

## **Apples, Actions, and Leopards** by Mark Matteson

Edmonds, Washington is a sleepy little burg on the shores of Puget Sound. The ferry goes back and forth from Edmonds to Kingston. I am always happy to return there from my travels. It is like an old friend I haven't seen for a few years; I pick up where I left off. As a kid, I called it "Deadmonds" and couldn't wait to leave. Now, 35 years later, I smile when I walk around downtown. I do all my business in my community. It's nice.

My barber's name is John; he cuts hair six days a week. John is originally from Ohio. Me, too. I was born in Ravenna, near Akron. He creates just the right atmosphere in his shop for his demographic, the 45- to 75-year-old man. There are 25 different magazines to read and a 42-inch flat screen tuned to ESPN or CNN.

When I want to read, he never says a word. When I want to talk, he listens. John is smart in that common-sense-everyman kind of way. He is always busy. I usually have to wait, but I don't mind. The experience is always worth it. I tease him that he should only charge me half the price. When I tip him, he says, "Oh, no, I couldn't. That would be stealing!"

During my last visit, I asked him, "So, what do you know?" A little surprised that I wanted to talk, he quoted a psychiatrist friend of his from Columbus, Ohio. It was profound. He said, "Human beings can be summed by three proverbs:

"The apple always falls close to the tree.

"Actions speaks louder than words.

"A leopard never changes his spots."

It was like a two-by-four to the back of the head. The next morning, I grabbed my journal and started thinking about what John had said.

## **APPLES**

The apple always falls close to the tree. As much as I would like to believe otherwise, a big part of who I am is due to my mother and father. I can break it down for you. Because of my late mother, Barbara Jean Matteson, I love books, write for a living, have a love of all things British (including a great cup of tea), love a gathering, and enjoy theater and film. Because of my late father, Robert D. Matteson, I am tall, balding, have a great sense of humor, love hearing or telling a good story, have a passion for basketball, and don't like anyone telling me what to do. If I am honest, he never suffered fools gladly. Me, too. Mean and stupid people are tough for me to handle. Each of us has our parents' DNA hardwired into us from birth. Mannerisms, vocal patterns, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, affinities, interests, and eating habits all come from our parents. Will you pass who you are onto your kids?

## **ACTIONS**

Actions speak louder than words. Socrates concluded at the end of his life, "I stopped listening to what men said and watched what they did." My children don't listen to a word I say, but they watch every move I make. A better example is the model imperative. I will always be judged by my actions, never on my intentions. It takes 21 to 35 days to form a new habit. Good habits are hard to form, but easy to live with. Bad habits are easy to form and hard to live with. Is it the same for you?

## **LEOPARDS**

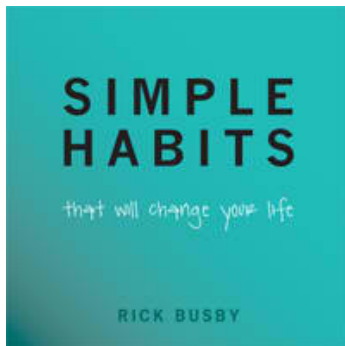
A leopard never changes his spots. Emerson wrote, "Who you are speaks so loudly, I cannot hear what you are saying." It has been said, "Who you are is fixed by the time you are five years old." That is uncomfortably true for some people. In my observation, it is true 80 percent of the time. Acceptance of our strengths and delegation of our weaknesses seems to be the answer for a lot of people, but there are some things we CAN change. That is what I choose to focus on. My attitudes, my behaviors, my moods, my thoughts and feelings, my friends, the books I read—these are things I CAN change.



*I have not failed (to invent the light bulb). I have just found 10,000 ways that won't work.*

*What you are will show in what you do.*

## Book of the Month



### ***Simple Habits*** by Rick Busby



Rick is an old friend and very successful businessman, father, and husband. When I sat on his front porch in Augusta, Georgia one evening and listened to his story, I asked, “Why don’t you write all that out in a book? It’s such great advice.” Who knew he would actually do it? Maybe you will never get to chat with Rick on his porch, but you can read his new and first book. You will be glad you did. Here is an excerpt from *Simple*

#### ***Habits:***

This book is all about habits. Life is all about habits. We are creatures of habit and we choose the habits that will ultimately form our lives. First we form habits and then they form us. Good habits are hard to form and easy to live with while bad habits are easy to form and hard to live with. I will be the first to admit that it was easier for me to write this than to practice its content. Experts say that the amount of time it takes to create a habit varies by individuals.

My advice is to pick one and work on it until it becomes automatic. Then pick another and another. Before you know it, your life will be changed and in the process you will change the lives of those around you. The habits you develop will determine the quality and outcome of your life.

To order this book, go to <http://www.buzzbeebooks.com>.