

Doing Great Things

by Julie Beader



So often, people who are doing something great don't realize it at the time. Consider this example:

An economics professor at the University of Northern Iowa spent 14 days writing a novel that he sent to a few friends as a gift. One of his friends gave it to a friend of his who happened to be a literary agent. A few days later, Robert Waller got a phone call from a man at Warner Press asking him, "Where have you been all my life?" As a result, *The Bridges of Madison County* spent 162 weeks on the New York Times best seller list and sold 12 million copies. In 1995 it was turned into a major motion picture that grossed \$176 million.

Now whether or not you have read this book (the characters' morality being questionable at best), you most likely have heard of it. The point being, that Mr. Waller had no idea when he was writing that book, that it was going to have that kind of impact.

Ordinary people do great things every day without realizing it.

I think of my second grade teacher, Mrs. Stockton. My camp counselor whom I knew as Flicka. My babysitter who I affectionately called Aunt Em. These are just a few of the heroes in my life. People who probably had no idea how significant their impact was on me. Having come from an abusive, broken home, these people brought glimmers of dignity, hope, and love that forever changed the person I was becoming. How did they do it? They were just doing what they were given to do...babysitting, teaching, loving, coaching. All of us have these opportunities every single day. The question is what will we do with them?

Look at the apostle Paul. Having a less-than-glorious beginning in ministry (what with killing all those Christians), he humbly went around doing what was made available to him to do, preaching and traveling. Successful? Well, it depends on your definition...stonings, shipwrecks, threats... most of us would take these things as a clear sign that we MUST be doing something wrong! I wonder if he ever asked himself, "When will I ever get it right?" I wonder if he had those moments of insecurity that I find myself battling on an all-too-regular basis. And how about this for a grand finish – prison! So here's Paul, in prison, at the end of what, by today's standards, would probably be considered a less than successful ministry. How do you handle something like that? Here's the big question...

What do you do when the life you are living doesn't look at all like the life you planned?

I know what Paul did. He wrote letters. He may not have been able to get out and preach, but by golly, he was going to do SOMETHING! I imagine Paul, in prison, writing letters, inspired by the Holy Spirit, yet probably unaware of the amazing impact his writings would have. I don't think he had any idea God was using his hands to pen scripture. In his state of yielded obedience, he was doing what most likely seemed a small thing and yet look at the result. How many times does God ask us to do things that may seem small? It's all the time. It's every day. It's in loving Him and loving others. It's in stepping out and taking a risk. It's in valuing obedience over popularity. It's in doing what is there for us to do the best we can do it.

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart..." Col. 3:23 NIV

It's important to remember that God does NOT calculate success the way we do. We are so quick to dismiss things as failures simply because they did not yield the immediate result that we were seeking. If we try something and it does not create financial gain or become popular, we think it was a waste of time. How foolish and short-sighted this mindset is. Consider the great artists of history, whose works now go for untold millions and yet, in their lifetime, they were considered to have no value. When we do not see the value of what we are doing or what we have done, given our limited and finite perspective, we MUST trust that God sees things we do not. How prideful and arrogant of us to give "pass" or "fail" markings (even to ourselves) on the eternal value of events.

Here's some perspective...

"For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7 NKJV

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV

"A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps." Proverbs 16:9 NKJV

Don't make the mistake of underestimating whatever it is you are doing right now. Just do your best. Seek the face of God, trust His leading and depend on His strength and you WILL be doing something great...whether you realize it or not.



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As part of her ministry, Julie will come to your church to help you creatively plan effective ministry regardless of your budget. You can contact her through her website or email julie@connectedministry.com. www.ConnectedMinistry.com

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July/August 2008

