

The Least of These

Early one Sunday morning in 1997 I was at church putting the final touches on my ABF lesson entitled “For As Much As You Have Done to the Least of These.” The scripture text was 1 John 3:16-18 which I had memorized in 1995 as part of a spiritual renewal program. Verse 17 says: “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?”

I was interrupted by a thirty-two year old, “terminally ill” (his words) homeless man who came to the church seeking assistance and since I was the only staff member around at that time of the morning, I agreed, reluctantly and apprehensively, to talk to him. After I listened to his story I wanted to tell him to come back Monday, but I kept glancing at my lesson, “For As Much As You Have Done It to the Least of These. . .”

Finally, I asked this man named Ronald exactly what he wanted hoping it wouldn’t be much, maybe \$20 and he’d be on his way. He said he wanted \$100 and a ride to the Greyhound bus station so he could visit his family in Indianapolis. Was I being conned? Perhaps. As I glanced at my lesson again it didn’t seem to make any difference.

“I don’t have that much money on me,” I responded expecting he’d settle for less. Instead, he correctly pointed out that I did have an ATM card and that he didn’t mind waiting for me to go to the bank. I decided to follow my heart instead of my brain knowing that by breaking the rules I was going to be in big trouble with Dorleen Garrett, our benevolence coordinator at the time. But she was going to have to get over it—Ronald had gone over her head. I raced to the bank for \$100, then drove Ronald downtown where we prayed in front of the Greyhound bus station before he left.

But the story didn’t end there.

When I arrived at my Sunday School class, the first person I met unexpectedly thrust \$20 in my hand for giving him a tape of several previous lessons. I thought to myself, “Well, I’m only out \$80 for the morning’s activities.”

That evening I spoke at a church in Lawrenceburg as the first speaker in a five-week program featuring visiting preachers. When I concluded my remarks the young minister in charge asked if it would be all right if they took up a “love offering” as the congregation departed that evening. They

would add this offering to the next four and divide the total between the five speakers and send me a check. That was OK with me.

On my way back to Louisville that evening I wondered what I would do if my portion of that love offering turned out to be \$80, the difference between what I gave Ronald and what my ABF class member had given me. On Friday, April 18, 1997, five weeks after I spoke, a letter arrived from Corinth Christian Church. I literally trembled as I opened the letter thinking how unlikely it would be for them to send me a check in the amount of \$80. The check was made out for \$80. . .and it still hangs in my office to remind me of the blessings of the ministry of interruptions.

Was that an incredible coincidence? I don't think so. God doesn't speak to me this dramatically very often. But I'm finding that the more I seek Him, the more I am alert for His presence in my life, the more I am sensitive to his leading, the more I am certain that He's there tending to my needs and working through me.

By Don Waddell