



THE SECOND BEST TIME TO BEGIN

Philosopher and economist Friedrich Engels said, "An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory." Perhaps it is easier to talk about what to do than to do it.

U.S. District court judge Woodrow Seal was active in a philanthropic organization known as The Society of St. Stephen. It is an internationally recognized organization with the sole purpose of helping people in need.

One day a church invited Mr. Seal to speak to their congregation and explain to them how they might begin a Society of St. Stephen. The plan was for the him to speak on the various programs of the society, then follow up with a time for discussion.

The people took their seat and the minister introduced the featured speaker. The judge helped himself to cookies and poured a cup of coffee. When the introduction was completed, Judge Seal walked over to the piano, put his coffee cup on top of it, and began to fumble in his coat pockets. Finally, he pulled out a wrinkled piece of paper and from it read the name of a mother and her four children, including their ages and clothing sizes.

He noted several other unmet needs of the family and mentioned that their address was on the paper which he carefully laid on top of the piano. The judge then said, "If you want to start a Society of St. Stephen, then you should contact this woman by 11:30 tomorrow morning. If you are not able to help her, don't worry, I'll be in contact with her tomorrow and I'll get her help by mid-afternoon."

With that, the judge turned to leave. "Now, forgive me," he said, "but I really must be going. Thank you for inviting me and for the coffee and the cookies."

Before anyone could respond he walked out the door. It all took less than five minutes.

Here was a group of people who thought they were going to spend an hour listening to a program on how to help others in need, and maybe discuss its merits for a while. Instead they spent an hour deciding how to help one family - and the next day they did it.

Judge Seal wasn't content to sit around helplessly waiting for people to make a decision. The problem for most of us is not lack of knowledge but lack of action. When all is said and done...more will have been said than done. But like the Chinese proverb teaches, "The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now."

What are you trying to plant? The second best time to do it is now.