**COLUMN NAME: THERE’S ALWAYS A SILVER LINING…**

**TITLE: LET US RALLY TOGETHER**

Ever heard the phrase, "When America sneezes; the world catches a cold?” This is most appropriate today as the South African Rand is at an all-time low with a strained economic performance. This period of lockdown has hit us all pretty hard. Individuals are not the only ones vulnerable but also formal and informal businesses. There is a wave of emotion over depleting finances.

All these emotions are valid and could partially be due to the media trumpeting news of the bleak state of affairs. It is time to minimize the exposure to “over information.” The information provided by news and social networks can be quite overwhelming. Rather choose one reliable source and derive relevant and meaningful information for your benefit. This will reduce anxiety levels and ease fear for the upcoming days. These times dictate an analysis by us as consumers as well as entrepreneurs. Self-examination is when we measure and monitor our personal economic strength and attempt to incorporate safeguards that signal any descent into poverty and debt. With the great emphasis placed on our financial security we need to be able to sustain ourselves until the economy improves.

Financial discipline will be crucial at this stage. Easier said than done and for small business owners there is an immense level of stress for continuance and survival. However, we have no control over this situation and the only decision we can control is our behavior and attitude to what is transpiring around us. I will recommend here that whilst given this opportunity with our children, we should use this as a teachable moment as to the stark difference between “needs” and “wants”. The economic conditions call for a downgrade in our lifestyles.

A perfect example is our instinctive need for overcompensation. This was prevalent in our stockpiling behavior at the initial decision of lockdown. Without rational thought, our animalistic self-serving traits came to the forefront. In hindsight we now know that it was fear-driven by our survival instincts. One can only hope this is not a continuance for the remainder of the lockdown period. Frugality is something we need to adopt.

With a country crippled in socio-economic issues even before the pandemic where most South Africans cannot even afford a loaf of bread, we need to hop off the bandwagon of self-pity and start looking toward the deprived, destitute and real people who are in distress. There are homes in our communities without electricity, running water or food. We should look at those business owners who survive day to day and have no options available to them as a going concern and no family support. We should look at those employees who have been retrenched, referred to UIF and those who are uncertain as to whether they will have jobs when they return. It is not easy to be in discomfort and also be empathetic. To look from your own stress and worries to someone else’s. It is a true testament to your faith. It calls for a higher understanding of the difference between abundance and wealth.

The key to shifting this mindset is gratitude. Make a conscious decision to appreciate and not complain. Our social responsibility to serve our communities is not in grand gestures but small consistent efforts of contributing whatever little we can with good intention and purpose. Alone we can go fast but together we can go far to overcome this difficulty as a community in the true spirit of Ubuntu.

"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."

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