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CHAPTER

# 11

## The Day of Reckoning

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**C**ranberries! Why did I ever get into this business? No money. Big mortgage. Huge bills. What's the point? It's one headache after another!

Robert sat down dejectedly on the tailgate of his pickup. What am I doing wrong? I've been at this business for 3 years and still haven't produced a crop that's up to industry standards. I was sure I'd be successful – after all, I spent two years at college studying about all of this – I even graduated with honors. I obviously know what to do, so what's the problem?

He wasn't looking forward to tomorrow when he had to submit the sum of his harvest to the juice plant. It'll only be another brutal day of reckoning, he thought.

The next morning, Robert met up with his crusty old neighbor, Cyrus, who also produced cranberries for the juice plant. He probably hasn't had much luck either, thought Robert. He doesn't even have the equipment I have, much less the training.

Robert hesitantly walked over to the clerk's office to submit his tally sheet for payout – he shuddered to think about it. As he waited, he couldn't help but eavesdrop on the conversation between Cyrus and the clerk.

“Gee, Cyrus, not quite as good as last year, but still the best yield per acre we've had this year. But that's not new for you, is it? You're always our top producer. We appreciate your loyal support of our plant, year after year. Thanks for another outstanding harvest.”

Robert was shocked. He couldn't believe what he'd just heard. How could a crusty old man who just played at farming do better than someone who had the latest equipment and training? It didn't make sense. What does he know that I don't?

As Robert handed in his own tally sheet with its dismal numbers, he was totally embarrassed and frustrated. He debated about talking

to Cyrus. Why should I have to? The guy isn't even in my league, he thought. He's old. He has no formal training. He probably wouldn't understand the methods I use. But, on the other hand, he's a lot better cranberry farmer than I am. I hate to have to admit that, but it's true. So, do I ignore him and continue on with my dismal results, or do I see if he'll share what he knows?

Robert slowly walked over to the clerk's office where Cyrus was standing. "Hey, Cyrus, my name is Robert Hancock. I'm the neighbor living just south of your property."

"I know," said Cyrus, as he peered up to Robert's 6 foot 4 inch height.

Robert felt about 5 feet tall at that moment. He debated about continuing the conversation, but reminded himself that he had nothing to lose.

"Cyrus, I couldn't help ....."

"I've met your son, Billy," interrupted Cyrus. "He's told me all about you and your family. Wonderful boy you have there. How old is he?"

"He's six," replied Robert. "You know, Cyrus, I couldn't help but overhear your conversation with the clerk when you handed in your tally sheet. It sounds like you're quite an accomplished producer for this plant."

"Well, that's what they tell me. I just do the best that Mother Nature lets me do and that seems to be the best they get."

"What do you mean?" responded Robert. "How does that happen when you don't even have the latest training or equipment?"

"All I know is that I know how to use the basics and that's all I've ever done. I simply obey the laws of Mother Nature."

This was not at all what Robert had expected to hear. Now what? Humility had never been one of his greatest attributes, but if he wanted to get himself out of this farming mess, he'd need to come up with some.

He followed Cyrus as he shuffled over to the clerk's office.

Robert cleared his throat and asked the question he'd been dreading, "Would you be willing to teach me what you do so I can reap the results you have?"

Cyrus smiled up at Robert. Actually, it was more of a smirk than a smile. He had wondered how long it would take for this conversation to happen.

"Sure," replied Cyrus. "But there are conditions. First, you have to humble yourself – I guess you've already started that part. Next, you can't criticize my techniques. I don't want to hear any high falutin' language from that College of yours."

Boy, I didn't realize I'd had that effect on old Cyrus, thought Robert. I've been quick to judge him – sounds like he knew that. But, my intuitions tell me that I can learn from this crusty old guy – probably more than I ever learned from college.

"Agreed," said Robert. "I'm the passenger – along for the ride. When can we start and how long will it take?"

"How about right now?" asked Cyrus, as he folded up his check and carefully placed it into his dusty old wallet. "If you buy me a coffee and a piece of pie over at the diner, I should be able to tell you all you need to know."

"Alright," said Robert in a playful tone, "let's head over there. Promise me you won't have seconds."

"I will if you don't listen carefully so that I don't have to," barked Cyrus.

Robert jumped into his new Ford pickup – a financed luxury – while Cyrus shuffled across the street to the diner where he'd parked his Mercedes. Cyrus always parked at the diner on cash-out week. He liked to celebrate his success by treating himself to a piece of Mollie's fresh cranberry pie with 2 heaping scoops of vanilla ice cream.

This year, it would taste better than ever – he didn't have to pay for it.

As Robert drove into the parking lot, he couldn't help but stare

### **Ponder This**

Isn't it interesting how quick we tend to *judge a book by its cover* when we live by a physical or intellectual Personal Operating System?

Just as was the case with Robert we usually end up quickly discovering that people are much more than what our physical or mental abilities are capable of discerning. That's why we should always reason with our hearts before we feel with our minds as we discover the people of our lives.

at Cyrus as he took off his dusty old jacket and threw it into the trunk of his Mercedes. He pulled out a quality leather coat and threw it over his shoulder as he entered the diner.

Robert was totally confused. This guy was a complete anomaly. He looks like a bump on a log, but wears an expensive coat and drives a new Mercedes – one that he owns outright. To top it all off, he's going to tell me how to increase the efficiency of my entire production cycle – over pie and coffee. What have I done to myself?

It quickly became evident that Cyrus was a regular at the diner; this cash-out week was no different than any other. Cyrus's order was repeated by both the waitress and the cook as if it was the request for the envelope for the Academy Awards.

Everyone, except Robert, knew that this was a momentous time. For the 13th year in a row, Cyrus had been the top producer – today was a time for celebration. They brought out the whole pie with a sparkler on it.

Cyrus giggled with the glee of an 8-year-old. Everyone in the diner was boasting about his accomplishment. Many came over to the table to shake his hand and kid him about maintaining his top status.

Catch the rest of Robert's Teachable Moment in:

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