

“We train disciplemakers...”



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Learning from The Rabbi

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[Mark your calendars for our Spring Men’s Retreat April 12-13, 2024 at Crosswind Conference Center. Special guest speaker is James Carter, Kansas City Ministry Director for The Navigators ©](#)

What is your plan to fulfill the Great Commission in 2024?

Jesus told His disciples "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20, NKJV). What is your part in fulfilling that Great Commission this year?

Perhaps God is leading you to walk across the room and get to know someone new at church, at work or in your neighborhood. Is He asking you to reach out in what seems to be an uncomfortable way to enter someone else’s life? Or perhaps He is leading you to ask someone a “spiritual” question like “What do you think about God?” or “To you, who is Jesus?” Scary? Maybe. But less than you think! He is at work in their life and perhaps they are wanting to pursue a deeper spiritual discussion (not lecture, discussion!).



Or perhaps He is asking you to spend time with your child, your grandchildren, your niece or nephew, really listening to what’s on their heart, listening for any hint of spiritual interest.

What an awesome privilege we have in being co-laborers with Our Lord! Let’s make the most of the opportunities He gives us, prayerfully being alert to who He brings into our lives.

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“So you, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be competent to teach others as well.”

— 2 Timothy 2:1-2, NET Bible

Lessons from “Sorry!”

One of my grandchildren’s favorite family games is “Sorry!” A patent was first applied for this game in England in 1929 and in the US in 1930 (per Wikipedia). Parker Brothers initially marketed this in 1934 and now it is published by Hasbro.

As we were playing this game this Christmas, I realized how many principles about life are shown by playing it.

First, ***we are all given opportunities to serve the Lord***, even though it may look different for different people. Some people may draw an 11 card and get to advance rapidly. Others may get a 7 and be able to advance in two different areas. No matter. God gives each of us opportunities that we can use to His glory and we shouldn’t compare ourselves with others. Some have a talent for something I can’t do, but in His wisdom He has given each of us talents that can be used for Him. (1 Cor. 3:5-10)



Secondly, ***sometimes it’s better to go backward than forward*** (drawing a 4 card causes us to go backward 4 spaces). To go forward, we must go backward. We go back to the basics: knowing Christ, reading and obeying His Word, praying to Him, sharing our faith, etc. This is the way we truly go forward in serving Him - by going back to the essentials. (Col. 3:15-16; John 15:4)

Finally, it is not unusual for one to get sent back to “start” as someone else draws a *Sorry!* card. This happened to our grandkids, followed by deep disappointment and a few tears, if not outright anger. Perhaps we are ready to enter the “safety zone” when “boom!” we are sent back to start over. Our plans are thwarted. What we thought was the way to win was taken away from us. Then we

draw a “two” card (getting us out of start), then we draw a “4” card (backwards 4 spaces). Then we draw a 7 getting us to “Home.” ***What we thought was a failure turns out to be, in the sovereignty of God, exactly where He wants us!*** (Romans 8:28)

Goads and Nails

By Richard Spann

“If not me, then who? If not now, then when?” — Lorne Sanny

— Vol. 3 pages 51-53

When Lorne retired as President of The Navigators, he ... and his wife, Lucy, began traveling across the country to establish and develop contacts with all their relatives, some of whom they had not seen or heard from in years. Lorne recounted that on one occasion, after visiting with a relative for some time, he returned to his car and realized that the relative did not know the Lord. As he sat in the car for a moment, he related that two questions came to his mind. “If not me, then who?” and “If not now, then when?” Lorne states that these two questions prompted him to return to the man’s house and lead him to a knowledge of the Lord. It has been more than twenty-five years since I heard Lorne tell this story. Of all the comments that I have heard from Lorne, this “goad” stands out as one of the most significant. It has brought conviction to me on more than one occasion over the years.

This particular patient had been admitted to the hospital for a surgical procedure called a bronchoscopy. ... Although I knew from our discussions that he was not a follower of Christ, I had not taken the time to talk to him about the Lord. The day before the bronchoscopy his niece came to me with a request. She said that she had spiritual concerns about her uncle because he had never been baptized and asked me to baptize him while I was doing the bronchoscopy! I told her that I was not sure that worked so well if you were under general anesthesia ...! After finishing the conversation with his niece the Lord immediately brought to my mind these two questions. “If not me, then who?” and “If not now, then when?” If his niece, who had no understanding of how a person is made right with God, was so desirous to see that happen in his life, surely I, who had that understanding, should be as equally desirous to see that take place. Thankfully, I was able to share the gospel with him later during the hospitalization and see him receive Christ as his Lord and Savior.

