



Single session workshop

Little Things Can Mean a Lot



You might think that you don't matter in this world, but because of you someone has a favourite mug to drink their tea out of each morning that you bought them. Someone hears a song on the radio and it reminds them of you. Someone has read a book you recommended to them and gotten lost in its pages. Someone's remembered a joke you told them and smiled to themselves on the bus. Someone now likes themselves that little bit more because you made a passing comment that made them feel good.

Never think you don't have an impact. Your fingerprints can't be wiped away from the little marks of kindness that you've left behind.



Word Porn

Questions to Discuss

- Have you ever met someone just by chance and it made a big difference?
- Did anyone ever do something small that had a big effect on you?

Philip and the Ethiopian Official



(We apologize that we have not been able to trace copyright permission for this picture.)

An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get ready and go south to the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This road is not used nowadays.) So Philip got ready and went.

Now an Ethiopian eunuch, who was an important official in charge of the treasury of the queen of Ethiopia, was on his way home. He had been to Jerusalem to worship God and was going back home in his carriage.

As he rode along, he was reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to that carriage and stay close to it."

Philip ran over and heard him reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

He asked him "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The official replied "How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?"

And he invited Philip to climb up and sit in the carriage with him.

The passage of scripture which he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep that is taken to be slaughtered,
like a lamb that makes no sound when its wool is cut off,
he did not say a word.

He was humiliated, and justice was denied him.

No one will be able to tell about his descendants,

because his life on earth has come to an end.

The official asked Philip, "Tell me, of whom is the prophet saying this?

Of himself or of someone else?" Then Philip began to speak; starting from this passage of scripture, he told him the Good News about Jesus.

As they travelled down the road, they came to a place where there was some water, and the official said, "Here is some water. What is to keep me from being baptised?"

The official ordered the carriage to stop, and both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptised him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away.

The official did not see him again, but continued on his way, full of joy. Philip found himself in Azotus; he went on to Caesaria, and on the way he preached the Good News in every town.
(From Acts 8:26-40)

Optional Activity -

Split into two groups. One group looks at the story from Philip's point of view, and the other from the Ethiopian official's point of view. Each group can consider these questions:-

1. Who am I?
2. How do I feel?
3. What do I fear?
4. What do I want?
5. What has changed?
6. What is required of me now?

"The love of God makes small things great.
Obedience is vital."

Mother Teresa

The two groups can share their answers in pictures, words, or both.

- Have you ever tried to tell someone about your faith (or something else that is really important to you) and they were NOT as enthusiastic as the Ethiopian?
- Can you think of a time when you did get an eager response?
- Have you ever had the feeling God was giving you clear instructions?
- Was it easy to follow them?
- Did it involve changing your plans?

True Story - read aloud

Donald Nicholl had left the bedside of his dying father on 13th February 1979, never to see him again, because he needed to return to his work in California. He had struggled through a snowstorm to catch a late night train from Halifax, had sat up in an unheated carriage on the sleeper from Leeds to London and then caught the first tube train of the morning to Heathrow. His story continues in his own words.

I wandered around the halls of Heathrow, which were almost entirely empty and echoing hollowly at the sound of my footsteps. Where I was supposed to go to wait for a stand-by place on a Pan Am flight to San Francisco, I had no idea. Nor was there anyone of whom I might enquire. And if it came to that, I was so tired from all those nights by my father's side, whom I would never see again, that I felt too disorientated to search for anyone.

That was when I saw a young woman come round a corner some 30 yards away. She was a rather dumpy person, bespectacled, with short hair of a nondescript brown colour. But as she approached, that undistinguished appearance of hers mattered less to me than the fact that she was wearing a uniform, a uniform that held promise that its wearer knew about airways.

So I moved over to my left to intercept her, and I asked her if she knew where I was supposed to go in order to secure a stand-by place on a Pan Am flight to San Francisco. Though she was clearly in a hurry she stopped to listen to me, and then looked kindly at me as she answered that she was sorry but she didn't know.

And then something happened. Whether it was some note of sadness in my voice that she picked up or whether she saw something in my face that moved her - whatever it was, she had been touched. Perhaps that is why she in turn touched my sleeve and said, 'Wait a minute, my love. I think I may be able to help you. Please come with me.' And at that she led me across the hall towards a window on which she tapped. Soon a man appeared to whom she explained my need, and he straightaway assured me that if I were to wait outside his window for a quarter of an hour he would assign me a place on the flight to San Francisco.

The young woman who had come to my aid turned towards me and smiled. 'There you are', she said. 'Have a safe journey.' I bowed towards her and thanked her for her kindness.

