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## **MESSAGES from the Masters**

### ***Here and Now by James Ray***

I just returned from what I call my "Here and Now" weekend. This is a trip I take, by myself, on a regular basis, to a beautiful place in nature to renew my mind.

Why do I call it "Here and Now"? Well, for the entire weekend I don't wear a watch, I turn all clocks out of view, and I leave all radio's and television completely off. I also do not speak to anyone with few exceptions (like ordering my meals). You would be surprised how much your life changes when you go inside and you have absolutely no idea what time it is – try it some time.

Consequently, for that weekend I live completely in the here and now. I do exactly what I am inspired to do, on my impulse and inspiration, free from any clock or schedule.

I find that after a couple of days, it is very difficult to enter back into the context of time and schedules.

Once I reenter though...I find renewed energy and excitement to accomplish my goals and the necessary tasks at hand. It is sort of like pulling off

the highway for fuel once in awhile. Absolutely necessary for continued performance.

Anyway, of all great thinkers and achievers I have ever studied, one practice they each cultivated and treasured was their time of quiet reflection. Unfortunately, very few individuals value this type of experience in our society. In fact, I have had some people tell me they think it is somewhat strange that "I would go off by myself on a regular basis."

Isn't it sad that we could call a friend with whom we had a dinner date and say, "I'm sorry I can't make it tonight...I have to work late." And while they would be disappointed, they most likely would understand. However, if we called the same friend and said, "I can't make it tonight...I need some time for myself," many would be surprised maybe even offended.

Says a lot about what we truly value in our world, doesn't it?

Here is what I know – the answers you seek do not exist outside of you. The answer to your challenge right now (whatever that may be) lies deep within you. But you have to quiet your mind and listen to hear it.

Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Take the time to find that special place – every day if only for 10-20 minutes.



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McCormick-Klessig & Assoc., Ltd. provides individuals, families, small and medium sized businesses with complete coverage of personal and business risks in all product lines: Commercial Personal Life Accidental and Health ( including group products).

### Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.

It would be nice to believe that health care cost increases were a temporary phenomenon. Unfortunately, that's not the case...the cost of medical care has outpaced inflation for the past 20 years and predictions are that medical and long-term care costs will continue to escalate as much as 10% to 15% per year into the future.

The decisions we make as to how and where we live in retirement are unique to each individual or couple. The options open to us, however, are frequently determined by our financial resources...our ability to pay. This review of the various ways to pay for health and long-term care costs during retirement is offered in the hope that it will be of assistance to you as you make decisions regarding your retirement plans. The options available to pay for medical and long-term care costs in retirement include the following:

**Retiree Health Insurance Plans:** If your company provides retiree health care benefits, make sure you know how much of the premium you will be required to pay, as well as deductible and co-payment requirements. Retiree health insurance plans are generally designed to coordinate with Medicare benefits. **Caution:** Even if your employer currently provides retiree health care benefits, there is no guarantee those benefits will be available when you retire. The escalating costs of medical care, combined with the "Baby Boom effect"...a large "bubble" of people who will make a substantial contribution to the size of the aging population...are causing employers to rethink their retiree health care plans, requiring retirees to pay a higher share of the costs or even discontinuing the plans.

**Medicare and "Medigap" Insurance:** Most people qualify for Medicare insurance when they reach age 65. Medicare helps to protect you from the costs of medical care during retirement. One fact, however, is evident...there is no "free lunch." You will have costs related to medical care and the likelihood is that those costs will continue to increase each year.

**Medicaid:** Medicaid is a joint Federal and state program that helps with medical costs for some people with low incomes and limited assets. To qualify for Medicaid, federal poverty guidelines for income and assets must be met. In addition, there are state requirements for Medicaid eligibility. Medicaid is essentially a safety net for those who didn't adequately plan for their financial needs in retirement, or who encountered unexpectedly large expenses that depleted their financial resources.

**Long-Term Care Insurance:** Long-term care insurance can put you in control, preserving your dignity and allowing you to select the type of facility and setting in which you want to receive long-term care services, if needed. Long-term care insurance also helps protect your personal assets, preserving them for your use or as an inheritance for your family. **Suggestion:** Check with your employer...your company may offer long-term care insurance as a voluntary or supplemental employee benefit!

**Personal Savings:** Review your retirement plan to make sure that it adequately takes into account the potential costs of medical care and long-term care in retirement. If you find a shortfall, you may want to increase your personal savings now in order to have sufficient funds available after you retire. Some experts suggest setting up a separate fund or account specifically to pay for health care needs in retirement. This approach adds focus to your plan and better enables you to assess your progress.

**Home Equity:** Many retired people have built up substantial equity in their homes. There are a variety of ways to tap that equity if needed to pay for health care costs in retirement, including selling the home, arranging a home equity loan or line of credit or using a reverse mortgage to supplement your retirement income.

**Going Back to Work:** When it comes to planning for health care needs as we age, it's time for a reality check. It's fine today, when our health is good, to state the intention to return to work if financial needs arise, but how many 70+-year-old people with health problems really want to be out looking for a job? In reality, planning to return to work in order to pay for health care needs during retirement isn't so much a plan as it is a hope...a hope that we won't face substantial health care costs as we age.

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