

NOTHING WILL BE WASTED

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Text: John 6:1-13

Do you believe in providence, in prayer, in God's desire to use you? If so, when faced with a situation so great that it leaves you feeling that all you possess is useless remember that nothing you have will be wasted. Jesus can take the most insignificant or seemingly worthless experience, talent or knowledge in your life and use it for His glory.

The following story is just such an example of God's ability to use what we give Him. "In 1996, a musician named Bob Carlisle was preparing to release a new album entitled, *Shades of Grace*. The producers realized this album was one song short so they sent Carlisle digging for another piece of music. He knew of one song but had no intentions of putting it on an album. It was a song he had written a year earlier for his sixteen-year-old daughter, Brooke. Until that time, the only place it existed was on an audiocassette that she carried around as an expression of her father's love. Putting it on that album to fill an empty spot seemed like the right thing to do, so with Brooke's consent, the world was introduced to "Butterfly Kisses." By 1997, it was one of the most requested songs in America and became Bob Carlisle's signature song. Isn't it amazing how some treasures are found? The success of "Butterfly Kisses" was primarily an accident. It was accidentally moved from a teenager's backpack to the top of nearly every music chart in the land. Although very few of us will ever have a similar type of experience in our particular field of service, the unusual history of this single song can be a reminder that God is still full of wonderful surprises."

--Focus on the Family, June 1999, p. 12

From this familiar text we can draw a couple of *observations* concerning just what God can do with the things we think are insignificant.

I. JESUS LOOKS AT OUR NEED AS AN OPPORTUNITY (vv. 5-9).

A. We rarely see difficult situations as opportunities—but Jesus does.

John 6:5-7 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" *NIV*

B. Too often we see our resources as insignificant.

John 6:8-9 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" *NIV*

II. JESUS TAKES SMALL ACTS OF OBEDIENCE AND FAITH AND USES THEM FOR HIS GLORY (vv. 10-13).

A. They gave Him what they had and waited in expectation.

John 6:10-11 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. *NIV*

B. Only by offering in obedience what seemed to be insignificant did they see a miracle.

John 6:12-13 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. *NIV*

God often takes the insignificant things of the world and in our lives to bring the most glory to Himself. Sure He can use our talents for His glory, but He can also use our failures. He can use our strengths, but also our weakness. He can use our position in life, but he can also use our lack of position in life. Nothing is wasted!

Note the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our

righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." *NIV*

CONCLUSION

World War II was raging when a young seminary student, who was preparing himself to enter the war as a military chaplain, found a used book at a bookstore on the subject of "How to Speak Russian." He had no desire to go out with the other students at night after a long day of classes, instead he preferred to remain alone in his room where it was quiet and catch up on his reading. This little book would be a nice distraction as well as a new challenge.

From then until his graduation he studied the little book when he had a chance. His friends just laughed at his odd hobby, but he never gave up trying to master the Russian language on his own.

After graduation and induction into the Army as a Chaplain he was sent to the European theatre where his battalion was involved in heavy fighting. One night as he lay on his bedroll, staring up at the stars his thoughts were only of how horrible his situation was at the time. Everyday and every night he was constantly trying to give comfort to the wounded and dying. The dead and the dying constantly surrounded him. With all of his preparation at seminary he was still unprepared for this. In fact, he did not feel prepared for anything he was being asked to do.

Just then a medic came running to him, "Chaplain, we have a man seriously wounded, he is scared and panicking but we can't understand what he is saying to us. Can you come help us?"

Upon arriving at the scene he realized that it was a Russian soldier who had evidently been gotten mixed up in the lines and been separated from his company. As he knelt down beside the man he heard familiar words—words from that little book. He could understand much of what the soldier was saying. He stayed by the soldier's side speaking words of comfort to him in broken

Russian and praying with him the best he could until the man died from his wounds.

As he returned to his bedroll and laid down under the stars once again, he said later that he remembered feeling that the stars were brighter and the load was lighter because he knew that God was at work even in the war and even in him.

What he had thought was an insignificant interest or hobby had been used by God to give comfort and guidance to a Russian soldier in the last moments of his life on this earth. Nothing had been wasted. God was using it all. *

It is important that we turn every part of our lives over to God because only He is able to use it all for His glory.

References

* –Final illustration and idea for sermon drawn from a lecture given by Dr. Steve Land at the Church of God Theological Seminary on September 12, 2002