**Quality**

**Again, truly I tell you,**

**if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask,**

**it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.**

**For where two or three are gathered in my name,**

**I am there among them.**

***(St. Matthew 18:19-20)***

**An ad for a general store in Loretta, Wisconsin, gives its location as:   
“Across from the phone booth.” (*Reader’s Digest)***

**A banana stalk produces only one bunch of bananas in a season.  
*(E. C. McKenzie, in Tantalizing Facts, p. 57)***

**A seal stops breathing when it goes to sleep, even on land. It wakes up   
every 15 minutes or so to catch its breath. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**A sports announcer summed up his broadcasting philosophy: “Short words at long intervals.” *(Don Freeman, in San Diego Union)***

**My dear Man: The secret of a good sermon is a good beginning and a good ending. And having them as close together as possible. *(George Burns)***

**Today, most chicle comes from Mexico. Sapodilla trees are tapped with grooved cuts and the latex is collected in small receptacles, as in the gathering of maple syrup. Most productive sapodilla trees are over 70 years old. For best results, each tree is tapped only once every six to eight years. The collected sap is then boiled, coagulated, and molded into blocks. *(Richard B. Manchester, in Amazing Facts, p. 74)***

**The annual harvest of an entire coffee tree is required for a single pound of ground coffee. Every tree bears up to six pounds of beans, which are reduced to a pound after the beans are roasted and ground.  
*(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 93)***

**Dr. W. Edwards Deming believed that, to remain competitive, a company’s top executives had to make a firm commitment to quality production. They had to pass the message that quality was their primary goal to middle managers, supervisors, and finally to rank-and-file workers. Dr. Deming also believed that the average worker wanted to do a good job, and that workers would have the answers to many production problems as well as valuable ideas for improving quality. After World War II, Dr. Deming tried to sell his ideas to American management, without much success. But the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) heard about him and invited him to lecture in their country. JUSE wanted to rebuild Japan’s shattered industrial capacity and overcome its reputation for producing “Japanese Junk.” They decided Dr. Deming’s “commitment to quality” was the way to reach those goals, and it was widely adopted by Japanese industry. The success of that effort has shaken the industrial world. To honor Dr. Deming, JUSE presents an award yearly to the Japanese companies with the most outstanding achievements in quality control. The Deming Medal, honoring the American credited with changing the direction of Japanese industry, is the most prestigious and sought-after prize in Japan today. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Disability is a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well, you're needed somewhere by someone. *(Mobil Oil Corporation ad)***

**Buckminster Fuller’s sentence structures were verbal geodesic domes, so intricately woven with fresh ideas that he seldom repeated himself in lectures that lasted three to four hours. *(Emily & Per Ola D’Aulaire, in Reader’s Digest)***

**The legendary Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., wrote his opinions standing beside a special high desk. “Mr. Justice, why do you write your opinions standing up?” a new assistant asked him one day. “It’s very simple,” said the famed jurist, “If I sit down, I write a long opinion and don’t come to the point as quickly as I could. If I stand up, I write as long as my knees hold out. When my knees give out, I know it’s time to stop.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Hummingbirds lay only two eggs during their entire lifetime. You never see more than two eggs in a hummingbird’s nest. *(E. C. McKenzie, in Tantalizing Facts, p. 1)***

**George Washington’s second inaugural address was just 135 words long. At the start of his second term, Abraham Lincoln took only 700 words to sum up the lessons and meaning of the Civil War. JFK’s soaring “ask not” speech, which inspired a generation, required just 1,366 words. By the standard of the greatest – and most succinct – presidential inaugural addresses, Barack Obama’s 2,096-word speech this week was relatively long-winded. But by the standard of the worst, he was the picture of verbal economy: William Howard Taft gassed on for 5,434 words in 1909, while back in 1841, William Henry Harrison set the high-water mark for bloviation, with 8,460 words. No one, of course, remembers what Taft or Harrison said; memorable speeches require precision as well as poetry. To be precise, a writer must think through what he wants to say – and ruthlessly prune the rest. My 11 years at this magazine has been one long lesson in the challenges and value of brevity. As a much younger journalist, I was quite certain that I could say nothing worthwhile in less than 1,000 words, and sometimes went on for 4,000. How instructive it was, then, to be required to fit something semi-coherent into this space, which permits no more than 285. Impossible? Lincoln – not only a great president, but a transcendent writer – distilled all the poetry, resolve, and eloquence of the Gettysburg Address into 272 ringing words. Those words live on, unlike the bloated inaugural of President Harrison, whose oration trapped him – and his poor audience – on a bitterly cold, wet day for 1 hour and 45 minutes, after which he came down with pneumonia and died. I suspect there’s a lesson there. *(William Falk, in The Week magazine, February 1, 2013)*  
When I studied at the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing in Atlanta, I   
encountered many hospital patients reluctant to allow a student to “practice” on them. One man was particularly concerned when I appeared, accompanied by my instructor, to administer his pain medication. “This isn’t your first shot, is it?” he demanded. “No, sir,” I replied confidently, administering the shot without incident. “I can assure you this is not my first injection.” “Well done,” my instructor whispered to me on our way out. “By the way, how many injections have you given?” “Counting this one, two,” I replied. *(Ruthanna Keller Corbin, in Reader’s Digest)*   
  
