

THE WARNOCKS' ESCAPADES

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From Ted:

Not long ago, I had an opportunity to have lunch with a pastor serving in Johannesburg, South Africa. During this meeting we discussed the challenges and opportunities that accompanied having over 800 children (many unaccompanied) and families living in the halls of the church. We discussed a feeding program they had where the meal consisted of a watery soup, and a chunk of bread. We even discussed what influences others in their faith. Why some step up to serve when others just give up. At the end of our lunch, we parted ways and continued on about the work that God had called us to do.

Sometime after that lunch meeting, I started to reflect upon what drives me and what stories do I hold onto when there are struggles or obstacles in the way of my service. This will not be a how to manual, but rather a reflection of how I have began to re-look at a story told so many times we almost know the ending before the story is told. So, please take minutes with me and indulge me as I give you my reflection on what often drives me to greater service in mission. Yes, I will show illustrations and pictures, but the story might take on a little more significance after you follow along with me.

Most of us all know the story of the child walking along the seashore. A storm has blown countless numbers of starfish onto the shore. There, the little child begins picking up starfish and tossing them beyond the waves and back into the sea - there to live another day. The child is then greeted by another person, and challenged. With so many starfish on the beach, what makes you think this is making a difference? We all know the reply 'It makes a difference to that one'. How many times have we told this story to reflect upon our belief that what we are doing as followers of God is like the actions of this little child? Are you the one throwing the starfish back in this story? I know in my early telling of the story, "I am always the child throwing the starfish back into the water".

For some reason, the last time I heard this story, I became disturbed with its simplicity and the sense that as long as I (yes, I was still the one throwing the starfish back) was doing something, I did not have to answer to anyone. I was doing my part. I was doing good work, and I was serving a greater need. I was serving God - even it was only helping one person (or starfish).

So, why reference the above? I need to share a new version of what it now says to me and how it continues to challenge the way in which we should all view our call to serve.



In my revised "starfish" story, I am still in the story, a little older, and I am still throwing starfish back in to the sea. This time, when I am approached by the beach walker (my generic term), I pause for a few minutes and begin to share that we all have a claim on the good that God has entrusted to us. That even our smallest acts can make a difference. I search for the right words, and share that if we were to work together, we could make a greater difference - more starfish or lives could be saved, more children could have a meal and not go to bed hungry. Greater still, we might even be able to help children attend school - strike a line in the sand that says enough, we begin here. Oh, how (in my reflective moments) I continue to find those right words when suddenly, my beach walker, begins to bend over and pickup a starfish, and with

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a smile, throws the starfish beyond the caps of the incoming waves. Now, there are two of us! Others come by. More sharing takes place, and still more is accomplished. *The new version helps me, but it still leaves me questioning.* Have I done enough? At the end of most days, I am tired. But as I look back upon my days, and if I am fair to myself, I know that I could have bent down one or two more times. I could have told the story a little better. I could have enlisted still more people. So, as I reflect upon an old story, what happens is that I remain on the edge, asking "have I done enough today, this time, with these people, for those I have been entrusted to serve"?



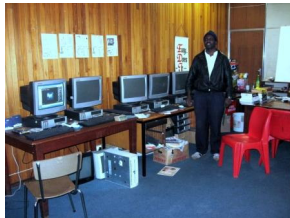
These past few months, I designed and built school desks for refugee children attending a school in Johannesburg. I built 10 desks. I told everyone who would listen what I was doing, why, and how their actions could make a difference. When I returned to Johannesburg this month, over 30 new desks had been



built, benches were made for the children to sit on, and some of the children were now learning how to measure and mark the boards to be cut. I could only make ten desks. Six other people from three churches are now building desks and repairing the rooms that now contain nearly 500 children.



Last year, Carla & I build 4 computer desks while she was visiting me in South Africa. The makeshift classroom of doors on filing cabinets could not hold another computer. Today, desks. Forty (40) have now learned computers were donated. Others part of making a difference. They saw what they could do.



From the desks, more refugee students basic computer skills. From the desks, more donated, monitors and printers were saw that there was hope and wanted to be a



This year, I met with countless leaders - church and business persons to set the stage for the partnership to begin a feeding program in South Africa. Our last Newsletter tells more about this. However, two of the lay leaders of the church must have heard my revised story (or were living it). They took me down into the squatter camps (technically informal settlements) and had me meet with the leaders of the community, meet with the children. I met with some of the parents. They were all making a difference. They were acting within their call - their faith and mission. They had told me their story so well, I had to tell others. I had to engage more people. I had to share where others could make a difference. I had to tell everyone who would listen. I had to share!



True, it is hard to shut down an excited person who has seen how we can be challenged in their faith and moved to action. Perhaps there will be a greater medium to share more in-depth stories in the future. Until then - throw more starfish, talk with anyone who stops you, talk to anyone who you can, and even when you are tired, pick up just one more starfish. You know what to do. It will make a difference!

