

“Give It a Chance.”

Off The Top of My Head. March 15, 2007. By Dave Gibson.

When I have a piece of paper to throw away my preferred method is to wad it up real tight, get back to a distance of 10 to 20 feet, and hurl it at the trash can from that distance. My success rate is about 10%. It is a very inefficient way to discard a piece of paper. I am forever on my knees fishing the little wad out from under the stove.

At the same time it is fun and challenging and I have not even tried to break myself of this habit. There is something thrilling about hitting the trash can from 20 feet—watching the little wad of paper disappear over the rim like a BB through a knot hole—that makes up for missing 9 out of 10 times. When I hit one I throw my hands in the air in male triumph like a point guard who has just buried a 28 foot three-pointer to win the NBA championship. That tenth time is so fun that I keep at this little game. (I know what you are thinking, “Dave needs professional help.” To that I say, “This is not a state secret.”)

I have one very sacred guideline for throwing these wadded up paper basketballs. The rule is simple and important and clear and I am religious about this rule. The rule is simply this: “Give it a chance.”

“Give it a chance” means that I always throw the wad of paper with gusto and courage and confidence, with energy and with arch. If the wad is thrown in this way it has a chance of getting all the way to the can and going in. It has a chance of going straight in or of banking off the lower cupboards or of ricocheting off the stove hood or of shooting off the faucet. I am not talking about a wild, mad, “hurl it with all my strength” toss that goes beyond the can and into the garage. I am talking about a confident toss that is strong and high and devoid of timidity.

I have noticed that when I throw a wad timidly, cautiously, and cowardly that it almost never goes in. It almost always falls short and usually far short of the can. Twenty footers do not go in when they are thrown timidly.

(By the way, I just threw the top of a water bottle at my trash can here at work. I missed wide right but it had the distance.)

I have come to believe that “give it a chance” applies to more than discarding paper wads and tossing water caps. I think it also applies to most endeavors in life. Opportunities tackled with courage and energy have a far better chance than those approached with timidity and caution. Asking for things with “energy and arch” have a far better chance than asking for something with cowardice and resignation.

If you are going to try something “give it a chance.” If you are going to ask for something “give it a chance.” If you are going to enter a ministry “give it a chance.”

“Give it a chance” applies to: job interviews, fund appeals, asking for dates, three-pointers, starting a ministry, opening a coffee shop, trying out for track, applying for college, pursuing promotions, motivating your child to try something new, asking your neighbor to consider Christ, jumping across a stream, taking up the clarinet, fixing the garage door, kayaking across the lake, catching the dog, selling the boat, entering a contest, ministry initiatives in the local church, and much more.

The Apostle Paul was a guy who “gave it a chance” in all his endeavors. He said in Philippians 4:13, guided by the Holy Spirit, “I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.” Since Christ is strengthening us the only sane thing is to tackle His work and our responsibilities with energy and courage and confidence and “give it a chance.” Since we are not left on our own abilities the right thing is “give it a chance.” Since God is helping us it doesn’t really make sense to be timid.

Whatever is ahead of you today “give it a chance.” Don’t be timid. Give it some energy and some arch. You will be thrilled if it goes in like a BB through a knot hole. And if it doesn’t go in—fish it out from under the stove and launch it again.