

The Significance of Routine Contributions

There are two powerful metaphors that Jesus gave His disciples in the gospels that state what their role is in the world. One of them is referred to often, the other *not so often!*

In Matthew 4:19 Jesus spoke to His first would be disciples and said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” I love the call to be “fishers of men.” Apparently many other Christians do as well. You often see “fishers of men” hats, shirts, and ties at Christian gatherings.

We understand the fishing metaphor easily. Go out and give it your best effort and catch as many people as you can; get them to pray a salvation prayer and become a Christian. And then drop them off at the church door and go out and catch some more! One of the great joys I have had dozens of times over the years is being with someone when they made their peace with God- it’s exhilarating!

But Jesus also gave those of us who are His disciples another metaphor that is easily forgotten. In John chapter 21, verses 15-19, Jesus is speaking with Peter after His resurrection from the dead. Three times He asks Peter a simple question, “Do you love Me?” All three times Peter indicates that yes, indeed, he loves Jesus. All three times Jesus responds to Peter’s love by saying essentially, ‘then care for my sheep.’

I don’t know about you, but I can’t remember the last time I saw a Christian hat or t-shirt or tie emphasizing that a Christian is to help shepherd Jesus’ sheep. And yet Jesus told Peter that his love for Jesus would be proven by his care for sheep. Fishing is easy in that after you make the catch your part is pretty much done. But shepherding is labor intensive and involves caring for the sheep even when they are stinky and stubborn! And yet this was the call of the resurrected Jesus, a call that goes alongside the call to be a “fisher of men.”

It’s also harder to quantify acts of shepherding than it is acts of fishing. With fishing we rejoice in the number of fish we have caught. But shepherding involves less glamorous acts. For the Christian, it involves remembering to visit the guy in prison who made the big mistake. It involves being there for the family struggling through a situation with their child. It involves going to the hospital at odd hours just to be there with the people you love.

Shepherding involves patiently teaching what the Bible really says to those who have a thousand and one questions. It involves visiting the person with Alzheimer’s even though she doesn’t remember who you are anymore. It involves smiling after preaching your heart out and that well meaning person tells you how great the sermon they heard on the radio that week was. The shepherd smiles because he knows the guy on the radio won’t be there in person when needed- but the shepherd will!

I say all this to encourage us all to never underestimate the power of the small contributions we make in the lives of others. Everything we do can’t be a “touchdown.”

But everything we do should contribute to “first downs” that eventually lead to a “touchdown.” I know many people in our church who have been faithfully giving financially now to the Lord’s work for over thirty years. They don’t think about it, but many of them have now given over 6 figures of money away to advance Christ’s Kingdom. But many of them have given far more *spiritually* over the years by being *shepherds of men*.

When Jesus asked do you love Me, He was asking whether you love Him enough to care for His sheep. If you show your love for Jesus one loving act at a time, you won’t lack significance!

Rev. Danny Campbell <><

Pastor, Wayne Hills Baptist Church