C. S. Lewis once stated that there are no ordinary human beings. We are all to become objects of splendor (those who have received His Grace) or objects of horror (those who have rejected His Grace). We need to remember this as we go about our daily lives ... As we do, let us ask ourselves: “If not me, then who?” and “If not now, then when?”

In Christ, Richard Spann

“If your natural life is spiritual ...” by Richard Spann

For many years, I have been to multiple conferences each year focusing on different aspects of ministry. The speakers have challenged me from their messages and examples of their own lives in various areas of evangelism and discipleship. As I have compared my life to theirs, I am left with a sense of guilt at times, not measuring up to what they were doing. Furthermore, I would at times experience a reluctance to even approach the areas of ministry the way they had done. It has taken me some time (and I am still working on this!) to realize that I don't need to do things the way that others do them. I also have come to peace with the thought that I am not gifted the same as others in different areas of our ministry. There are a number of those in our ministry who are quite gifted in evangelism. Likewise, there are others whose lives are very productive in areas of discipleship. The breadth and depth of ministry of others in our team of Navigators has varied considerably. As I reflect on this, I am led to the fact that we are all different in terms of our temperament, our personalities, and our approach to others. The Lord's team consisted of a Zealot and a former tax collector for the Romans. It included the outspoken Peter and a number of others whose conversations were not even recorded. They were expected to be different reflecting their own personalities as they followed Christ. A Navigator speaker some years ago mentioned that if our natural lives are spiritual then we can let our spiritual lives be natural.

Have you ever had the experience of being in a situation where you were into some aspect of ministry that was not a natural reflection of your spiritual life? Tim Downs describes such an experience in his book *Finding Common Ground*. He related that his group in college was told one evening to go find someone and share their faith.

He states that he met that announcement with “the same enthusiasm he would have in looking forward to a root canal!” He and a friend spotted a solitary figure who seemed to have nothing to do and asked if they could share the contents of a little booklet. The man turned and walked away, his eyes glued to the sidewalk. He said nothing in response to the question so they began reading the booklet. As they continued to read, the man began walking faster, his eyes never leaving the ground before him. They plunged ahead with the reading “Man is sinful and separated from God so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love.” They came to an intersection. Without waiting for the light to change, he darted across. They were right behind him, reading fast. “Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience His love.” By this time, they were almost at a dead run. They arrived at his dormitory just as the presentation was finished. He was out of sidewalk. They were out of laws, and everyone was out of breath. As Tim recounts the experience, it was clear that this was not a natural expression of their spiritual lives!



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“Never do anything that someone else can and will do, when there is so much of importance to be done which others cannot or will not do.”

If your natural life ... (continued)

For some individuals, their gifting and personality leads them to naturally share Christ with others wherever they go. A friend of mine once had the opportunity to go door to door with Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. He related to me later that Bill had a gift for making people comfortable in his presence and moving naturally to the gospel presentation. I have known others in my lifetime which have that natural God-given ability as well. To me, that is not a natural expression of my spiritual life. I am more accustomed to developing relationships and then asking about their interest in looking at the Bible together. God will ask us to move out of our comfort zones, but he will not ask us to do that which is an unnatural expression of our spiritual lives.



What is meant by the statement, “The natural life is spiritual”? The simplest definition would be a life ruled by God. The life of Christ would be visible in words and deeds before others. An example of what this looks like can be found in I Timothy 4:12. “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.” If this is true of our lives, then our natural conversations, our business dealings, and our relationships with others will allow the spiritual life to be natural. We can comfortably be ourselves as we seek to deepen

relationships that will bear the weight of God’s truth. The fragrance of a naturally spiritual life is unmistakable! It is described in II Corinthians 2:14. “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.”

Our Lord states the following to us in Luke 9:23. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” These are the basic requirements for our natural life to be spiritual. The denial of self is inward and hidden; the taking up of the cross is outward and visible. To follow Him is to trust and obey. If our natural life is spiritual, then we can rely on His promise to us in Matthew 4:19. “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” If our natural life is spiritual, “Follow me,” then we can let our spiritual life be natural, “I will make you fishers of men.” The Lord Himself will take the responsibility for letting our spiritual lives be natural. We can trust Him to do naturally in our lives that which demonstrates what Eugene Peterson describes as “the unforced rhythms of grace.”

In Christ, Richard Spann

"Successful witnessing is taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God." — Bill Bright, founder of Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ), quote found at https://www.azquotes.com/author/44242-Bill_Bright