Like everyone I know, I was horrified to learn of the tragic devastation that occurred in Nepal and the surrounding region when an earthquake struck. I lived in California for many years, where earthquakes were a fact of life. But I never experienced anything like the quake that hit that region last week. The destruction and loss of life are heart-breaking.

I won’t attempt to give advice to the people affected by the tragedy. What they most need from us is prayer and relief efforts. But one thing I do know is that they will need to be creative in overcoming the difficulties they are now faced with. And we can all benefit from learning more about that topic. On that note, today I’d like to talk a little about creativity.

To face the greatest challenges of life, we need to cultivate creative thinking. In times of crisis, you need to tap into every good idea you have. And of course, the best time to increase your creativity is before the crisis occurs. This can be done by establishing the discipline of creative thinking.

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS WE CAN DO THAT:

1. SPEND TIME WITH CREATIVE PEOPLE.

Make a habit, both inside and outside of work, of spending time with creatives. Let their way of thinking challenge and influence yours.

2. LOOK FOR THE OBVIOUS.
When problem-solving, many of us make the mistake of looking only for the “big” solution. Creativity means exploring all ideas, even the obvious and seemingly insignificant ones. Often the simplest solution is the best solution.

3. BE UNREASONABLE.

Logic and creativity can work together quite well, but sometimes rational thinking gets in the way of being creative. Be willing to look at unreasonable ideas. Often they expand your thinking and lead to breakthroughs that you might otherwise miss.

4. PRACTICE MENTAL AGILITY.

Creativity requires flexibility. Rigid, bureaucratic thinking is in direct opposition innovation and creativity. So make a habit of considering every idea, no matter how difficult it might seem to implement or how much change it may require.

5. DARE TO BE DIFFERENT.

Being creative means standing outside of the norm. You must cultivate a willingness to challenge every rule and assumption.

6. SEE PROBLEMS AS OPPORTUNITIES.

Sometimes the only difference between a problem and an opportunity is the word you use to describe it. Whenever you face a problem, take a step back and ask how it could be described as an opportunity—to innovate, build, and improve.

The discipline of creative thinking will change you—and for the better. As jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “The mind, once expanded to the dimensions of larger ideas, never returns to its original size.”

My prayer is that people who have spent years cultivating creativity are already at work in Nepal - and the Middle East, and around the world - to serve people and bring solutions to hurting nations. May we find creative ways to offer relief, and keep them in our prayers.