

August 2005: Hands of Mercy

by Aaron Greenway

My wife and I have been reviewing a lot of my old videos of taped shows, programs and concerts as well as a particular video of an old youth program with two people in it that impacted my life tremendously: Rick and Eddie. Rick was the youth minister and Eddie was the music pastor. Just recently, we caught up with Eddie and I was able to find out about what is going on in his life as well as to share with him something very special: the impact that he had on my life.

This was very significant because I grew up in a Christian home, but in a home where there was not a lot of love. My father only gave love based on performance. My mother did her best to counter all of the animosity, but there is only so much someone can do. I also went to a Christian school where my classmates treated horribly. Unfortunately, a young person who is not receiving love will go looking for it somewhere else. For me, I looked for it among the other students at school. But they would not give it to me.

The only place where I found true love and acceptance in general was at the church where I attended. All children want to feel accepted for who they are. It is a terrible feeling when a child grows up not wanted, emotionally or physically abandoned. For this reason, many teenagers commit suicide for not having felt the love that he/she has to experience to be a healthy person emotionally and spiritually. Otherwise, that person will look for love and acceptance somewhere else. He will look for it with his friends but many times they are incapable of giving it to him. While watching the videos, my wife noted, "You smiled and laughed a lot, but I could see a sadness in your eyes."

But God has a way of intervening, sending others to encourage the downtrodden, the depressed, and the rejected. God sent me the church, Sunnyside Temple (that is now called "Cedar Valley Community Church"). Rick,

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the youth pastor, challenged my hard and calloused attitude. I was a very bitter young man because of all that had happened to me, but this man showed me unconditional love and included me in all the youth events. This was a change because socially I had always been excluded. Eddie, the music pastor, encouraged me with my music. A man who traveled with Bill Gaither, Steve Green, and had a ministry of music himself told me so many things to stir me on, to challenge me, and to make me feel that my life was significant. The last time we saw him, I said, "Eddie, only Eternity knows how much your words of encouragement have impacted what I am doing now, not to mention the thousands of lives my wife and I will be reaching in Peru." A teenager never forgets people like that for the way that they were loved. And young person never stops loving that dear mentor. Eddie was my hero, and I told him directly. I am now thinking about calling Rick to tell him the same.

Now, God has put me in the public schools as an elementary school teacher. This month, I will be teaching fourth grade. With children and even with people in general, you can encourage and lift people up to serve Jesus with your words of acceptance or you can crush them with insults and sarcasm. There is a phrase that I have heard many times referring to the modern-day church, "Christians are the only ones that shoot their wounded." As I mentioned before about being a blessing, I want to reiterate that our words can build up or cause someone to go astray. They can motivate someone to righteousness or they can destroy their life. One never knows if the person they are encouraging will be the next Billy Graham or the next Bill Gaither, or someone that will win thousands of people for the Lord, all because you decided to lay aside your pride, all because you invested your time into the life of someone else.

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His hands, His hands of mercy. Because we represent the Father on this earth.

As we look at the Apostle Paul's life, we see other Christians that encouraged him that was crucial to his ministry, especially right after his conversion. Look at Acts 9:26-28, "And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out." It was years later that Paul was discipling Timothy. We never know what our words can do.

So where does that put us? If it had not been for Rick and Eddie, I may have already given up, I may have already been lost, and I certainly never would have sung for the Lord. For just one moment, think about the person that reached you, that made an impact on your life. Now, think about how you can do the same for someone else, someone that desperately needs hope. Christ is the only hope that we have, but he calls us to pass it on to someone who has none. We cannot be selfish hiding it away so that others will never experience it. As I said before, we are Jesus to the downtrodden so that the power of God will be revealed in someone's life.

Something to ponder...

Your brother,
Aaron Greenway