

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 11/7/2022

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, November 8, you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for the leaders of churches. Not just the pastors, also include prayers for church leaders who help make the ministries of churches touch people's lives and share the gospel. Ask that GOD raise up faithful servants who give generously of their time in service to GOD'S mission in the world.*

I have two neckties that I enjoy wearing because of the message of each of them. Those messages also work together, though I haven't ever worn the two ties at the same time. And they are good reminders for all of us who seek to live out our Christian faith in the world daily.

The first is my "against the current" tie. It is covered with a number of fish, all swimming to the left. That is except for one. This fish has a Christian cross as its eye and it is swimming to the right, against the current followed by all the other fish. It is an illustration of how we, who are Christian, swim against the current of today's world and culture. The world may go one way, but we Christians often should find ourselves making different choices.

The second tie shows a man dressed all in black, including his black fedora hat and dark sunglasses. In the middle of the tie are the words, "On a mission from GOD." The image comes from The Blues Brothers movie where the two main characters try to reunite their blues band in order to give a concert to raise money for the orphanage in which they were raised. Throughout the movie their determination to complete this undertaking comes with the belief that it is a mission assigned to them by GOD. We, too, as Christians need to understand that we have been called carry out GOD'S mission in the world.

Surprisingly, seeking to live "against the current" can lead to opportunities to contribute to GOD'S mission. Though it may sound like this is a monumental task, we often will find that these occasions to share GOD'S message of unconditional love come in small and unexpected ways.

A few years ago, I was working nights, doing inventory auditing. A team from our company would go into a Sears, or Macys, or 99 Cent Only store and count the inventory of the entire store. Often this would be dusty work, especially in places like the 99 Cent Store as we had to almost climb into the bins that contained dozens of bags of candy or toys or other such items. As a result, throughout the evening, members of our team would sneeze from the dust. And a number of people would call out what many say when someone sneezes: "Bless you!" That's what we do, right? But, swimming against the current, I say, "GOD bless you." It doesn't seem like a big deal, but rather than the way most of the world says it, I see it as an opportunity to invoke the name of GOD for the benefit of another.

One evening as we worked, someone sneezed, and again, a number of voices called out, "Bless you." I, as I explained, said, "GOD bless you." The woman working two bins over from me said, "Oh, I don't say, 'GOD bless you,' because I don't believe in GOD." Now the mission from GOD kicked in and I asked her, "Then who do you believe is going to bless him?" She considered for a moment and said, "I never thought about it that way." For the next several weeks, when we were on the same inventory team, this woman would position herself next to me and then ask me what I believed about GOD.

Though it may not seem that it matters, swimming against the current for our faith can open the door to occasions that allow us to explain about being "on a mission from GOD." If that makes you feel nervous, we also have to remember that, if GOD has sent us on a mission, GOD will provide what we need to accomplish it.

When we find ourselves in these situations, we will also discover that the words or actions necessary to share the gospel are right there at the front of our minds. Give some intentional thought to the ways that you can swim against the current as you recognize that you have been called to be on a mission from GOD.

In CHRISIT'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey