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**THE ADVENTURE OF THE UNEXPECTED**

**Mayan Revelation Number 223**

**Life is Adventure**

**Variety and Surprise**

**Around the Corner**

**The Element of Surprise**

**The Unexpected Guest**

**Adapt Yourself**

**I Wanted To Surprise You**

**Affirmation**

Beloved Centurion:

There is so much that I would like to say by way of introduction to this lesson, which we have called "The Adventure of the Unexpected", but since we have said a great deal in the pages that are to follow, I will keep the prologue to a minimum.

The unexpected in our lives, whether it is good or bad, has a purpose. We must have change; otherwise, life would be very dull. Sometimes we cannot understand why these unexpected events occur, and very often those things that would seem to us to be tragic happenings are really blessings in disguise.

I have occasion many times during the days and the weeks to see deeply into the lives of many of our members. Often, in great distress, a member will relate to me something that has happened that seems so unfavorable in its effect upon his or her life, whereas it turns out to be quite the opposite, but it was the unexpected that they found difficult to accept and understand.

Then, of course, there are always the wonderful surprises. I shall never forget the unexpected surprise that I encountered when I was in the jungle in Yucatan. We were chugging along on our perilous way, feeling that any moment we might be swept out of the jeep. Suddenly, there loomed before us a beautiful temple, an ancient ruin, and once again our eyes opened in amazement as we saw this temple with its carving that is almost like lacy filigree, the handiwork of the Maya. This was the Temple of the Jungle Rain God. Truly it was an adventure in the unexpected, a delightful surprise. Life is made up of these.

And so before we begin our study, let us thoughtfully repeat the words of the following prayer as we ask for better understanding of how to cope with the unexpected.

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PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank Thee that the future is always built mostly of the unexpected. Help me to know that in the larger sense the changes Thou dost send are for good and to adjust to it well.  
Amen.

**L**IFE IS  
ADVENTURE

Would you rather have life be a vacuum or an adventure, a monotone or a melody, a blank canvas or a picture? Life itself gives the answer. It is an adventure made up of a long series of smaller adventures. It can never grow prosaic or uninteresting. It is not a still picture but a moving one. A new scene is before us all the time. That is because life and nature are dynamic. So are biography and history. We have to keep moving with them. We cannot stay behind.

What makes it so? The unexpected. If the next scene of a movie or next chapter of a story were only what the viewer or reader expects it would not be worth telling and would never be given to the public. We would soon weary of life itself if everything were only what we expected. We can bear to keep looking at a line only if it has some undulations in it. The same is true of a day, a year, a lifetime, or an epoch. We weary of straight lines in anything, even a road.

When we straighten a highway we take away the scenery. The only thing of interest left to see is an occasional filling station. Some of us take minor roads because we know the views will not have been expunged. They may be a little longer and a little harder, but they keep us wondering what is around the next bend or over that approaching hill. Even though we have been over it there is always something we never noticed before, and not to notice anything is not to see it. It is the same way with the living of our lives.

It is a thrilling experience to hear a good orchestra play a great symphony because of the variation. The music leaps from low to high, from quiet to stormy, from soft to loud, from slow to rapid, and from one kind of harmony to another. We would weary of it if it did not. It is the unexpected that gives it challenge.

Don't resent the unexpected and the fact that you must adjust yourself to it. It is the very thing that is going to make life interesting, and it may be the thing that is going to make it worthwhile. That is what redeems a journey, whether over a road or along the years. That is what gives it the points you will longest remember and about which you will most often speak.

The unexpected is the difference between interest and stagnation. The fruit of the nothing tree is nothing. It withers like the one of which we read in the Bible, having only leaves to offer as an excuse for being. The growth of organisms and probably of the universe itself is a series of explosions.

Expect the unexpected. You cannot expect what it will be, but you can expect that it will come. You will not be disappointed in that. You will not be disappointed in the experience itself either, if you adjust to it, learn from it, and make the best of it.



## VARIETY AND SURPRISE

It is often and truly said that variety is the spice of life. But what is variety but surprise, the unexpected? It is the question of what is coming next and the answer to that question, even the final outcome of the answer. These are the things that create variety and keep the days interesting. They are our insurance against "the same old thing".

No two trees, or leaves, or blades of grass, or human faces, or personalities, or experiences, were ever exactly alike. In dealing with life, nature, and experience, you never know what is coming, but you may be sure it will be different. That is what keeps us on our toes. It gives us to understand that our reactions must be prompt and right.

Meeting the unexpected is an art within itself. Just meeting the expected, if that were what it would be, is easy, too easy. Life does not let us off with that. We have to develop the power to meet situations that are different. We have to learn to be original, as life itself is original. If we prepare to meet the expected we have not only to reprepare to meet the unexpected but also to tear down the preparation we made to meet the expected.

The pioneers had to do that. If they had not been strong and wise enough to do it well we would not have the country that is ours today. In one way or another we are all pioneers, for every new phase of life is a frontier to be crossed. The adventures are different, but they are there. We come to frontiers of justice, of culture, and of spiritual advancement, and conquering them is no tamer a task than that of the pioneers of forest, river, and sea. We too have to meet the unexpected. That is what makes our story worth remembering.

The great generals had to be masters of the unexpected, able to meet surprising things and do surprising things. They called it strategy, which comes from the Greek word for General. That gives history its variety with something new at every turn. Living life calls for generalship. We never know just how it will marshal its forces next, and we have to learn to meet surprise with adequacy. History is a series of stories of something new at every turn.

We may complain when we are confronted by these unexpected situations, but when we have gone far enough to see how they fitted into the scheme of things and what it meant for us to deal with them we would seldom have it otherwise. We may think we are having it hard, but if life were a picture with neither highlights nor shadows it would become even harder to look at. Variety makes it not only endurable but interesting, not only interesting but thrilling.

Meet things as they come, but always keep prepared for the unexpected, or even to meet the expected in some unexpected way. When it comes accept it. See, or at least be willing to see the good in it. If it is a mystery package life has handed you, perhaps it has something better in it than you ever anticipated. Life will like you for meeting it on its own grounds.

## AROUND THE CORNER

We never know what we are going to meet around the corner, or around the bend of the road, or over the hill. It may be what we are expecting, or it may be something of which we never dreamed. It may be something when we were expecting nothing, or nothing when we were expecting something. In any case it is likely to be a surprise, and it is sure to be something we have to take. How well we can do that and keep on doing it is not only a measure of how much we make of life but also of how well we enjoy it.

Around the corner may be something that will make us happy, or something that will make us unhappy. We may find as time goes by that the effect on us of either will be reversed. But there must be some clouds and a little rain or the gardens of life would grow no blossoms. Around the corner may be the opportunity or the defeat of a lifetime, but we can never tell for sure which it is till we have gone far enough to see it in perspective, that is, in relation to the rest of the picture. But whatever it is, one thing is sure, and that is that it will be a step toward destiny.

It would be well to approach the corners we know we must pass with minds prepared as well as possible for whatever it may be. We can know that whatever it is it is not going completely to make us or break us, that whatever it may be a maximum of courage and optimism will not be out of place, and that whatever it may be it will pay us to be practical about it. The outcome of life is never bound us in a single moment. We can spoil the best or do something about the worst that we can meet around any corner.

Do not appraise too hastily whatever may suddenly confront you from some hidden place. Do not let fright, surprise, or any emotion, rob you even temporarily of your ability to look it in the face. Remember that blessings come in disguise and vice versa, and it takes time to be sure about either a friend or a foe. Be sure that what you meet is important and give its nature time to reveal itself.

If what comes around the corner is a test, meet it. If it is a disappointment, do not let it defeat you. If it is a heartache, be strong enough to endure it while it lasts. If it is an opportunity, make the most of it and be grateful. If it is a friendship, tread softly till you are sure of its quality and make it welcome as this becomes clear. If it is a lesson, learn it and make it a part of your viewpoint and program. If it is a shock, remember that the shock treatment has its place.

Whatever it may be that comes around the corner, it is a part of your story and the effect of it will become a part of your world. If it is good, cultivate and develop it. If not, let it die from neglect and lack of nourishment. As a story let it be well told. It is a threshold to something, or a connecting link between something to be and something that already is. It may have supreme value, and it will at least remind you that life is never dull.



It usually happens that the better one does meeting whatever comes around the corner, the better the next one will be and the more adequate to it he will find himself. This may not be clear at first, but time will tell.

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## THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

If you were a writer of fiction in either narrative or drama you would be constantly confronted with the importance of the element of surprise. If your story is to appeal and live you must not let it drag. You must keep your reader awake by keeping him anticipating, and you must do that largely by introducing the unexpected. It must be good, of course; but it must also be something the reader is not looking for. You will do this with an occasional crisis, but you will do it also between crises with surprising events or dialogue.

