

What's Got Your Focus?

The jockeying for position began even before they entered the Arena, and their grim faces were etched with such determination that their intense focus was almost palatable. The faint hearted had long since given way and fallen back. Their mom and I had simply succumbed to the indelible will of these two warriors.

The finish loomed just ahead. It would be an up or down call, with many lives hanging in the balance. All the pre-game hype meant nothing now. It had faded like a cheap perfume upon the neck of this epic struggle.

I will never forget the agony wrought in my boy's face as he clung desperately to his sister's pant leg. It was his last desperate effort to stave off his inevitable defeat. The speed and strength accompanying her five year age advantage had proven to be insurmountable.

With only a few feet left she lunged for the prize, determined to see new doors opened for us all. However, the boy's grip on her pants stayed true and when she felt her jeans doing the plumbers slide, she hesitated. It was the only break he needed. He walked up her back and slapped that little elevator button before she could even blush. A warm magical light appeared. A resounding "Ding" filled the hall. David had slain Goliath!

To my surprise several adults were crowded inside the elevator still playing the game. They cautiously guarded their little corners and stared at the little display panel like their elevation depended on their concentration. No one dared break focus to acknowledge us. I thought to my self, "What's with those silly elevator buttons?"

A better question might be, "What's with us silly people?" Could it be sometimes we get so caught up in our own little challenges that we forget to run the bigger race that God has called us to? I'll admit, elevator buttons do have a certain magnetic appeal, but surely we could tear away for just a few seconds to say hello to that living soul next to us. You know, the one Jesus died for?

I've been guilty myself. Sometimes I just lump people into categories based on whatever criteria I have handy and overlook the fact there are real people in those sacks of skin. Somewhere in there is a person, thinking thoughts, making plans, feeling pain, and facing struggles just like me. If only I could see people the way God does. Maybe I'd have a little more compassion on that rude person at the cash register, especially if I knew what they had just gone through. Surely I'd be more willing to offer a smile if I realized it might be the only thing that will pull them through the day. The truth is I should just do it anyway.

Someone might say, "Why should I risk any part of myself for a rude stranger?" I admit it's much easier to just crawl up with an "us four and no more" attitude, but have you considered what a huge chance God took on us? The Bible says, (*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*) **Romans 5:8**. He took a great risk in extending His love to me when I didn't deserve it, and it has cost Him dearly. I don't know why God did it. Love is just what He does. It's who He is. In the end, Love is all that matters.

But anyway, one day God will punch that great elevator button in the sky for the final up or down call. I pray we'll all be ready with hearts that have accepted and given His unconditional love, weathered the risks, and are still glowing brighter than any old elevator button. I also pray we'll each be taking something with us on this last ride, the souls His love has won for Christ through us. Yes, I hope things will be looking up for us all that day.

-Guy Sheffield 2-01-06