

## Speech: The Ultimate Question

A speech by Lance Miller ([www.lancemillerspeaks.com](http://www.lancemillerspeaks.com))

August 20, 2005

***Winner, World Championship of Public Speaking, 2005. This speech is aimed at each of us. It's a fun speech with a simple but important message which is artfully threaded throughout. Lance's conversational style, laced with rhyming and repetition, makes his journey of discovery an enjoyable experience...***

The Ultimate Question!

That question that has plagued man since the dawn of time.

And that question that each and every one of us must ask

At some point in our life. *[Pulls a parking ticket from jacket, holds it up.]*

Do you validate? *[Returns parking ticket to pocket.]*

Mr. Chairman, Fellow Toastmasters, and Friends-

I was 26 years old.

I was living in a small town in Indiana.

I had a job I didn't like.

I hadn't a date in three years.

And I had a couple of roommates named Mom and Dad!

I felt like my life was going nowhere

So I took control-

I left my home and my family

And I headed to Los Angeles to start over.

6 months later -

I had a job I didn't like.  
I was dating a girl  
Who was trying to make me "better"-  
By pointing out all my faults.  
And I had a couple of roommates that made Dumb and Dumber  
Look like Einstein and Oppenheimer.

I had changed everything in my life-  
But nothing had changed.  
I still felt like I was going nowhere.  
And then, one day after a business meeting  
All I wanted to do was get my parking validated.

*[Pulls parking ticket from jacket, holds in hand.]*

And I walked over the receptionist and said  
"Excuse me-do you validate?"  
And she looked up and said  
"Well, yes I do-you have a lovely smile."  
Showing her the ticket, I said  
"No, I was just in a meeting with your boss-  
Do you validate?"  
And she said  
"Well, let me compliment you  
On what a fine choice of business associates you have."  
Catching on, I said-  
You have such a keen sense of humor  
I'm going to go tell your boss how lucky he is to have you out here.  
And she goes - "Give me that ticket!"

She took her little machine and she went **Chi-chink.** *[Stamping the ticket.]*

And then as she handed it back  
She looked at me and said-  
"There's something special about you."  
I took the ticket and headed for the elevator.  
But I stopped and I turned around and just said-  
"Thank You." *[Returns parking ticket to pocket.]*

I don't how long it had been since I felt validated.  
Her words stayed with me all the way home.  
And as I was looking at my life  
I started to wonder how long it had been  
Since I'd validated somebody else.  
I wanted to do that!  
I wanted to make people feel good!  
But I felt that I needed to be important -  
I needed to be successful-  
So that when I said something to somebody  
It would mean something to them.  
But that receptionist had just made my day.  
Heck-she made my month!  
With one little **Chi-chink** she stamped my ticket.  
And I thought - I can do that!

So I went home to see Dumb and Dumber.  
These guys were constantly bringing people back to the apartment.  
It was driving me nuts!  
But I went in and I said  
"You make friends faster than anybody I have ever seen-  
And that is a gift."  
To see their faces-  
I swear they got smarter right before my eyes!  
**Chi-chink.**  
I went to see my girlfriend -  
And I thanked her for caring enough about me  
To want to see me be as good as I could be.  
You know what? - She got nicer!  
**Chi-chink.**  
I went to work, and I thanked my boss for hiring me.  
He'd done me a favor-  
And I started enjoying my work a lot more.  
**Chi-chink.**  
I used to think that I had to be important  
Before I could validate other people.

I used to look at people as obstacles to my success.  
But what I discovered was-  
I became important when I validated other people.  
I became important to that person - and that person.  
People were the pathway to my success.  
I started trying to find something I could stamp on everybody I met-  
That little piece of goodness -  
That little piece of rightness -  
Just a little **Chi-chink**.

I started to feel like a SUPER HERO.  
Underneath this mild-mannered exterior  
Was a blue and red spandex suit with a giant V on the chest-  
YES! - I was the VALIDATOR!  
When things would get tense  
They'd tighten up.  
I'd come in and-  
**Chi-chink - Chi-chink - Chi-chink -**  
I had plenty of ink!  
I'd hear people say, "Who was that man?"  
"I don't know-  
But I heard this **Chi-chink** -  
And suddenly I feel so much better now!"

And then I figured it out-  
Do you know what's wrong with world?  
Do you know what's wrong with me?  
Do you know what's wrong with you? --  
WHO CARES!!!!  
The question is-  
What is right with the world?  
What is right with me?  
What is right with you?  
The common denominator of all humanity  
Is the fact that we are human.  
We are-by nature-imperfect.

It takes no special talent to find an imperfection in another person.

But every person goes through life-

Wanting to be RIGHT

Wanting to be VALUABLE.

Find that -

Bring it out in them.

I started to discover in my life that I got what I validated.

I found out that I brought out

The goodness- the value in others-

By validating that.

We have a lot of problems in this world.

But I've learned

That there is not a problem that exists-

Between a parent and child

Between a husband and wife

Between a worker and his employer

Or between races, cultures, or nations-

That does not stem directly

From an inability or an unwillingness

To validate-

The rightness

The value

And the goodness

In another.

This is the Ultimate Question -

Do Your Validate?

But this is not what's important.

What's important is

Can you - **Chi** - [Audience response: **Chink**]?

Can you - **Chi** - [Audience response: **Chink**]?

Can you - **Chi** - [Audience response: **Chink**]?

You've been a great audience!!!!

(C) 2021 Lance Miller. Reprinted with permission. All Rights Reserved. This speech is available to watch on YouTube ([click here](#)), or by searching YouTube for ***Toastmasters Lance Miller***.

*Brian Woolf's comments: What makes this speech memorable is not just the message but the sound that reflect the message all tied together in the closing with the speaker and audience all participating. Lance's simplicity of message is enriched with creative wordsmanship, including such gems as Dumb and Dumber, Einstein and Oppenheimer; I had changed everything, but nothing had changed; I swear they got smarter right before my eyes; do you know what's wrong with the world (etc); and his killer truism, it takes no special talent to find an imperfection in another person. These words still echo in my mind after many years- the mark of a unique speech.*

*Copyright © 2005-2021 Lance Miller (www.lancemillerspeaks.com)*

---

***And there's more where this came from...***

**Visit Brian Woolf on the web for his complete collection of articles, speeches, insights and practical advice, at**

**[www.brianwoolf.com](http://www.brianwoolf.com)**

Email: [brian@brianwoolf.com](mailto:brian@brianwoolf.com)

Tel: +1 864 458-8277

**BRIANWOOLF.COM**