The members of some insect species are so short-lived that they have no way of eating. Some completely lack a mouth! *(Denver P. Tarle, in A Treasury of Trivia, p. 234)*The stem of one type of wild iris, known as blue-eyed grass, is so delicate   
that it cannot support more than one blossom at a time. One blossom must bloom and drop off before the next one can form. *(Craig Varoga & the Associated Press editors, in It’s A Fact, p. 202)*  
Jury selection dragged on, and the crowd of potential jurors grew tired,   
irritable and hot. The Texas courthouse’s air conditioning wasn’t working, but the defense attorney didn’t notice our discomfort and rambled on. To illustrate one point, he asked, “What does Angela Lansbury do every week on Murder, She Wrote?” The courtroom was quiet until a weary voice called out: “Finishes in an hour!” *(John Wagner, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Harper Lee’s first and only novel, To Kill a Mockingbird, published in 1960, has sold more than 30 million copies. It is the most widely read novel in high schools today and still sells about 1 million copies a year. The Library Journal voted Mockingbird “Best Novel of the Century” in 1999. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 205)***

**Did you know that George Washington’s inaugural speech lasted all of one and a half minutes? I guess there’s just not much to say if you’re a politician who can’t tell a lie. *(Jay Leno)***

**Probably the most important reason, however, that the champagne of seafood can’t be farmed is that lobsters also like lobster. Consequently, they must be raised singly. And that, like everything else about the lobster, is expensive. Lobsters, it seems, will go to any length to remain exclusive, even to chewing up the competition. *(Jack Denton Scott, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Sometimes your biggest weakness can become your biggest strength. Take, for example, the story of one 10-year-old boy who decided to study judo despite the fact that he had lost his left arm in a devastating car accident. The boy began lessons with an old Japanese judo master. The boy was doing well, so he couldn’t understand why, after three months of training, the master had taught him only one move. “Sensei,” the boy finally said, “Shouldn’t I be learning more moves?” “This is the only move you know, but this is the only move you’ll ever need to know,” the sensei replied. Not quite understanding, but believing in his teacher, the boy kept training. Several months later, the sensei took the boy to his first tournament. Surprising himself, the boy easily won his first two matches. The third match proved to be more difficult, but after some time, his opponent became impatient and charged; the boy deftly used his one move to win the match. Still amazed by his success, the boy was now in the finals. This time, his opponent was bigger, stronger, and more experienced. For a while, the boy appeared to be overmatched. Concerned that the boy might get hurt, the referee called a time-out. He was about to stop the match when the sensei intervened. “No,” the sensei insisted, “Let him continue.” Soon after the match resumed, his opponent made a critical mistake: He dropped his guard. Instantly, the boy used his move to pin him. The boy had won the match and the tournament. He was the champion. On the way home, the boy and the sensei reviewed every move in each and every match. Then the boy summoned the courage to ask what was really on his mind. “Sensei, how did I win the tournament with only one move?” “You won for two reasons,” the sensei answered. “First, you’ve almost mastered one of the most difficult throws in all of judo. And second, the only known defense for that move is for your opponent to grab your left arm. The boy’s biggest weakness had become his biggest strength. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Mayflies, after hatching and then spending one to three years developing as naiads, live only one day as adults. During this single day, they molt twice, mate, and lay eggs in water. Because these adults do not have fully developed mouth parts, they do not feed. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 249)*  
The Japanese have a special method for growing superb melons. They plant a seed, allow it to sprout and form buds, then pick all the buds but one. This one bud is allowed to mature into a full fruit. In this way a single fruit receives all the nutrients originally meant for the whole-plant. The result is a remarkably succulent melon. *(David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 56)***

**Mincing your words makes it easier if you have to eat them later. *(Franklin P. Jones, in The Wall Street Journal)***

**Gone With The Wind was the only book that Margaret Mitchell ever wrote. *(Ed Lucaire, in Celebrity Setbacks, p. 63)*  
  
Muhammad, who founded the Islamic religion, had few followers until he was 60 years old. He spent years preaching in the city of Mecca -- but when hostile authorities forced him out at age 52, only 70 people were willing to follow him. *(Paul F. Levy, in National Enquirer)***

**The second Earl of Leicester sat in the House of Lords for 67 years and   
never addressed a word to that body. His son, the third Earl, sat there for another 32 years without uttering a public peep. But in 1962, the current Earl, a veritable chatterbox, stood up and made his maiden speech in the House of Lords...after a brief silence of only 22 years! Good Lord! *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 60)***

**At Proctor and Gamble, one-page memos are the rule. At 3M, new product ideas must be proposed in fewer than five pages. *(Joe Griffith, in Speaker’s Library of Business, p. 240)*  
Isaac Newton’s only recorded utterance while he was a member of Parliament was a request to open the window. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 102)***

