

Rock Solid Sacred Moments

April 2011 – It had been a long day. But a good one. An important one. A memorable one.

The memorial service for my grandmother was simple, sincere, and Christ-honoring — just the way she would have wanted it. From the chapel, family and friends made their way to the Forest Lawn cemetery for a few more words of tribute and farewell.

And then something happened. Something that has marked me to this day.

Family and friends were slowly leaving the graveside and returning to their cars. As I trailed behind them, I stopped and watched my grandfather as he stood over the flower-covered casket. While he thought he was alone, I was close enough to overhear his final words of farewell to the woman with whom he shared 58 years. As tears rolled down his cheeks, I listened to words marked by a depth of love and tenderness unlike anything I have ever heard — words that to this day are irrevocably deposited in the memory bank of my heart.

Bold love is courageously setting aside our personal agenda to move humbly into the world of others with their well-being in view.

-Dan Allender and Tremper Longman

That day, I was eyewitness to a sacred moment.

Some sacred moments are easy to see. Some much less obvious.

If you look carefully enough, you will see that life is punctuated with sacred moments. A lot more than you think.

Some sacred moments you see from a distance, seated in the grandstands. Like the neatly-shorn Marine sweeping his wife off her feet on the tarmac after a six month tour of duty.

Some sacred moments you see up close, a front row seat with a personal invitation. Like the wedding day of your son.

And some sacred moments you just don't see coming. Unscheduled. Unanticipated. But they are there nonetheless. Like a graveside farewell.

I wonder how many sacred moments I've missed. Inattentive. Busy. Self-absorbed. Focused on, what at the time, seemed so pressing.

I wonder. Don't you?

Author and pastor, Eugene Peterson, captures it well when he writes, “Every meeting with another person is a privilege...to spy out suppressed glory, ignored blessing, forgotten grace. I had better not miss them.”

So let’s probe a bit. As a leader, what do you do when you find yourself in the middle of a sacred moment? How do you not ‘miss’ the moment?

The first thing you have to do is to recognize it. See it for what it is. Don’t take it for granted. For whatever reason, you have been invited into a special moment in the life of another person. You are walking on holy ground.

Throttle back the normal RPMs of life. Fully immerse yourself in the moment. Listen deeply. Listen reflectively. Attend to the emotions of the heart. Give space for the person to reach deep within their soul to pull out the words that will help them give voice to what they are experiencing. They may be words that have never found the light of day — words perhaps long buried under decades of disappointment or layers of hurt.

Often in these sacred moments, a well-timed, thoughtfully-worded question can serve to help the person more fully process their thoughts and feelings. “What is happening right now? What do you believe is going on inside of you that this circumstance has given rise to such weighty emotions?”

Though it may be a journey of many steps, ultimately a leader is entering a sacred moment with a heart to help a person find God. His presence. His help. His shalom.

I better not miss the moment.

Lord, I confess that it is all too easy to be more focused on my ‘to do’ list than to be alert and attentive to sacred moments. Lift my head. Quiet my heart. And give me eyes to see—Your eyes.