father to bring his son back after one month.

During that month, the holy man gave up sweets, and

when the boy and his father returned after a month, the holy man said to the boy "My dear child, will you stop asking for sweets that your father cannot afford?"

From then on, the boy stopped asking for sweets.

The boy's father questioned, "Why did you not ask my son to give up asking for sweets when we came to you a month ago?" The saint replied, "How could I ask a boy to give up sweets when I loved sweets myself. Last month I gave up eating sweets." A man's action is much more powerful than his words. When we ask someone to do something, we must do it ourselves also. What you don't want done to you, don't do to others.

8. True Wealth

One day a father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the purpose of showing his son how the poor people live so he could be thankful for his wealth.

They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family.

On their return from their trip, the father asked his son, "How was the trip?"

"It was great, Dad." said the son.

"Did you see how poor people can be?" the father asked.

"Oh, yeah. " said the son.

"So what did you learn from the trip?" asked the father.

The son answered, "I saw that we have one dog and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end." "We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night." "Our patio reaches to the front yard and

they have the whole horizon." "We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight." "We have servants who serve us, but they serve others." "We buy our food, but they grow theirs." "We have walls around our property to protect us; they have friends to protect them."

With this, the boy's father was speechless. Then his son added, "Thanks dad, for showing me how poor we are."