

The Small Important Things

by John Edmiston

Walking In the Spirit – Series 38 (A Ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

John 15:12 MKJV *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*

I just read a friend's blog today (ponderworthy.org) – full of poetry and ideas and emotions. Not a huge ministry, but to those who are part of it, very "real" and very much part of their lives, a place to share. A bible study group that is 'real' can be a greater ministry than a mega-church that is shallow.

There is a wonderful Greek word in the NT (*allos*) – "one another". There are over 30 commands featuring this word. Commands such as 'wash one another's feet', 'love one another', 'be of the same mind toward one another', pray for one another and so forth.

This 'one another' life is supposed to be active. At no point in the Bible do I see the command 'just sit next to one another and be quiet for that is your whole duty in church'.

If we are to encourage one another, comfort one another, love one another fervently from the heart and wash one another's feet – then we need to be in small groups. You simply cannot do this in a 'meeting'. The Christian life is not just about glory filled meetings. It's about glory-filled relationships and glory-filled lives.

These small places in which we can be real and authentic and give and receive the love of Jesus Christ are at the very heart of the Kingdom of God. The small acts of kindness are what touch lives and turn them around. Twice in my life I have been saved from deep almost suicidal despair by such acts of kindness. One was a birthday card when I was desperately lonely, the other was someone bringing me a hamburger when I was feeling at my very lowest after a broken relationship. These small acts, that these people hardly thought about, are part of the reason I am still here and ministering today. You may have similar stories in your own life.

We need a lot more than information and emails if we are to grow in God. We need human love. We need encouragement, hope, and counsel. We need the reality of another human being 'being there for us'.

When Jesus loved people He loved each one individually. He did not say "Oh that's just another blind guy, bring him here and we will do the opening of the eyes thing". Jesus knew names of people like Bartimeus, Mary, Martha and Lazarus. He

ate with them, stayed with them and got to know them. His disciples did not just sit in rows in a classroom – they lived with Jesus, walked with Jesus and got into boats with Jesus.

The small things are often the big things. To the thief on the cross Jesus said: “Today you will be with Me in Paradise”. Just a single sentence to a dying man – and it made all the difference in the world.

When Jesus told His disciples: **John 15:12 MKJV** *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you* He was not talking about programs and buildings. The next line makes that clear - **John 15:13 MKJV** *No one has greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

We have retreated far from self-sacrificing, foot-washing, life-giving love! And our retreat has been into what? Into ourselves and our materialism? Into 'not bothering'? We have to start bothering. We have to start doing the small acts of kindness and love that the whole Kingdom of God is built upon. Jesus was 'moved with compassion' and we should be too! And not just to people in far-off places on mission trips (though that is also good) but to those closest to us, those right next to us who are hurting and lonely and desperate.

Our bible study should lead us into acts of love. It should get us to reflect on what it means to “love one another as I have loved you”. Paul wrote to Timothy, the pastor of the church at Ephesus about what the goal of ministry was: **1 Timothy 1:5 MKJV** *But the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned,*

This kind of love and maturity is built into us by other people who care for us. Nobody is matured in a theater, nobody becomes strong just by watching someone on a stage! We have to live out our faith and love in true relationship and in small daily actions that are full of the love of Christ.

Now God gives us plenty of opportunities to live out our faith by placing needy people directly in our path; just like Lazarus who lay day and night at the gate of the rich man. The poor will always be with us because God places them among us to see how we will react to them. Are we kind, compassionate, forbearing and caring? How do we react to the disabled, the mentally ill, and those with lives full of torment and confusion? That tells us a great deal about how real our faith is: **James 1:27 MKJV** *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

Bumper stickers and big black bibles are not the same as living faith that results in good works at the daily individual level of Christian community. God has saved us by grace but also in His grace he has made us new creations to do good works that He has prepared beforehand for us to do:

Ephesians 2:8-10 MKJV *For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast. (10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Most of these good works are 'ordinary' in that God places us right in front of our nose, because He has for ordained that we should walk in them. When your wife needs companionship or your son needs you to hear him out, that is a good work that God has put in front of you for you to do. It might not seem 'religious' but it is good.

Think back over your life – it is these small acts of care that have mattered most. Whether your parents loved you or neglected you, whether your boss appreciated you or did not appreciate you, whether people took time to genuinely care about you, or whether they just passed on by. Go to any funeral and listen to the stories people tell. The stories are not about how many bridges that person built or about how many books they wrote or even about how much money they made – but about who they were as a person, and how they touched human lives.

Do you want your children to say: “We never really got to know our Dad because he was just so busy with the church all the time?”. Stop and think about the small important things, the relational things, the acts of kindness, love, encouragement and foot-washing. Think of the service that you can perform because it is in these small scale acts that you will find the true Kingdom of God.

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