

Thought for a Wednesday

July 7, 2010

A week from today and I'll officially be on vacation in Ohio – Enjoying family, camping, hanging out and soaking up some rays, and getting some much needed R&R. And that's cool, we all need time away to rest, relax, reflect and refocus (how about the alliteration – oh yeah, I still got it!)

But to be honest, I'm not taking a vacation from the burden and prayer concern that God has laid on my heart for the city of Saratoga. And let me be brutally honest here – Neither should you! So, even though you won't be hearing from me know for two weeks, I will leave you with some thoughts and ideas about how we as a community of faith can reach this city for Christ. Another way of understanding this is to say we want to love Saratoga Springs to Jesus Christ!

“Small Things Done with Great Love Will Change the World...”

Servant Evangelism (SE) is one tool that is effective in helping Christ-followers develop an outward focus – Simply put, SE is **doable** evangelism. Although all evangelism is good evangelism, the times now require show and tell, go and reveal, work before words, rather than the past methods of come and see, hear me, model of evangelism.

By definition SE is: *Demonstrating God's love by offering to do simple acts of kindness with no strings attached.* It is kindness in action!

Demonstrating God's love...

SE is action-orientated outreach that demonstrates the attribute of kindness, mercy and generosity of God's nature toward an individual in a practical way. Most often the demonstration of God's love is expressed by a simple service or by a small gift.

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
(Romans 5:8, NIV)

Some examples could include, but not be limited to...

- ◆ Totally Free Car Wash
- ◆ Oil Changes for Single Parents
- ◆ Car Drying at Self-Serve Car Washes
- ◆ Cold Bottled Water at the Park(s)
- ◆ Umbrella Escort (if its raining of course)
- ◆ Leaf Raking
- ◆ Christmas Gift-Wrap
- ◆ Snow Removal from Walks/Driveways
- ◆ Smoke Detector Battery Replacement
- ◆ Laundromat Washer/Dryer Payment

The offer alone is powerful. Most people are not served freely in our culture – Most people do not expect a free offer. Many times the offer alone provokes thought. Questions like: *“Why would you?... Who are you?... What are you?... and Where are you?... You mean you would do that for me?”*

Simple acts of kindness...

“Kindness is not an apathetic response to sin, but a deliberate act to bring a person back to God...” (Nelson's Bible Dictionary)

“Or do you... not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?” (Romans 2:4, NIV)

The acts of kindness are small deeds done with great love, powerful seeds that can penetrate the heart. Who doesn't like to be given a cold bottle of water on a hot day? Or hot chocolate on a cold day? Especially by someone who is smiling, pleasant and having fun! SE wins the heart before it confronts the mind. The small act of kindness nudges a person closer to God and I have found it to be truth that the average Christian is willing to hand a stranger a can of cold bottle of water on a hot day (low risk).

The high grace is seen in the typical reaction. *"Oh, thank you! I can't believe this is for free!"* And, *"Why are you doing this?"* Kindness builds the bridge for a person to receive a touch of God's love. It's simple, practical, effective, inexpensive and fun!

With no strings attached...

No strings attached means we serve anyone and everyone. It also means we do not demand anything from the person. We do not expect them to come to our church (although this might happen). We don't expect payment. We simply serve freely.

These are just some thoughts... wish I could say I was an expert on this... but I'm actually still learning HOW!! These are things I have witnessed transform a church and community, it really works! Looking forward to continuing a dialogue with you on this matter... Feel free to share your thoughts to me!

Be strong... Be courageous... Be fearless...

Christ is All,
Pastor Mark