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When I look at the dazzling sunset, or play my guitar, or even just take some time to sit down and relax, I realize that there is something bigger than myself out there. I know that I am very small, like a raindrop falling into the ocean; I can create an immediate impact on those closest to me, and my effect ripples through the waves, but when the only thing you see is the ocean, then I am lost. Just another face in the crowd or random citizen going about their lives. However, even though I am so small, I recognize that I still have an influence. In my life, I want to use my influence to perform good works.

If I am only to be a raindrop, then I will make it one that counts. I will be the best person I can be. I do that by constantly developing self-respect. I know that if I were to treat someone badly, be destructive or procrastinate then I could not have self-respect. To have self-respect I know that I must be a good person. I could have the most amazing career in the world, but if I do not have respect for myself, then it would be useless.

I know at times I will fail at being a good person. I would not be human if I could not admit to my own follies. That is why I am in a constant attitude of growth. To see failure as an end will lead me nowhere, but when I see failure as steps to a bigger success, then failing becomes a necessary part of the journey. Growth as a person will lead to my ability to perform good works. Good works such as inspiring all those who hear my message to act and teaching others about the world around them. In my pursuit of good works, I expect that my failures will teach me the necessary things I need to know so that I can accomplish even greater works, as every failure is an opportunity.

Opportunities are everywhere if we have the eyes to see them and the courage to act on them. For myself, the eyes came by watching others. Learning from example is one way I can discover the growth needed to fulfill my dreams. Once you know what to do, acting is the next step. To act on growth takes courage because of how unfamiliar it is. Sometimes the unfamiliar can seem greater than our capacity to overcome it, but if we look around and hold to hope, we will find that our capacities can grow beyond what we think our limits are.

In my life, I am the youngest of four children. Growing up, I watched my siblings make all the mistakes while I learned from them. Whenever I needed help, I had a family there to back me up. I thought I knew everything. Then I spent eighteen months away from my family and the life I was living to spend it in church service with strangers. That was when my preconceived notions of reality all broke and I was left without a foundation. Relying on the strength of these new friends, on belief in the possibility of a joy, and on the light I felt through service and self-respect, I gained a new and stronger foundation.

There was a time during those eighteen months when I went to go visit with a particular family with my assigned companion. I did not understand why we were there because our reason for being there seemed frivolous. We stayed for longer than I wanted until finally, we left. When we were gone, my companion told me about the trials that family was facing. They had burdens more painful than I could know at the time. Being faced with this reality, I learned that, one, I didn’t know everything, and two, our being there helped to be a positive ripple in the life of that family. We didn’t do much, but we were there for them, and often times, that means more than anything.

Through self-respect, learning to grow from failure and seeking and acting on opportunities, I forge a path to perform good works in my future. The type of good works I want to accomplish are those that help others to develop in themselves. I know that I am just one person but I still want my works to matter to those in whose influence I have the ability to reach. While I still have a lot to learn in life, I know that I can do what I can, as big or as small as that can be.