

Wangaratta Wesleyan Methodist Church Sunday 18th October 2015

One (Won) for Jesus

Bible Passages: Genesis 1:27-28, Mark 5:1-20, Ephesians 4:11-16

Intro: Some have suggested there was a chain of conversions linking Billy Graham back through a series of evangelists to DL Moody and the man that was instrumental in his conversion. It may seem a bit of a stretch but at the least there was overlap in the ministry of these men.

Edward Kimball was a Sunday school teacher in Chicago in the 1840's

- DL Moody
- J. Wilber Chapman
- Billy Sunday (Ex baseball champion)
- Mordecai Ham
- Billy Graham
- Both Moody and Graham were converted age 16-17.

Imagine if Edward Kimball had not responded to the Lords prompt to visit that illiterate 17 year old in the back of the shoe store that Sat morning.

This morning I want to uncover how God feels about individual people and consequently how you and I can be involved in building God's kingdom one important person at a time.

So what is...

1. The value of one person

Let's first look at how the individual fitted into God's economy...

a. Throughout church history

For the first three hundred years the church was persecuted relentlessly from the Roman leaders. It was an underground, counter cultural movement.

- In the early part of the fourth century a Roman leader by the name of Constantine came to power and declared that Christianity was legal and the church became accepted into political and public life.
- This changed the church scene dramatically.
- The church merged from being a grassroots movement which relied on small secretive gatherings and individual responsibility to an organised institution with hierarchal leadership.
- Was this a good thing? Well it certainly slowed down the persecution but it moved the church from being a counter cultural movement to a main-stream and accepted form of society. In essence the church moved from the back alley ways to the highest hill in town.

Now the personal responsibility of the individual to learn about Jesus and lead others to Christ was slowly replaced by a clergy led and controlled institution. The individual became more redundant and for the next 1200 years the church, generally speaking, suppressed individual responsibility in building the kingdom of God. Many church goers couldn't read or even own a bible and most had abdicated all missional responsibility to the clergy.

- Even the pastor/leadership model that dominates churches today is still a carryover of a western institutionalised church model.
- Fortunately in the last 50 years we have seen more of a swing towards the priesthood of all believers where individuals are being released by the church to be fully engaged in building the kingdom of God.
- Yet many established churches are still stuck in the mould of a clergy led club.

I know I'm generalising in these comments, there are always exceptions to the rule.

I wonder how God feels about this. Let's look...

- b. **In the Old Testament...** and discover God's understanding of the value of one person.

In Genesis we see God creating an individual and meeting his most intimate needs.

(Gen 1:26-28) ²⁸' God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"

(Gen 2:20-24) God wanted a suitable helper for Adam so he created Eve to be the perfect mate for him and they completely complemented each other so much so that God said they would be united together to become one flesh.

God has such a high view of men and women as individuals and he also has a high view of a married couple as he calls them to be one. We are individuals, we are made like God, we are unique and we are at the pinnacle of his creation.

Consider Abraham. God chose to create a mighty nation out of this one man. Ps 51:2 'look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many.'

Moses had one on one time with God, face to face communication, and Moses was then able to lead the people. It was not Moses' natural gifting that turned him into a great leader, it was as a result of his intimate time with God.

Now God wanted his people to develop community together but it seems that God was very interested in the individual as part of that community. So often God invested in one person so that they could become influential to others.

- c. **Jesus was interested in the individual... also**

- i. **New Testament stories**

Our passage from Mark recounting the healing of the demonic man is a good example of Jesus' interest in the individual. Jesus went way off track into non-Jewish territory to free one man so that he could become an agent for change and revival in his own community.

- Jesus went out of his way to meet this man
- He was healed and restored by Jesus: v.15
- He wanted to join Jesus' team but Jesus said no, go back to your people. V.18-20
- It would have been easier for that man to follow Jesus but Jesus knew he was the most effective person to minister into his community.

In John 4 we discover a woman at a well, ostracised by her community but hungry for relationship and acceptance. Jesus invested in her by accepting her and giving her dignity and then encouraged her to tell the people in her town. Many of the people from her town believed because of the woman's testimony. Jesus recognised the power of one person's story who had been impacted by Him.

Finally Jesus picked out a cheating tax collector called Zacchaeus; defied public opinion and ate at his house. Again he invested in this man because he could see his potential to instigate change in people's lives.

I find it interesting that these three individuals, whom Jesus saw great potential in, were all outcasts from their communities where the locals had written them off as unable to contribute to society. Jesus always seemed to turn established conventions on their head.

Jesus demonstrated his unique strategy to change the world when he called...

ii. His (Jesus') disciples

If Jesus could miraculously feed 5,000 people, heal 10 lepers simultaneously and raise the dead why didn't he spend his three years on earth converting and healing as many as possible? No, he chose to invest his three years in training 12 unschooled ordinary men to be equipped so that they could in turn be agents of transformation to the people they mixed with.

Transition: Now here is a searching question; how well does the church measure up to what Jesus modelled and instructed his followers to do? What about here in Wangaratta?

Personally I find this dilemma one of the most difficult things in church life to figure out. As a younger person evangelism mainly consisted of inviting people to events, visiting evangelist, film nights etc. In recent years, especially in western culture, there has been a move away from mass evangelism to a more personal friendship model. This appears to be most effective when a prior relationship already exists.

