





personal motto – that Happiness is a decision! Hmm. My ears perk up and I listen with more intensity.

As Fr. Steve goes on, he suggests that Rudeness is also a decision – the act of being unkind or disrespectful to another is a conscious choice made in the moment. The acting out of Jealousy? A decision. Patience, kindness – other decisions.

The love that Paul speaks of, says Fr. Steve, no gooey pop-song sentiment. For Paul, love is social cement building up friendship and the common life of society. Love has constructive and unifying power.

The Greek word Paul uses here for love is *agapē*. Latin translates this word as *caritas*, from which comes our English word “charity.” And charity – an attention to others – is a sort of love that is about reaching out to others. Charity is love that is lived thru our actions, through our choices. Love is the live crackle in the wiring of our lives, energizing our common life of service to one another, to our world and, and to our God.

Love, and the actions that flow from choosing to show love to others, is a powerful force in our lives, in our communities, even in our workplace. *How we choose determines our lives.*

Fr. Steve got me thinking about how often I have the opportunity to make decisions about my behavior with others.

A LOT! Every day, every time I speak with another, merge into traffic, stand in a checkout line, answer the phone, meet with a client, connect with family...indeed, every time I interact. And when I behave in a manner that is inconsistent with love and caring and respect, I have made a CHOICE to do so.

### **Last week: a Threat to Love**

The news flowed through our family channels faster than anything I’ve experienced in my fifty years of life: Aunt Corrine has a brain tumor.

Aunt Corrine, in her mid-70s and going strong despite diabetes and a knee-replacement a few years back, is a bundle of love and energy and service: she’s the one who runs the food drive to create baskets of food for families in distress; she spends many hours packing and the delivering supplies to needy families at Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving. Her house is the place where holidays are held – open houses, with sometimes hundreds of people passing through in a single day to be fed and hugged and loved. She holds an annual egg hunt on Easter morning that has, over the past 25 years, thrilled thousands of little kids, mentally-handicapped adults, and their parents, friends, and guardians. She visits the sick in the hospitals. She goes to funeral homes to pray with the families. She runs a veritable shuttle service for those who have no family. She and Uncle Bob take groups of widows on their many driving vacations. She travels in a community. She cares about everyone.

Aunt Corrine is the strong one. She’s the one who loves all and takes care of everyone else.

And I notice, as the many emails and bulletins fly back and forth as our large extended family tries to gather information and understand what is happening, that everyone is signing their notes,



Love, Sharon. Love, Colleen. Love, Doreen. We are suddenly aware of having chosen NOT to say this in the past, and in the face of a threat to a source of love, we are compelled to say it out loud, to remind each other that we are bound to this family, this community, through love.

**This week: Love is a Verb**

On Sunday, Cheryl and I deliver a talk at a retreat for engaged couples. Members of the retreat team range from three months of marriage to us, the 'veteran' couple, with 28 years. We hear many stories of the challenges and rewards of living in a committed relationship.

These engaged couples are all "in love" right now, focused on the wedding day. But the retreat, the opening speaker reminds them, "is about preparing for your marriage, not your wedding. The latter is a single day, the former is the rest of your life."

One of the "wisdoms" that Cheryl and I share with the participants is this: you are so different from one another. You will not always be "in love." Sometimes you will be in frustration, or anger, or confusion, or stress. At times, you will struggle under the weight of obligations, decisions, kids, finances, jobs. Sometimes you will look at your spouse and wonder, "who IS this person? Why can't they be more like me?"

So we talk about communication and ground rules for dealing with issues. And we share with those couples something that it took us years to learn: that while Love is an emotion or a feeling, Love is also a verb: it requires action. Every day, nurture that love; never take it for granted. It takes work, it requires attention, it is a choice. To leave little notes. To pick up a flower on the way home. To accept your partner, flaws and all. To actually say, "I love you." To spend time with. To express concern. To listen.

Especially to listen.

**Back to Father Steve**

In his homily, Fr. Steve extended the notion of choice to other areas: Patience is about choosing to wait, to slow down. Kindness is choosing to take an action toward another that serves them. Courtesy is a decision made in the moment regarding polite vs impolite behavior, or about the use of language.

Every day, we have the power to choose how we express love to those around us, be they coworkers or customers, family or strangers.

How do you choose?

**Do This For Yourself!**

Is there someone in your personal or professional life with whom you wish to have a different (aka better) relationship? Use your power to choose. Name the feeling you'd like to hold when you are in relationship with that person – in other words, how do YOU want to feel when you are around them? Confident? Caring? Loving? Valued? Accepting? Calm?

Consider what that feeling looks like in action. Then, instead of waiting for the emotion to emerge





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wife have taken on. He seeks to help not only with money, but also with focus – by using his celebrity status to draw attention to horrendous situations that can often be addressed with very simple technology and allocation of resources.

[http://money.cnn.com/2007/01/09/magazines/fortune/Gates\\_philanthropy.fortune/](http://money.cnn.com/2007/01/09/magazines/fortune/Gates_philanthropy.fortune/)

Gates appears to be a leader who cares. Bravo!

#### **IV. THE LEADERSHIP SERIES**

Skip and I have heard some great things about our newly-released Leadership Series.

If your workplace suffers from poor communication, unmotivated teams, lack of feedback, unresolved conflict, or unhappy people, you may find help in this downloadable audio product.

It's six hours of lessons on leadership for your PC, iPod, or MP3 player, along with printed supplemental materials and a couple assessments, including my Leadership Audit, to supplement the learning. You'll hear about best practices in Leadership, Communication, Conflict, Coaching, Motivation, Emotional mastery, and (of course) Happiness in the workplace.

It's like attending a full day of conference programs, without having to leave the comfort of your office!

The Leadership Series draws on our combined 50 years spent in the leadership world. We are both so excited to be able to share our collective wisdom with our clients and colleagues!

We launched [TheLeadershipSeries](#) this month and are offering a special deal to our subscribers: you'll receive a \$20 discount for trying it out and giving us some feedback. ([Follow this link](#) – the \$77 discounted price will show up in your shopping cart when you check out).

Let me know what you think!

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#### **IV. INSTRUCTIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

Jim Smith is The Executive Happiness Coach™. He is a recovering corporate executive whose passion is to help people discover and increase the amount of Happiness in their lives and work.

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Drop me a line anytime with your feedback and queries! Jim <mailto:Jim@1LeaderCoach.com>

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**Happiness is a decision, not an event.  
How will YOU decide today?**



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