Life is the oldest story teller in the world. It is writing a part of the story of your life every day. It weaves in a touch of mystery here and there so you both have and give the element of surprise. That is what makes it a good story for you, for others, and for the ages. It shows that life was watching for what might at any time come around the corner.

Of course you are helping life write that story. Life builds the outline, indicates the places that would be good for surprises, and leaves you to fill in the details, and possibly add a few surprises of your own. We might say that life furnishes the action and you provide the reaction. But however the collaboration is carried out, it will be full of the unexpected and that is well if you make it so.

You will notice that in your life as in a written story grouping and relation play quite a part. Everything that comes around the corner ties in with various other things that have done so or will do so. Life has assembled and laid out all kinds of things - thoughts, actions, utterances, and the like - that attach themselves to these surprises like steel particles sliding toward a magnet. Then you can watch them grow and develop in related form. Thus you will see that there was some reason for most of the things that came around the corner.

You not only do not know what is coming next, but you do not know either how it is going to relate itself to the situation, nor the new situation that may rise from that relationship. Whoever thinks life is accidental or haphazard has not looked into any part of its story, especially that covering a long period, to see how things work together. All nature is full of these relationships, so it is no wonder that the stories of our lives should be. It is like reasoning. One thing is true because certain others were true, and so on either backward or forward. Or it is like mixing a chemical compound. The compound is the sum of the elements you have put into it plus the effects of their relationships, which are sometimes very great.

Think of these things as you help life write your story. Keep it interesting with surprises, but make them surprises the effects of which are good. That is, let its surprises contribute to your advancement toward goals that will be satisfying - worthwhile. Let your surprises surprise the world to see how good they were and how much good you made of them as they came around the corner.

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**T**HE UNEXPECTED  
GUEST

What you will encounter tomorrow, an hour from now, or in the next five minutes may affect your life profoundly, or even change the course of it. It may take the form of the coming of an old friend, a new one, a casual acquaintance, a stranger; and the arrival may be entirely unexpected. It may be like the passing of a ship on the ocean with surprising news. It may be like the breaking of a sudden storm, or the breaking of the clouds after one. Whatever it is, it and its results will go into the unwritten but permanent record of the day.

An unexpected guest does not have to be a person. It may be an event, a situation, or a development; but in any case it will affect your life personally, either as something you reject or something you accept and use. Your problem is to decide whether it is good, and act accordingly. If it is good, use it. If you are sure it is not good, see that it does not affect you. But do not take snap judgment. Try to be sure. A tree is known by its fruits, but it may take some time for the fruits to mature enough that one can tell.

You can look back on events you may have scarcely noticed at the time they happened, but of which you later realized that because of them life was never quite the same again. The effect may have been for weal or woe, but it was certainly real and determining. This is a reminder to reject negative values and capitalize on positive ones, and to develop a good judgement as to which is which. In this sense everyone is a banker, and he has to know the difference between potential assets and liabilities.

Think what it meant to you when, perhaps unexpectedly, you met a certain acquaintance, teacher, friend, or neighbor, perhaps the person you took for a life companion. By this time the effect on your life has probably become so great you cannot even reckon it, but you know that you are partly what you were and partly what the coming into your life of that unexpected guest has made of you. You too have been such a guest in the lives of others. It is well enough to consider now and then what the effect of your coming into their lives has been for them.

It is energy and the forms it takes that makes the action in the drama of life. Nature itself is a vast system of pulls and pushes, tensions and relaxations, gives and takes. So is life. Something is always causing us to behave as we do, and we have the problem of keeping the better impulses in control, the good influences in the majority and predominant in power. Our personal lives largely consist in being helpful to others and letting others be helpful to us - unexpected guests.



The unexpected guest may not even be anything tangible. It may be an idea, a realization, a decision. Whatever it is may break the ice or cut a path in the jungle, and open a way. It may be an unexpected opportunity or realization of power. Life consists of them and what we do about them. Only the blind could find it dull.

Think what the passing of the Master meant to Matthew, and Simon, and John, and Judas Iscariot. Life was never the same for them again either, whether they made the best of it or the worst. We are all charged batteries of power along any path we go, and to most of the people we meet our coming will be unexpected, as will their impacts on us.

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**A**DAPT YOURSELF Through all these things we have been thinking about runs a single thread of meaning we cannot escape. It is the fact of the necessity of adaptation. Since these unexpected things happen and will happen, as they always have, and since any one of them may be imminent at any moment, we need to be prepared and able to adapt ourselves to them. What does any given unexpected development mean for you? How can you be enriched by their coming? How can you keep the account off the debit side and on the credit side? How can you keep life from running you into the red?