More than six years later, in September 1985, Donald Nicholl still remembers and reflects upon this incident.

It is never easy to convey in writing the significance which certain seemingly trivial events or actions assume in a person's life. To an outsider, that casual encounter in a deserted Heathrow airport between an unusually tall, bearded man wearing a duffle-coat and a dumpy woman airport worker could hardly have seemed of any importance in the life of either the man or the woman. They had never met before and they have never met since - not knowingly, at least, since neither knew the other's name and almost certainly would not recognise the other's face. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the woman even remembers the incident, since she has probably dealt with thousands of such passengers subsequently who are no more than a blur in her mind.

But the man, myself, will never forget how his numbed heart was melted by the warmth in the woman's voice when, though a total stranger to him, she said, 'my love'. I have wondered since if she often says 'my love' to total strangers, or whether it was the Spirit of God which inspired her to do so that winter morning. And is she a believer? The answer to that I shall never know, any more than she can have the remotest idea what significance her generous, though modest, gesture has come to assume in my own life.

What further fascinates me about the whole incident is the hint it provides of how the web of human relationships may well be more determined by such small deeds, accomplished each day by millions of unknown people, rather than by the decisions and acts of those who imagine themselves to be controllers of human destiny.

(From "The Testing of Hearts: A Pilgrim's Journey" by Donald Nicholl, published by DLT)

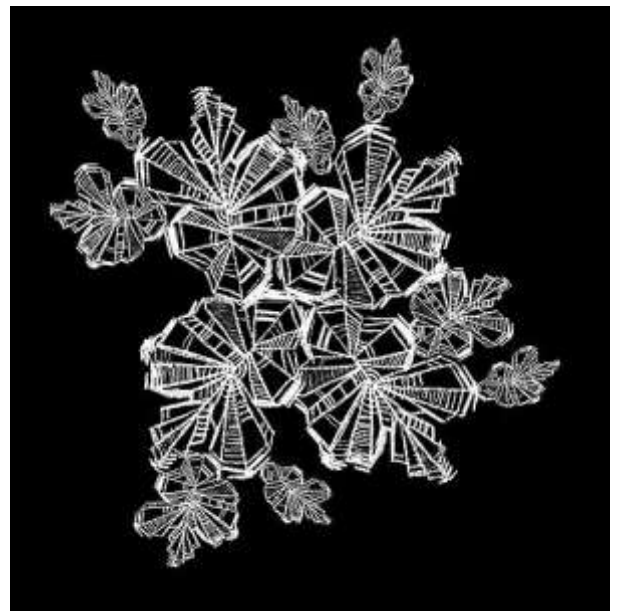
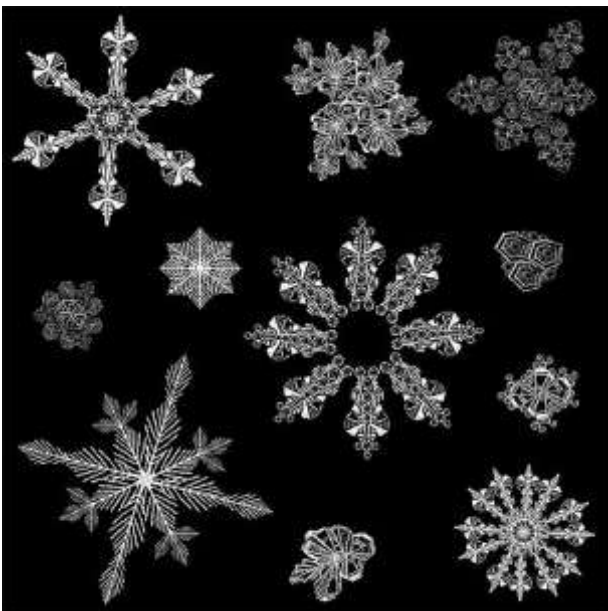
Questions to Discuss

- Do you think that very small acts of kindness can sometimes make a big difference for people?
- Can you always tell when people are especially in need of kindness?
- Do you always know when you've really made a difference?
- Is there anything you want to do, stop doing, or do differently after hearing these stories?

Activity

Scraperboard

Provide participants with scraperboards and scraping tools. Invite them to draw something that will help them to think a bit more about what you have all discussed. Using only small scratches they can make a complete picture.



Images by Brooke Duckart used under Creative Commons License

Prayer



Prayer

Dear Father please keep us so close to you that we do not miss the chance to do whatever you want us to do. Please help us not to be too busy with all we have in our own minds.

Thank you for your immense love. Thank you that through your love you can use us to weave another small thread in the great tapestry of your design.