

We are all part of something bigger

by Mark Pavilons

?No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.? ? Gautama Buddha

Are we all alone in this, or are we part of something bigger, more complex and well, just more?

There's been a lot of debate on just who to rely on to help pull us out of our self-made holes.

Many, like Buddha, contend only we can clear our own paths, walk them and accept the consequences.

Sounds easy, right?

In reality, we do all chose our own destiny, even if it's one decision at a time. From getting gas and stopping for lottery tickets, to making life-altering moves, we steer our own ships. We make hundreds of tiny moves each day and any one could spell disaster, or alternatively, triumph.

How much of our lives are governed by chance, accident or fate? Is there a master plan?

Okay, I'm not the best sailor, so scraping some rocks and sandbars have been common in my voyages. I?may have fallen overboard on occasion, but fortunately I?know how to swim.

I still remember, with a certain amount of PTSD, my first swimming lesson at a local community centre. I was actually pushed in and told to make it to the stairs at the other end of the pool. I dog-paddled to save my life and when I reached the stairs, gasping for air, got down on my knees and thanked God I was alive.

Funny what we remember. Did it make me stronger?

Hell no, it scared the crap out of me!

Wise scribes and self-help gurus encourage us to take the fork in the road. How do we know which fork? What if we're wrong?

Why isn't there a fortune-teller parked at that infamous fork? Maybe they could give us some advice.

Yes, almost everything we do rests on our shoulders. Some are incredibly important and heavy choices. Often they seem too much for just one person to bear.

And that's the key. Are we alone to follow our hearts and minds and use our best judgement?

Can't we rely on, or at least ask, our friends and family members for some guidance. Maybe there's a water witch in our family tree, leading us to success.

Maybe Uncle Bob, with his vast experience, can help us with our problems.

Nana's sage wisdom may be comforting, but not always practical.

Sadly, there are no connections left in my family tree to depend on. I?watched them leave, one by one, until I was the last man standing.

Yes, there are times I feel so alone it's terrifying. It's frustrating and I'm overcome by a sense of loss and failure. I'm pretty smart, so I can identify the problem and possible solutions, but often they just won't work. The actual 'fix' involves things I don't have - excess money, time, flexibility and the agility of a 20-year-old.

That's why we have liquor cabinets!

Our lives, like the universe itself, are constantly unfolding and unravelling. Things go from bad to worse, back to good and once in a while, end up great.

I never liked roller coasters, and yet I'm forced to ride one, every day of my life. No wonder I feel like throwing up now and again.

In terms of mutual support, I often feel I shouldn't burden others with my problems. My wife and kids have their own challenges and struggles, they sure don't need mine getting in their way.

And so, I remain quiet, alone with my thoughts. My wife often comments that it must be nice for me to live in my own head. On the contrary, my brain is no place for visitors, let me tell you.

It's not even a hospitable place for the owner.

They say hell is being trapped in your own inner nightmares.

Steve Jobs once remarked that life sometimes hits you in the head with a brick. The key is not losing faith. But what if that brick causes a concussion?

Our life is filled with daily coin flips. Maybe we need to view either side as advantageous.

Otherwise, it must land on its edge for us to be satisfied.

My son and I have discussions on our porch before bed each night. We look up at the stars and feel small. We talk about the incomprehensible size of the universe and how it seems to run smoothly, maintaining orbits and such, at break-neck speeds.

We talk about time, other dimensions, the meaning of it all. We talk about purpose.

We don't have the answers. But what we do have are curious minds, questions and a certain amount of awe.

He may not see it, but I know his life - the next 20 years or so - will bring many incredible changes, technological advances, and maybe even 'first contact'. His children will vacation on the moon, or the orbiting space hotel (which incidentally is set to open in a couple of years). He may not be able to teach his kids to drive, because the electric vehicles will all be autonomous by then.

While the future may seem bright, it will also bring many challenges, not the least of which are housing affordability, sustainable jobs, climate change and potential conflict. I fear things will get worse before they get better.

But our kids not alone, at least not as long as Kim and I are around. We have much more wisdom and advice to dispense and are happy to do so. We may not be able to give them down-payments or fancy cars or elaborate weddings.

But we can give them support, love and an all for one, one for all approach.

And maybe they will teach us a thing or two along the way.

We are not alone.

Enjoy being part of something bigger!