

# The wrong equation

by BRIAN LOCKHART

This interesting story, or maybe a parable, came across my Facebook page the other day.

I thought it was interesting enough to share:

At the start of the first class of a new school year, a teacher wrote several equations on the blackboard.

The first equation was  $4+6=12$ . She then followed up with several more equations, all with the correct answer.

When she was done, she looked to the students and they were all laughing at her because of the first equation which was wrong.

Then the teacher said the following:

?I wrote that first one wrong on purpose because I wanted you to learn something important. This was for you to know how the world will treat you. You can see that I wrote nine equations right, but none of you congratulated me for it. You all laughed and criticized me because of one wrong thing I did. So, this is the lesson: The world will always focus on the one wrong thing you do even if you do good a million times. But don't get discouraged, always rise above all the laughter and criticism.?

There is a lot of truth in this little story. Very seldom do you hear about the good things you do, but make a mistake, and people will let you know.

The irony of the above parable isn't lost, however, because if there is one person who always, and I mean always, points out your mistakes ? it's a teacher.

When I first entered high school, I was determined to be a good student. One of the first classes I enrolled in was electricity.

I had been informed by my older brother, that in high school you couldn't submit hand-written reports.

When we got our first big assignment in that electricity class, I took it seriously. I did the work, and got out my own little portable typewriter, and spent hours making sure every word was spelled correctly, and the entire report was neatly typed with good clean copy. I was proud of the job I did.

After the reports were graded, and handed back to us, across the top of my report, written in big red letters were the sarcastic words, ?Who did your typing??

I was a shy kid at the time, and didn't follow up on this. However, I should have gone back to the teacher and demanded extra credit for producing a paper he thought was beyond the ability of a Grade Nine student ? who he didn't even know.

I should have then demanded credit on top of that in the way of an apology from the teacher for making an assumption without checking facts, being unprofessional, and basically being a jerk.

That stupid comment from that teacher set the tone for the rest of my time in high school. I had little respect for any comment any teacher made about my work from that point on. As far as I was concerned, they were there to criticize, not point out the good things you did.

It is true, in life, that people are far more likely to point out a mistake, than praise someone for a job well done.

A baseball umpire can make 100 perfect calls in a row, however it is that one missed call that results in the crowd yelling out the insults.

If a person in a coffee shop makes a coffee the wrong way, the customer almost always has to make derogatory comment about such bad service, without thinking about the other 1,000 coffees that day that were made to order.

You can drive a car for 30 years with no accidents or tickets and no one will thank you for your good driving. However, have one accident and suddenly you are deemed a risk and your insurance rates will go up.

I recall a concert by the late tenor, Luciano Pavarotti, where for some reason, his voice warbled or cracked on the high note. The Italian crowd started booing. Apparently they take opera very seriously in Italy.

The man had decades of beautiful performances, but could not be forgiven for one mistake.

No one ever stops a police officer and thanks them for doing a good job and keeping the streets safe. But if one person catches a cop on video wrestling with a drunk who is on probation and took a swing at him, they demand ?justice? for the criminal.

Criticizing is apparently a lot easier and more satisfying than praising someone.

Sometimes you can deliver a compliment, thank someone, or just say something nice, and it will improve the day of two people ? the person who received the compliment, and yourself for giving it.