**PAY IT FORWARD**

Did you ever see the movie *Pay It Forward*? If not you have hopefully heard of the concept. In the show an 11 year old boy is challenged by his Social Studies teacher to take on a project that was written on the board as: “Think of an idea to change our world – and then put it into action.” The boy, who lives in a sad dysfunctional home with alcoholic parents, goes to the board and gives his idea. He draws a circle and says, “That’s me.” He then draws three more circles underneath and says, “That’s 3 people who need help.” He proclaims, “I can help them.” Then he draws nine more circles, three under each one above it, and says, “Then they can help those three… that makes 9 more.” Then he draws three more under each of those, declaring “Now 27 have been helped.” He keeps drawing until the 27 become 81, who help three more each and thus 243… 729… 2,187… 6,561… 19,683… so that in just 10 generations the world has been made a better place. One person performing three random acts of kindness (called RAK) changes so much. In the movie the class laughed at the boy, but the teacher said Trevor’s idea was the only one suggested that could actually change the world.

The concept from the movie is not an idea that came from Hollywood, or a brilliant script writer, or even a genius psychologist. It came from God. The beautiful “Golden Rule” we have taught our families for generations has already changed the world. Matthew 7:12 says, *“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”* The NASB says, “*Treat people the same way you want them to treat you*.”

Since the moment Cain asked God, “*Am I my brother’s keeper*?” and God emphatically implied “Yes you are!” (Gen. 4:9), the Bible has taught us to “*love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matt. 22:37-39). It is impossible for me to pass another human being without realizing that God says “That is also your brother!” As Paul told the Athenians, *“He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth”* (Acts 17:26). I’m related to you – and all men – by blood from Adam. You are my brother and I’m your keeper.

The beautiful theme of *Pay It Forward* starts with God at the front of the class and He draws a circle and says, “That’s Me!” He then draws a circle under Him and says, “That’s My Son Jesus.” Jesus then draws 12 circles under Him and says, “That’s My apostles.” He makes disciples of them and then challenged them to “*Go and make disciples of all nations*” (Matt. 28:19). They begin in Jerusalem, then spread to Judea, then to Samaria, then to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). What a concept, huh?

Look at it in real life and in slow motion. A terrified man named Ananias swallows his fear and knocks on a door and tells an enemy who will be shunned by all others, “*Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins*” (Acts 22:16). Paul then begins a revolution by touching the lives of others, eventually “*turning the world upside down*” (Acts 17:6). Then, after over 30 years of non-stop labor, he is about to die and so leaves his last will and testament to his young disciple Timothy.

*“​You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* - 2 Timothy 2:1-2

Can you not read the theme of *Pay It Forward* in that verse? Paul teaches Timothy, who then teaches others, who then teach others. You are a Christian right now because someone paid it forward by teaching you after having been taught by someone else. The “Great Commission” is still changing the world one person at a time.

From the creation of the world God has had a plan in place. That plan was to produce “*peace on earth, goodwill toward men*” (Lk. 2:14). But to achieve that goal He never forced man by His power to be good. Instead He gave man His blessings and then told them to *Pay It Forward*. I love how Paul described this process:

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:3,4).*

The Father of mercies and God of all comfort first comforts us, giving us the opportunity to then be a blessing of comfort to others. I’m comforted to comfort you. John Henry Jowett said, “God comforts us, not to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters.” I love that.

I count my blessings, see what God has done, then give them away to bless others. Jesus must have had a famous saying while He was on earth that became so well known that Paul made it immortal. He said, *“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘****It is more blessed to give than to receive****”* (Acts 20:35). As a child I took joy in receiving every birthday and Christmas. As a parent I take far greater joy in giving than receiving. As a Christian I say with Paul, “*By God’s grace I am what I am*,” then joyfully give that grace to others.

Let’s accept the challenge a young 11 year old boy named Trevor got from his teacher. He blessed a homeless man down on his luck, a prisoner, and a young boy being bullied. They in turn changed the lives of three others. By the end of the story thousands had been impacted. If I can bless just three people who need help, and they each bless three others, then within 10 generations we will have impacted 19,683 souls. Within 10 more generations over 1 billion people have been blessed. That, dear friend, is God’s great commission in a nutshell.

Until tomorrow… reach out and touch someone. That may turn the world upside down.

I love you.

Rick