

Turtles and Fence Posts

Charles Swindoll, Christian pastor, author, educator and radio preacher, shares an insightful story about turtles in his book *The Finishing Touch*.

He recalled an imagery used by Dr. Robert Lamont, a Presbyterian pastor “who felt incredibly blessed by God, yet obviously humbled and unworthy.”

When he was a schoolboy, Dr. Lamont said, “We would occasionally see a turtle on a fence post, and when we did, we knew someone had put him there. He didn’t get there by himself. That is how I see my own life. I’m a turtle on a fence post.”



Then Swindoll added, “The Bible is chock-full of turtles: one person after another who knew that his or her position of power, authority or promotion was given by Another.” He cited:

- Joseph was a turtle. Sitting on his Egyptian chariot or standing in his opulent surroundings, Joseph must have closed his eyes and reflected on his humble beginnings – his jealous brothers, the pit, slavery, prison. Now this – the second most powerful man in Egypt!
- Moses was a turtle. As a leader of the Israelites, he surely awoke many a morning in the wilderness shaking his head in disbelief, remembering his murderous and monotonous past. How good of God to have put him on the fence post!
- Gideon was a turtle. Remember his response to the angel when he was informed that he was to be the commander of the Israeli troops? “Sir, how can I save Israel? My family is the poorest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least thought of in the entire family!” That’s turtle talk, spoken in due humility atop a fence post.
- David was a turtle. Imagine how often his thoughts must have returned to the Judean slopes where he had tended his father’s sheep. The awesome throne in Jerusalem, the resplendent beauty of his own personal residence, the ear-splitting applause of his admiring public could not eclipse the realization that he was merely a turtle on a fence post.

As leaders in Life Care and Century Park, what a healthy perspective for each of us to maintain! The next time we are tempted to think we’re self-appointed fence-post sitters, we should remember the prophet Isaiah’s counsel: “Listen to me, you who pursue

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righteousness, who seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your Father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain” (Isaiah 51:1-2).

There’s nothing better for a turtle temporarily elevated on a fence post than to return to those humble roots, the quarry from which you were dug, and remember the strong determination of a mother who bore you and the quiet commitment of a father who cradled you through poverty, hardship, and pain.

– Beecher Hunter