Pk's Perspectives… Conversations

When I know of a great need or pressing issue in someone's life, I'm sensitive to that need whenever having conversation or interaction of any kind with that person. Like, knowing someone's spouse/sibling/parent recently died is going to affect how I interact with that individual. Knowing my friend just lost his or her job is going to influence my conversations with that friend…at least for a little while. If I'm talking/texting with someone who has surgery coming up, I'm probably going to offer words of encouragement along with a promise to pray for their procedure. Oh sure, there are certain situations where I might be too timid to mention the specific issue with which a person is wrestling but I'm definitely going to have it in the back of my mind in case he or she brings the issue into the conversation.

And then there are those times when the busyness of my own world distracts me from what is happening in my friend's world; I have an entire conversation, walk away, five minutes later remember what my friend is facing, and feel horrible that I failed to share my concern or words of encouragement or maybe even a quick prayer. I've done that. You probably have, too. It's easy to overlook the load in my friend's basket when I'm focused on the weight of the load I am pushing in my own life.

I'm reminded that every single person with whom I share a conversation has a spiritual need: either the person needs to know the love of Jesus if they've never surrendered to the Gospel, or the person needs words of encouragement to continue passionately pursuing intimacy in their fellowship with Jesus. Everyone I talk to in the course of a day is either a follower of Christ or lost in their sin. Sounds kind of stark but it's the truth if I believe what the Bible teaches about the greatest need of humanity. If an individual I'm speaking with is unknown to me, foremost in my mind should be finding out if this person has accepted Christ and if they haven't received Christ, are they willing for me to share my story of Jesus' love. If an individual I'm speaking with is known to me as a follower of Jesus Christ, foremost in my mind should be encouraging them to respond to life in the light of their faith in Christ. But I'm thinking that on a daily basis we have many conversations with a whole variety of people without ever really being cognizant of the greatest need those people face.

Hang tight for a quick minute while I do some calculating >>>>>>>>>>>>> okay, thanks for waiting. I was attempting to tally the number of people with whom I interacted yesterday. In the course of my yesterday (Monday), I had conversations/interactions with 34 different people which was actually a slow day since much of my day was spent studying for Wednesday night Bible study and addressing administrative stuff. If I was truly clued in to the greatest need of each one of the 34 people I conversed with yesterday then I would have certainly found some way to ask them one of two questions at some point in the conversation: "Do you have a relationship with Jesus?" or "How is your walk with Jesus?" Did I ask some form of either of these questions in all of my 34 conversations yesterday? Nope. And I'm embarrassed to admit it. Yesterday, I had 34 opportunities to address the greatest of human needs, to point people to Jesus, and I failed miserably in at least half of those conversations.

Now, I'll wait for you while you calculate the number of conversations (face-to-face, texting, phone) you had yesterday. (Your yesterday would depend on what day you are reading this newsletter.) What's your number? 20? 41? 56? Of all the conversations/interactions you had yesterday with your fellow human beings, how many times did you directly address that person's spiritual need? Of all the conversations you had yesterday with your fellow human beings, how many times did you fail to even consider the spiritual plight of the individual to whom you were speaking? I hope your success rate was higher than mine!

When we look at the example of Jesus, we see that while he recognized and addressed the obvious needs of people, he was always sensitive to the greater need underlying the obvious need…the spiritual need. Jesus responded to Martha & Mary's grief AND spoke deeper spiritual truth into their lives. Jesus responded to the humiliation of the adulterous woman AND spoke deeper spiritual truth into her life. Jesus responded to Peter's embarrassment AND spoke deeper spiritual truth into his life. Jesus responded to Thomas' doubt AND spoke deeper spiritual truth into his life. Jesus responded to the shame of the woman at the well AND spoke deeper spiritual truth into her life.

How many conversations will you have between now and Sunday? Think of each one as an opportunity to point someone to Jesus; ask God to give you a heart that is sensitive to the spiritual needs of humanity. Have a great week full of great conversations! Cya in Sunday School & Worship, PK!