

A Means to Mental Health

Words to live by from the beloved professor who founded the Marion E. Wade Center.

by Dr. Clyde S. Kilby, Professor of English from 1935-1981

It is no surprise to those of us who knew him that Dr. Clyde Kilby would write these twelve suggestions. Few people wished as sincerely as did he that every human being would grasp the wonder of our creation and existence. To him, lively minds and awakened imaginations guarantee richer and more expansive lives.

Dr. Kilby was a multi-faceted, Southern gentleman, and no list can accurately show the numerous qualities his life embodied. This deeply loved professor of English loved words, particularly metaphors. He loved myth and fantasy, poetry and drama, and magic and mystery. He seemed to have a special love for the parable, particularly the parables of Jesus. Perhaps the thoroughly metaphorical nature of the parable deepened his appreciation for it. He liked that "shock to the imagination," seeing the familiar in a new way. He knew that when Jesus told a parable, He used the familiar, even the commonplace word, such as seeds in different types of soil, lamps under a bushel, salt losing its savor, or lilies of the field.

Dr. Kilby's "loves" were almost endless. He loved beauty, whether a gorgeous sunset or a lovely iris from his own garden. He loved the students who crowded his classrooms, the alumni who rushed to see him when they returned to campus, and his many friends. He treasured each one. He certainly loved the Creator God, holy and majestic, and Author of all things true and beautiful.

No wonder Dr. Clyde Kilby left so many wise suggestions for living an abundant, joy-filled life.

Dr. E. Beatrice Batson M.A. '47,
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1. At least once each day I shall look steadily up at the sky and remember that I, a consciousness with a conscience, am on a planet traveling in space with everlastingly mysterious things above and about me.

2. Instead of the accustomed idea of a mindless and endless evolutionary movement to which I can neither add nor subtract, I shall suppose the universe guided by an Intelligence which (as Aristotle said of Greek drama) requires a beginning, a middle, and an end. I think this will save me from the cynicism expressed by Bertrand Russell before his death, when he said: "There is darkness without, and when I die there will be darkness within. There is no splendor, no vastness anywhere, only triviality for a moment, and then nothing."

3. I shall not fall into the falsehood that this day, or any day, is merely another ambiguous and plodding twenty-four hours, but rather a unique opportunity

filled, if I so wish, with worthy potentialities.

4. I shall not be fool enough to suppose that trouble and pain are wholly evil parentheses in my existence, but just as likely, ladders to be climbed toward moral and spiritual manhood.

5. I shall not turn my life into a thin straight line, which prefers abstractions to reality. I shall know what I am doing when I abstract, which of course I shall often have to do.

6. I shall not demean my own uniqueness by envy of others. I shall stop boring into myself to discover what psychological or social categories I might belong to. Mostly I shall simply forget about myself and do my work.

7. I shall open my eyes and ears. Once every day I shall simply stare at a tree, a flower, a cloud, or a person. I shall not then be concerned at all to ask what they are but simply be glad that they are. I shall joyfully allow them the mystery of what Lewis calls