All this, item by item, needs evaluation. In the old country communities we used to have men who knew values well, and who were always called in when property was to be appraised. Here is a department of living in which we all need to be good appraisers. Watch an appraiser at work, and learn his watchfulness for values.

The first person who ever saw a rose bush may have feared it, but had he paused to realize its possibilities he learned that it could produce beautiful blossoms as well as stabbing thorns. One thing always to watch for and take into consideration is the fact that there may be another side either to a character or an event.

The first person who ever saw a chestnut may have felt its countless sharp sword points and thought it a dreadful thing. But if he took the pains to find what was behind that threatening burr he discovered that the chestnut also had a pleasing gift to offer. Good appraising takes more than one or two quick glances, more even than ever meets the eyes at all.

Unexpected people, events, or situations, all may conceal qualities and meanings that do not at first appear. They all have possibilities that far exceed what you see before you when you meet them. As every acorn holds an oak tree within itself, every development in life holds future effects bound up within it as much greater than itself as the oak is greater than the acorn. The Master said that this is true even of the kingdom of heaven. It may be bound up in something as insignificant as a grain of mustard seed.

Each of life's surprises makes a little difference in our personal worlds and therefore in the lives we are living in them. They make new molds into which we have to refit ourselves, and as we do so we may find their meanings for us quite different from what we expected. The importance of some may evaporate, and we may find others were blessings in disguise.

Do not seize upon or reject your surprises too quickly or with too little thought. Do not do it too violently either. Analyze them carefully and deliberately, and adapt yourself to them in what appears to be the best way. Thus you may avoid the thorns and pluck the roses, and rescue the chestnuts from the burrs. You will also have learned more about appraising life's experiences. One of the first lessons of which is that things are not always what they first appear to be.

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**I WANTED TO SURPRISE YOU** The importance and value of the unexpected often shows in a familiar family situation. It used to manifest itself in surprise parties and dinners, especially birthday dinners for the old. In the morning they would be induced to go somewhere in old clothes. Later a messenger would follow them to say that someone had come. They would hurry back home to find that everybody had come and a fine dinner was being put on quickly improvised tables. We still arrange for little surprises in the family, especially for children. What happy occasions they are!

Pleasant things we anticipate lose much of their wonder, and sometimes all of it if we wait too long and then do not find the experience as wonderful as we expected. Expectation takes the edge off the impact and dulls the experience itself. Possibly that is the reason why life makes so many of our experiences come in the guise of the unexpected. Observe the reactions of a child. You will find that surprise makes every color brighter and every wonder greater. It is much the same with us all.

It even helps if an unpleasant experience comes as a surprise. To anticipate a so-called trouble is to live it over and over instead of experiencing it once and being done with it. There is time enough to enjoy a pleasure or endure a trouble when it comes, especially to endure a trouble. In commenting on death and courage someone has said that a coward dies a thousand times, a brave man only once. It is the same with all experience. It is for the best that so much of it is unexpected. It is as though when a trouble comes God says, "I didn't want to worry you", and that when a delight comes He says, "I wanted to surprise you".

What will the day bring? We often wonder that when we waken in the morning. We may think we know, but we do not, and that is well. Even the thing we expect may seem quite different when it comes, and if something much better comes we may not realize it and pine for the lesser gift. Experience



cannot but tell the truth, but expectation is a deceiver. Appreciating the unexpected helps us to learn patience too.

We cannot be prepared to know what is coming or how to meet a specific thing, but we can cultivate the ability to be prepared to meet whatever comes. We can expect the best, and be strong enough to profit by or endure it. After all, the ability to be humble and grateful in good fortune is akin to the ability to be courageous in ill fortune.

Being able to accept things is a part of our adjustment to life. People have always found that whatever came brought some good which may not have been apparent till after the results were all reckoned up. Any statue could tell us, if it could speak, that chisel strokes hurt but they bring out the design hidden within the stone.

Refuse to let the unexpected be a liability. Make it an asset. Let your unexpected joy make you grateful, and your unexpected trial make you strong. Each is a part of the scheme of things, and they combine into something of value. Keep your mind on that final result. It is not any hour or number of hours that tell the story. It is what they add up to. Life means well when it whispers, "I wanted to surprise you".

AFFIRMATION

I do not know what is ahead, but I know it is a blessing, even though in disguise. I keep prepared for it as I might to receive a guest.

Blessings,

Your Instructor.