

## **A stubborn Irishman**

Recently, a good friend of mine told me the story of how she wanted to help a gentleman with some banking issues he was having. She spoke to a friend of hers who worked at a bank and elicited some possible solutions from her.

She indicated to her banking friend that the said gentlemen would probably dismiss her suggestions. She told her, “After all, I know this guy. Don’t be surprised if he says ‘no’ to your suggestions. After all, he is a stubborn Irishman.”

I, also, found out that this stubborn Irishman shows that stubbornness as well when out shopping. One such example of his approach: If he buys something that costs around \$15.25, he will give the cashier a \$20 bill and a quarter. He will just wait to see if the cashier is confused. Sometimes, the cashier pushed the quarter back toward him, indicating that he shouldn’t be complicating things for her. Then, he reminds her that she can give him back a \$5 dollar bill in change. I think, in his stubbornness, he likes to confuse and complicate things for the cashier, whereas, he is really making the transaction simpler for himself.

Why would he get enjoyment by confusing and complicating the life of a cashier who is doing her job without having to use any complicated math systems.

I often wonder where the concept of a “stubborn Irishman” originated. I presume that other nationalities have stubborn persons also. Maybe, as legend has it, that God created the Irish last of the human species and He was rather tired so He decided have some fun. He decided to make them stubborn and obstinate so they could annoy and confuse the other nationalities by their charm so that others would become totally confused, and, consequently, need God to help them unravel the Babbling script they had to endure.

I thought about her stubborn Irishman and I wondered if the notion of being stubborn or stubbornness is given bad publicity.

I know in the scriptures that the Lord often admonishes his people and chastises them for their stubbornness of heart. Maybe, they were testing God’s resolve and commitment to them. Maybe, their pride was getting in the way that they felt they had a better plan and idea of how things should be rather than God’s way of doing it.

Still, I wonder if being stubborn or stubbornness is always such a negative notion so I decided to discern the implications of its possible definitions. One definition of stubbornness was a “dogged determination not to change one's attitude or position on something.”

I have often wondered at a child’s emphatic “No” when asked to do something. Is it a show of autonomy, of self-reliance, an intransigence, an uncompromising stance on the shoulders of one’s own strong mindedness and independence?

When an adult exhibits stubbornness, is it most often seen as rebellious, not being a team player, not cooperative, being bull-headed and being difficult to work with? Could not stubbornness also reflect values worth fighting for, principles worth living for as well as an instinctive desire to express one’s own individuality?

Is there not a stubborn streak in all of us? Maybe it goes back to the beginning, to Adam and Eve. Maybe, we all inherited that gene. Was not their sin that of eating the apple of pride, autonomy, independence rather than interdependence, trust and assurance.

When we suggest someone is stubborn, are we sometimes making a judgement that often has negative connotations that are true – rigidity, closed-mindedness, ignorance? And are there any positive attributes to stubbornness?

Some see stubbornness as a determination to focus on and finish a project they have started. Others see it as a lack of openness, transparency and the possibility that one doesn’t have all the answers. Maybe, stubbornness suggests that we are constantly involved in a battle between head and heart; between certainty and openness, between determination and vulnerability; between conflict and resolution; curiosity and patience, doubt and certainty.

I would love to know if that stubborn Irishman took the suggestion and advice that he received in order to solve his banking difficulties. I am not sure I will every find out because he might be too proud to admit that the suggestion might have merit and he tried it, or that he, himself, in his stubbornness and certainty, simply dismissed it, because he had a better idea.

I put my curiosity and quandary about stubbornness on my pillow for the night, to rest in the hopes that, in the morning, I might have some clarity. The next morning, when I awoke and looked in the mirror, I meet this stubborn Irishman and he just smiled at me.