

November 15, 2009

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“The Power of One”

1 Corinthians 12.4-7

When I think of the Power of One I think of the difference One Degree makes. At 211 degrees, water is pretty darn hot. But, at 212, its boiling, and making steam. It is only one degree, but there is quite a difference...a transformational difference.

While hot water is a nice thing when you are soothing those aching muscles in a hot tub, amazing things happen with one simple, small degree added to the equation...the water boils and steam is created that can literally move a 2 ton locomotive train.

One extra degree makes all the difference...the power of one.

Today is commitment Sunday...a day to celebrate the hope that rises through the power of one...one person...one church...a day to celebrate the difference God is seeking to make through this one church and through each individual. I believe every person is created with a divine spark of God within them and that spark of God wants to find expression through our individual lives.

I believe one of the roles of the church is to encourage every person to discover that divine spark within them, to fan it into a dancing flame, that increases energy...even that one degree... and use the transformational energy that divine spark produces in loving service to others and the world. It's not about encouraging people to follow their ego, but to encourage each person to discover the unique way God is seeking to show up in and through their lives...and to trust the power of one... to trust how one extra degree can unleash remarkable transformation.

What does that one extra degree look like in your life? What does that one extra degree look like in the life of this church? I often feel we're on the

brink of God doing something extraordinary and transformational through us – all it takes is one person – one extra degree.

A woman by the name of Barbara Glanz was hired by a large supermarket chain to lead a customer service program designed to build customer loyalty.

During her talk, she told the employees, “Every one of you can make a difference and create memories for your customers, and motivate them to come back. Put your personal signature on your work. Think about the one thing that you can do that will create value for your customer...make them feel special – a memory you can create that will make them come back.”

I wonder if Barbara Glanz got her inspiration from the Bible. Paul said something similar to the people in the church at Corinth, “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same God is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to every one for their particular service. The Spirit’s presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all people.”

Did you catch that? God shows up in each person in some way for the benefit of all people.

How is God seeking to show up in you? How is the spark of God seeking to find expression through you? What divine spark in you needs to be fanned into a dancing flame increasing the energy by even one degree...trusting the mystery of transformation that is possible with one extra degree?

Hear again what Paul said – “The Spirit’s presence shows up in each person for the good of all.”

Barbara Glanz, the grocery store speaker, told about something that happened after she worked with the employees of that grocery store. A

month after she was there, she received a call from a 19 year-old bagger by the name of Johnny. She said he proudly informed her that he was an individual with Down Syndrome, and then shared his story with her.

Johnny told her that he liked what she had said, but at first wasn't sure he could do anything special, anything that would make a difference for their customers. "After all," he said, "I'm just a bagger." However, he got an idea of something he could do.

He said that every night after work, he comes home and finds a positive thought for the day. If he doesn't find one he likes, then he'd make one up. His dad then helps him print multiple copies of the positive thought he has chosen. Johnny then cuts out each quote and signs his name on the back. Johnny takes the quotes to work each day, and puts them in the bags he fills for the customers. His final words to the shoppers are always. "Thanks for shopping with us."

Sounds simple enough...one person...one degree extra.

Apparently, Johnny's efforts really made a difference with the store's customers, because Barbara's next phone call came from the store manager. He told her that as he was making his rounds one day, he had discovered that Johnny's check out line was three times longer than any one else's. He said he quickly called more cashiers to the front, and asked them to open more lanes. Then he tried to get people to change lanes, but no one would budge. Instead, they told the manager, "It's okay. We want to be in Johnny's lane; we want his positive thought for the day."

It turned out that there was something really contagious about Johnny's efforts, and similar things started happening all around the store. If a broken flower or unused corsage was found in the florist department, the floral clerk was putting it on an elderly woman or a little girl to wear. The manager told Glanz, "Every one's having a lot of fun creating memories."

Yes, they were creating positive memories for their customers because they were more aware and more intent on determining what little things they could do that could make a difference in some one's life, even for just a little while. We're not necessarily talking about what makes the headlines, but those small things that may seem insignificant at first glance but have the potential to be transformational...that one extra degree.

Mother Teresa – You may not be able to do great things but you can do small things with great love!

I love the quote by Edward Hale, "I am only one, but I am one. I can not do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I can not do interfere with what I can do."

How might God be seeking to show up in your life? What divine spark within you needs to be fanned into a dancing flame increasing energy by that one degree? Where is the hope rising in you waiting to be expressed? Where is the hope rising in others because of the one thing you did...the one thing you offered...the one gift you gave...the one risk you took? The one life you reached out to?

Anne frank said, "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

Imagine that Divine Spark in you being fanned into a dancing flame...imagine the energy increasing as I share an amazing example of the power of one...the power of one extra degree.

Katherine Commale is seven years-old. Last year Katherine was watching a PBS show with her parents and heard that a child dies every 30 seconds from Malaria around the world because they are bitten by mosquitoes that carry the malaria virus while they are asleep.

She also learned that for \$10 she could buy an insecticide treated bed net and when a child in Africa slept under that net, they were protected from

being bitten by a mosquito carrying the malaria virus and it would save their life.

When Katherine Commale went to sleep at night in the safety of her own bedroom, she was upset and prayed that God would somehow help all those children around the world who might be bitten by a mosquito that night while they were asleep.

She prayed and prayed and then with the innocence of a child who didn't worry about how young she was, or how small she was, or how insignificant she was, an idea came to her how she could help those children she was praying for. You might even say a Divine Spark became fanned into a dancing flame.

She shared her idea and passion with her parents and her friends and she went around to every one she knew and asked them for \$10 to save the life of a child in Africa.

She used her love for art and creative talent to create a diorama out of cardboard which depicts a bedroom of a family in Africa. It shows a mother, a father and two children sleeping in one bed. She would take her diorama around to Sunday school classes and to her school class to show them an African family sleeping in their bedroom. Then she had a cardboard mosquito that would fly into their bedroom and bite the children and they would become sick with malaria. Then she would put a mosquito net over the bed and demonstrate how the mosquito could not get through the net to bite the children.

Then she would tell people that for \$10 they could buy a bed net and save the lives of these children. Every one could understand her story.

Other groups heard about Katherine's project and some one made a video of her and her diorama and put it on the web. To date, Katherine, now 8 years-old, has raised more than \$100,000 providing nets for over 10,000 children. Her project is called Nothing But Nets. Send a Net – Save a Life.

Can you even believe that the faith, passion and commitment of one little seven year-old girl could make such a huge difference in the world?

The power of one...one life...one degree can make all the difference. The Spirit's presence clearly shows up and shines through this little girl for the benefit of thousands.

William James said, "Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does."  
Act as if who you are makes a difference. It does."

How is God seeking to show up in your life? What might that one degree be for you?

Maybe it's simple as being more present and intentional with those you love? Maybe it is forgiving some one or asking for forgiveness? Maybe it's tutoring a child or teaching in Treasure Quest or Godly Play? Maybe it's volunteering to hammer nails or serve meals? Or, maybe there is an idea in you that will raise the temperature by one degree...and transform people's lives and even the world.

Take a moment...what is the one thing you will do that represents that one degree for you?