



## **Peace on Earth, Goodwill Toward Men!**

*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. Luke Chapter 2*

As the holiday season swings into full gear, I find myself pondering Luke's account of the first Christmas and am drawn not only to the events that took place that night but also to its declarations and hope: the promise of peace on earth and good will for all people. In every strata of our society today there is a decided lack of peace. It is evident in broken homes, tattered lives and social ills too numerous to mention. Many live in economic insecurity and our newspapers and airwaves are riddled with the gory details of war and turmoil.

I just returned from Sierra Leone where, as an Athlete Ambassador for [Right to Play](#), I witnessed firsthand the lingering effects of ten years of bloody civil war. The lack of infrastructure, electricity, running water and young men hobbling around with amputated limbs are compelling reminders, as are all the images from the other war torn areas of our planet, that we are indeed not experiencing "peace on earth" nor showing "goodwill" toward each other.

In October I participated in a World Peace conference in Edmonton, Alberta where a disparate group of individuals from all corners of the globe, representing diverse ethnic groups, religions and vocations met to discuss a common idea: a commitment to peace. During his keynote address on the opening night of the conference, James Loney, a former Iraq hostage, passionately declared "Peace is the most important achievement we can strive for." That statement struck a chord with me because I spend a great deal of my time encouraging people to live up to their full potential, as I believe that self actualization is the ultimate in personal achievement. As I mulled over James' comment, I finally concluded that we were finding different ways to express the same idea.

### **Strive to achieve**

The effort to achieve our dreams helps us to focus on thoughts and actions that challenge, inspire and lift us up. In so doing we are able to marshal and draw out of ourselves all that is good and noble. The good intentions that we have for ourselves not only benefit us but also benefit those that we come in contact with. It allows us to see goodness and the potential for greatness in others as well.

This was brought home quite forcefully to me during the Olympics in Calgary. These Games took place during the height of the cold war - a time when everyone living behind the Iron Curtain was supposedly evil. As we lived in and experienced the utopia of the Olympic Village, I came to realize that the only difference between us was ideology, and that we shared similar hopes and aspirations. It would seem that the root cause of many of the conflicts in the world is our inability to see the same goodness and potential for greatness that we see in ourselves in others as well. If we did, we would treat others more kindly.

### **Be the change**

As you know, goal achievement and striving to attain self actualization requires growth and change. This, of course, is internal change. Through our ability to change ourselves, we have the ability to achieve our goals despite what our family members, friends, and acquaintances, think

or say or do. The same principle holds true in our pursuit of peace in the world. We can make steps to live peaceably with others even if we perceive that they are unwilling to do the same. In the words of Gandhi, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

Realizing our full potential is not only about the amount of material things we can stack up, it is also about learning and practicing the ways of peace, cooperation, compassion, understanding and forgiveness. In many ways these things are more difficult to achieve than an increase in our bank balances but these are the very things that I saw the poverty stricken kids of Sierra Leone learning and practicing this past week through sports and play. While I am forced to admit, that in my opinion they have resigned themselves to what they perceive as their economic realities, they have found peace within themselves and as [Prem Rawat](#) says, "When people in the world are at peace within, the world will be at peace".

Man's ability to set goals and create his own destiny is one of the things that set him apart from other species on the planet. We have an internal mechanism that instinctively gives us the desire to strive for higher levels of achievement. When we set goals that are congruent with our highest ideals we find ourselves at peace with ourselves and our fellow man thus enjoying the hope of the first Christmas: peace on earth, goodwill toward men.

*Keep On Pushing!*