

What Really Matters

Okay, so like, I was really encouraged by all the positive feedback I received from last month's article entitled *Fallen Giants*. Apparently, many of you were in agreement with the premise of my article, and like you so often do, you let me know you appreciated what I had to say. But, honestly, there were so many who responded, it got me thinking, a lot, about what really matters in life. I guess I am getting to that point in my life where I am reflecting on the long ago spoken adage that, "It's not what you hold in your hand that matters the most, what matters the most is what you hold in your heart."

In fact, I received a welcomed letter from Wallace Hughes, my predecessor in this associational role, who spoke of the friendship he had over the years with both Wayne and Reuel, but also spoke of his endearing relationship with Horace Sims and Jim Ridgeway as well. I am aware of both of those two giants of religious statesmanship as well, but never knew either one of them personally. But again, his letter got me to thinking, thinking about that long ago spoken adage referenced above. And as I reflected, about the fact that what matters the most is what you hold in your heart, I began thinking about my last fifteen years of life. You see, as of the end of this month, I will have been director of this association for all of the last fifteen years of my life. Which is important, cause no one ever put up with me for fifteen long years, except my Mama and my wife, both of whom will receive an extra crown in glory for doing so.

And as I think about what matters the most, I think about that old sit-com television show called *Cheers*. Many of you my age and older remember it well. It was based around a bar in some city where all the regulars came at the end of their work day to relax, spout off about whatever, interject into conversations their own perspectives about being a shrink, a mailman, a bartender, etc. And most of you remember the song that became synonymous with the show. The lyrics are, *"Making your way in the world today takes everything you've got. Taking a break from all your worries sure would help a lot. Wouldn't you like to get away? Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came. You wanna be where you can see, our troubles are all the same, you wanna be where everybody knows your name. You wanna go where everybody knows your name."*

As much as I hate to admit that I enjoyed that show and laughed along with it, it was in reality a sad picture of folks who were looking for relationships. Yet, too often they left having just been another customer at the bar...they came empty and they left empty. They were seeking to fulfill the deepest longing of the human heart...living in relationship, where everybody knows your name, albeit for them, it was only temporary. In reality, there are only three places to fulfill that most basic of human need, and that is to live in relationship with God, spouse/family and koinonia, which is the Biblical term for intimate fellowship with others. True koinonia (original Greek term) can only be found in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is there that I think one discovers what's really important. We work and plan, we build houses and put money away for

retirement, vacations, boats, lake houses, fancy autos, etc., but at the end of it all, as Ecclesiastes says, "It is vanity, all vanity." Because you see, what really is important is not what you hold in your hand at the end of life, but what you hold in your heart. Which is why, I been a'think'n...about what really matters.

Yep, been think'n about Farmer Clyde who offered his uncle's property for hunting and all the memories that my family and I have had together because of his generosity. I think of all the BBQ cooked with Rodney and Dwight and all the pork pulled by all those men from around the association and especially Abbeville First who have helped, and all the ragging about who's got the bestest most tenderest Que in the Lakelands. I think about the days bass fishing with Bryant, crappie fishing with Mike, duck hunting with Chuck and Todd, deer hunting with Preston and the boys, squirrel hunt'n with Tripp, eat'n squirrel hash with Jimmy and turkey hunt'n with Mark. I recall with great fondness the many memories made on mission trips to Rwanda with Randy, Honduras with First Mt. Moriah, Kentucky and W. Virginia with Buddy, his crew from Ware Shoals First, and the hundreds who have made those trips so much a part of their lives. I think about all the meals, BBQ, fish, etc., and all the wonderfully encouraging words from speakers at men's rallies, women's events, WMU. I think of Scott Smith and BCM BBQs, prayer walks, and really just doing life, through some fun times and some painful times, like when he lost his beloved Judy. Think about doing life in the Lakelands with all the churches coming together for the past twelve years to host HarvestFest, all the kids who have grown up with it and the many saved because of it. I think of the kindness of folks like Chuck who lets me borrow his fishing boat and offers wisdom and laughter to boot, like Randy who gave me his grandfathers old rusted out, rat infested pickup truck for me to rebuild (Kim still is not over that one yet), of all the pastors I have done life with and eat'n lunch with over the past fifteen years. I think about ladies like Sheila who have absolutely ragged me to death over ever little thing, and yet, I have loved every moment of giving it right back. And speaking of ladies, how could I miss thinking about the wonderful ladies who have kept this associational office going, most recently Sherrie and Brandy. I mean, poor Brandy has been "keeping me straight," as many of you allege, for ten years now. I know...impossible, but she has tried. And I could go on about so many good folks who I have shared life with in the churches of this association for so long. Really, it is the things you hold in your heart that matter the most. Had it not been for all y'all and so many more, my years as a DOM would have been just a lot of work and challenges, but with you, it has been an awesome journey.

And lastly, my incredible family has been the anchor of my life. From Kim, the rock, to Zack and Katelyn and their two and 3/4s children (one is due in June), to Lacy and Ben, Emily and Justin, and precious Addie Lee, they are what keeps life fun and exciting. To watch them grow and mature and become so much a part of God's Kingdom work whether at church or on the job, has been for me a much undeserved blessing.

Yep, I am blessed indeed! I hope you will stop along the way and think about just how blessed you are, not because of the things you hold in your hand, but because of the things you hold in your heart...the things that matter the most.