**Can you imagine what a wonderful world this would be if we only spoke when we had something to say, and better yet, only when that something was positive? *(Wendy S. Craig)***

**Of the 50 million eggs a female oyster spawns at a single setting, only two can be expected to survive. *(Boyd’s Curiosity Shop, p. 89)***

**A strange new breed of palm tree that flowers once every 100 years and then dies a few months later has been discovered in Madagascar. Named Tahina spectabilis, the tree, which can grow to 60 feet high, had previously been misidentified as another species because no one had ever seen it bloom. But last year, scientists saw that one specimen was literally dripping with nectar and had sprouted huge fronds, 15 feet across, which resembled a Christmas tree. So far, 92 of the “suicide palms” have been found. “For botanists,” said William Baker of London’s Kew Gardens, “it’s equivalent to finding a new kind of elephant.” *(The Week magazine, February 8, 2008)***

**It is not the length of our prayer but rather the depth of our faith and   
the sincerity of our petition that really count. The greatest prayer ever   
prayed, the Lord’s Prayer, contained only about 65 words. It was Martin Luther, the great reformer and preacher, who said, “The fewer the words the better the prayer.” A little girl taught her father a lesson one night that he has never forgotten. As she said her bedside prayer she prayed, “God is great, God is good, and that’s enough, Amen." *(Rev. Don Jennings, in Prairie Farmer)*  
  
The story is told of a hapless Californian named Sharlene Dwyer. In search of ultimate truth, she journeyed on a pilgrimage to Nepal. Once there, she journeyed on foot for ten days to reach the high-mountain retreat of a renowned mystic and philosopher Pranabanda. When Dwyer arrived, Pranabanda refused to speak to the westerner, but Sharlene persisted. Finally, the guru agreed to allow Sharlene one question. Apparently tired and torpid after her long ordeal, Sharlene squandered her one opportunity and to find truth by asking, “Why do I only get to ask one question? *(Valmarie Carson, in Tidbits of Tri-County)***

**The recipe for a good speech includes some shortening. *(Gene Yasenak)***

**I was vacationing in the South Carolina mountains with a friend who’s a freelance journalist for a couple of small-town newspapers. When she got a call about a car running off a curve and going off the side of the mountain, we hurried to the site. Thankfully no one was hurt. After a quick scan of the spectators, my friend sought out one local man to interview. “Have you lived in this area long?” she asked him. He told her that he had lived here all his life. Then she asked, “How often do cars go over the side of the mountain?” “Only once, ma’am,” he replied. *(Sharon McNeil, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Charles McCabe was for many years a columnist for The San Francisco Chronicle. In his column for September 7, 1971, he wrote about his experience as a commencement speaker. He had been invited to come back to Great Barrington, and he had a speech carefully worked out with only 8 or 9 sentences of introduction. But when he had finished those introductory sentences, he decided this was all he needed to say and he sat down. He says it was the most successful speech he ever made. *(Glendon Harris, in LectionAid)***

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**When words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain. *(Shakespeare)***

**Shakespeare’s career lasted only about 25 years. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**Sharks grow slowly and produce only a few young. *(Noel Vietmeyer, in Reader’s Digest)***

**As my dear old Dad used to say (SILENCE). Dad wasn’t much of a talker. *(Robert Orben, in The Joke Teller’s Handbook)***

**The quality of a silkworm’s silk depends on which mulberry leaves it eats. White mulberry leaves make the finest. *(L. M. Boyd)*The female tropical American sloth produces only one offspring in her   
lifetime. *(E. C. McKenzie, in Tantalizing Facts, p. 100)***

**A man was jogging on the beach one day when he came across a boy picking up a starfish and frantically slinging them into the ocean. “I’m afraid your efforts are in vain, young man!” the jogger said as he approached the boy. “Hundreds of starfish have been washed ashore here, and they’re withering fast in the hot sun. Your well-intentioned efforts simply aren’t going to make a difference. You might as well run along and play.” The boy surveyed the many starfish on the beach, then looked at the beautiful starfish he was holding. Flinging it into the ocean, he replied optimistically, “Well, I made a difference to that one!” *(Bettie B. Youngs, in Taste Berries for Teens)***

**Some subatomic particles discovered by nuclear physicists have a lifetime of just a few trillionths of a trillionth of a second. In this moment, light – which travels from moon to Earth in 1 ¼ seconds – moves to no more than the width of a proton. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 400)***

**One of the most famous melodies in the world was composed by a man who wrote only one song in his life. The famous “Taps”--which has been called one of the most hauntingly beautiful melodies ever written--was composed by Daniel Butterfield in July of 1862. Butterfield was a general in the army before retiring to a career as a businessman. *(Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 86)***

**Wheat blossoms only about 15 minutes a season. (*(L. M. Boyd)***

**If you would be pungent, be brief; for it is with words as with sunbeams. The more they are condensed, the deeper they burn. *(Robert Southey)***

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