For Rhonda and me, our time in Healesville shattered our entrenched views of how the church should operate. We literally became a church without walls in the community. This opened up many doors for us to meet and minister to people who would never normally come through the doors of a church.

If Jesus with shoes on walked into our church today what would we ask him to do? Would we confine him to our church building so he could preach powerful life changing messages? Would we take him to Loaves and Fishes CC and to our hospitals to meet the needs of those there?

No I suspect he would call us together and empower each individual to go out and preach, meet people's needs and heal the sick. He seems more interested in empowering individuals to do his work than doing it himself.

Is there a more organic grass-roots strategy for growing God's kingdom rather than relying on trained clergy and mass evangelism? How about...

2. Harnessing the power of one

Many churches that operate on a traditional model have few people trying to do all the work while many sit idle and are simply spectators. But if each person does their bit a lot more can be achieved. Here is a helpful way to illustrate this...

a. Addition or Multiplication

Imagine if you had a church of 10 people and you wanted the most effective way of growing it. Place the slides up and comment.

Additional Model: 10 people creating programs that can win 10 people a year in growth. Results: slowly growing but few people doing all the work... get tired and burnout.

Additional Model																
Years:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
People	10	20	30	40							110	120			150	160

Multiplication Model: 10 people each reaching one person each year and training them to reach one person also.

Multiplication Model																
Years:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
People	10	20	30	40							110	120			150	160
People	10	20	40	80							10,240				327,680	

Conservative Multiplication Model: 10 people taking three years to train and lead one each to the Lord. Benefits: Sharing the load and training people to do the work. It is not therefore dependant on the original people.

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People	10	20	40	80							10,240				327,680	
People	10	10	10	20	20	20	40				80	80	160		320	

b. Growing a church which way?

So if we are keen to grow the church which way would you choose?

Many of us are quite timid about talking to others about Jesus. We are not sure what the other person may think and we don't want to embarrass them or ourselves in the process.

3. So how can we be involved?

Well maybe we can just try...

a. One (Won) for Jesus

If we agree that we all have a responsibility to be engaged in pointing someone to Jesus then let's give it a go. It may not be as difficult as it seems.

If we are thoroughly convinced that knowing and following Jesus is the best thing for us then to tell someone else is not that hard. I'm sure you've been on public transport or somewhere with people you don't know and you ask about a good eating place or a good clothes shop. Even strangers are happy to tell you about the best bargain they have come across.

Talking about Jesus should be no different; we are telling people about the best bargain they will ever experience.

The first step is to simply talk to someone and befriend them. For most people that is an everyday opportunity and comes fairly easy.

Example: The man with the dog...

Be careful not to stage your relationship with people. Sometimes we can be building a friendship and then after a year all of a sudden start talking about Jesus; this would seem rather odd to the person. Instead start talking about Jesus as a very natural dimension of your life from the very beginning or at least very early in your friendship.

Example: Ladies hair saloon: Listen to problems... You need Jesus.

Can I encourage you to start with your neighbours. Be nice to them, talk to them support them and pray for them. We have always tried to minister to our neighbours... Expand

- Not easy at times
- Has it worked? Well yes we led one of our neighbours in Healesville to the Lord and we are still working on our current neighbours.

It is one thing to introduce someone to Jesus but it is yet another to see them become a disciple.

b. Discipleship

What is a disciple? They are essentially a learner who is following Jesus' teaching. They are trusting in Jesus and imitating how he lived. In fact Jesus said if we remain in him, (this is present and ongoing,) we will bear much fruit.

The purpose of any fruit tree is to bear fruit, which is why it exists. The goal of a disciple of Jesus is to bear fruit. What does that look like? I'm not necessarily meaning the fruit of the spirit here (is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness and self-control) rather I mean the tangible outworking of our Christian walk; our worship, obedience, service, generosity and of course our witnessing and discipleship of others. A true disciple is one who knows how to grow others. In a sense we become the arms and legs of Christ as He reproduces in another person what he has done in us.

Now you may ask, what, then, is the purpose of pastors and leaders if the average Christian is to engage in building the body of Christ. Read Ephesians 4:11-12 and comment.

- Equip: prepare, train, to get someone ready. It is to do all you can so that they can do what you are doing. Jesus equipped his disciples and sent them out to continue his work. Jesus said, 'anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.' (John 14:12)
- Works of service: The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are not to do all the work, they are to train God's people, which means every Christian, to share the work also.

Like I intimated earlier I'm not sure how the church got the idea that the clergy were to do all the work. It is simply not scriptural and unfortunately we are still trying to break free of that thinking. Not all of us are called into leadership but all of us are called to be ministers of the Gospel of Jesus.

In conclusion is there a yet to be written story about someone you know?

Imagine if we could be involved in someone's life by: Meeting, befriending, caring, serving, compassion, speaking into their life with the soothing words of Jesus: "let not your hearts be

troubled, trust in God trust also in Me.” Or ‘When I look to the hills where does my help come from? It comes from the maker of heaven and earth.’

Seeing them come to Jesus and disciple them so they also can reach others for Jesus.

Remember God places infinite value on one life

If you only influence one person to follow Jesus in your lifetime you have done a wonderful thing.

Can I give you a challenge over the next week?

- Invest in one friendship for Jesus
- Invest in encouraging one person (Ange last week)
- Invest in one person to help disciple them to become more like Jesus.

Message by Pastor David Lloyd