


*The Butterfly Effect*

By Gary Field

It's been said that the flutter of a butterfly's wings on a dusty savannah in Africa, can set in motion a chain of events that leads to a hurricane bearing down on Florida's coast. Now, that may seem farfetched, but let's see if we can visualize such a thing.


Let's say a butterfly emerges from a cocoon and spreads its wings. That sudden movement could startle a bird into flight. The whole flock could then take off and start a stampede of nearby zebra. The dust that rose onto the air from the pounding of thousands of hooves could get caught up in a jet stream and carried out over the Atlantic. There, high up in the atmosphere, the dust particles and water molecules form an invest, or depression. From depression and tropical wave to a storm warning, the next thing you know there's a hurricane taking aim at Florida's coast.

So the next time you find yourself in Home Depot stocking up on hurricane supplies, you can blame it on those damn African butterflies! 

Scientists have some pretty fancy terms for this effect – a chaos theory, cascade effect, or deterministic chaos. But, no matter what we decide to call it, we can see examples of the butterfly effect all around us. We can see it in Scripture (where many might refer to it as The Hand of God); we can see it in nature and among nations. We can see it being played out in society, our communities, and in our personal lives.

Ever since man's original fall from grace in The Garden, we have been looking for something, or someone to blame when things go wrong. Adam claimed "It was the woman who You gave to be with me, she gave me of the fruit and I did eat of it." In one smooth move, Adam managed to blame it on God and the woman. And Eve? She said, "It was the serpent. He

tricked me and I did eat."

Most of us can now blame original sin on Adam and Eve, and it was they who set in motion a chain of events that, perhaps, led Bruce Jenner to say "Call me Caitlin." 

The fact is, the butterfly effect has been settling things off long before Queen Latifah made that movie. But, far too often, by the time we begin to notice the results, we're in the midst of some kind of catastrophe.

Many people say that the extreme weather events that greet us each day on good morning America are the results of global warming; that greenhouse gases and the burning of fossil fuels could be causing climate change and shifting weather patterns. Now we might not agree on the causes, but we can clearly see the effects when wildfires are burning out of control in seven western states, and homes are being washed away by floods in other parts of the country.

In 1914, a little known Duke was shot in Sarajevo – a place that many had never heard of – but most agree that his death set in motion a chain of events which led to World War I. That war merely set the stage for World War II, which, by the time the smoke cleared, left the United States and Russia facing off in a cold war as the last two remaining superpowers.

In 1955, a secretary would refuse to give up her seat on a bus, and a little known preacher would help organize a boycott. Sometimes, a cascade event can produce a dream – as it did in the case of Rosa Parks and Dr. King. But, far too often, what we get is chaos!

Rodney King made a decision to hit the gas rather than get pulled over, and it wasn't long until Los Angeles went up in flames.

But gentlemen, what I want us to consider today is this – no one wakes up one day and says: "I want to set in motion a chain of

events that will lead me into the Valley of Death, or to a double-digit prison sentence." So why is it that so many of us have found ourselves in that valley or with so much "time" on our hands?

If we can recognize the fact that a negative chain of events can so easily be set in motion, then the opposite must be true!

Shouldn't it be possible for us to set in motion a positive flow of events? And shouldn't we make every effort to do so?

The same way that it doesn't take all day to recognize sunshine – gentlemen – it shouldn't be all that hard to figure out when we're walking in darkness, praying in the shadows, or on the verge of setting off a negative chain of events. Like a pebble in a pond whose ripples reach for distant shores, your actions will possible impact your family, the community, or society. They could have an impact on the nation, or even touch the world.

Now, we might not be able to stop a hurricane from forming, but we can begin taking control of our lives. We can begin striving to set forth a positive flow of events into the lives of those around us, rather than leaving a trail of destruction.

We can't control our destiny; we can't control what may be happening 5, 10, or 15 years from now. We can only control ourselves and that one act at a time. But each act becomes a brick, and it's with those bricks that we will lay the foundation upon which our lives will either rise or fall.

What we need to realize is that each act or action is preceded by a thought...

So let us think clearly and act wisely. After all, we have a lot more to work with than some damn African butterflies! 