

Christmas Inspirations: Encouraging Talents in One Another

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“And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7). On Christmas morning about two thousand years ago, Jesus became life to Mary and Joseph. Thirty-three years later He would die for all of mankind’s sins and be resurrected, a promise of the ultimate of all life for us; eternal life. It seems that the innkeeper on that first Christmas morning was aware of the need for shelter and refuge for the young couple, but unaware of how important the offering of that manger really was. In what ways does God want us to call forth life in others, even though, like the innkeeper, we may be oblivious to the full extent of our ministry?

Late in 1991, an advanced stage of AIDS had left my brother, Ted, extremely weakened and wheelchair bound at a hospital in New York City. One evening, Broadway actors and actresses came in various arrays of dress to entertain Ted and other patients. Dressed in high heels, with a white boa around her neck and a 1920’s flapper costume, a young actress approached Ted. “Ted, could you teach me how to do the Charleston?” she inquired. Instinctively, I positioned myself closer to my brother’s shoulders. I needed to protect him, I thought. Ted might be embarrassed and humiliated by this request, because the extent of his physical and mental losses could be magnified. Confused, I made eye contact with the actress. Her return gaze appeared trustworthy and confident. It seemed as if she was aware of the many possible emotional ramifications of her question to my brother. And yet, God’s love in her eyes challenged me to rethink my worries. Could this woman be speaking life to my brother? Could she, having known my brother for only a half hour, have enough Christ-like faith to believe that her request would be restorative and empowering to him?

I stepped aside. She faced my brother and gently repeated the question. With his right arm, Ted stubbornly pushed the intravenous stand behind him. He straightened his shoulders, and the actress straightened her shoulders too. The actress waited. I waited. The other patients waited too. Ted placed his right hand on the food tray in front of him. First he moved his index finger, then he moved his second finger; forward, backward, crossing over and back again. Forward and backward moved the actress’s right foot, forward and backward moved her other foot, crossing over and back again. Methodically and gracefully, “Ted the dancer” came back to life. A lame man was dancing with his fingers, a Broadway actress was ministering, and God was pleased.

God takes pleasure in the calling forth of creative life. Mistrust of our own God-given abilities and the abilities of others to speak life, can inhibit the work of the Holy Spirit. A tired, disgruntled innkeeper offered a manger and Jesus was born.

An overprotective, anxious sister stepped aside and a dying brother danced. In what ways does God desire to use us for this creative, calling forth of life this Christmas season? God bless you as you join with Him, who loved the world so much “that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

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