

Dear friends of Vital Signs Ministries,

October 2023

Can anything *really* important be accomplished by just a small group of saints, let alone by a single Christian all on his own? Do we really believe there is spiritual value in “smallness”? I’m afraid that the modern Church is persuaded that its mission requires success -- and success as determined by the same things the world values. Big numbers. Big names. Big buildings. Banner headlines. Media acknowledgement. Awards. And all the other things that flash and bang and sparkle in order to gain attention and make an impression. No wonder that we doubt God can be well pleased with the particular, the unheralded, the seemingly insignificant.

But I’ve got news for you. God *does* care about the little things...and He cares a lot. Let me remind you of just a few examples from the Scriptures. A mustard seed. A talking donkey. The widow’s mite. Rahab. A cup of water. Bethlehem. A dove. Moses’ rod. Crumbs from the table. A child. A jawbone. Esther. A ram in the thicket. A heartfelt prayer. 5 loaves and 2 fishes. Taking a lame friend to Jesus. A jar of olive oil. Zacchaeus. A kind word. A stone in a sling. 2 or 3 gathered in Jesus’ Name. You get the idea.

Francis Schaeffer in his 1974 work, *No Little People: Sixteen Sermons for the 20th Century* puts it this way. “The Scripture emphasizes that much can come from little if the little is truly consecrated to God. There are no little people and no big people in the true spiritual sense, but only consecrated and unconsecrated people.” And “For each of us as Christians, the important thing is that there are some people, whether great or small, who can be thankful that we have lived and that God has worked through us.”

Claire and I give a hearty “amen” to Schaeffer’s important challenge. For throughout our 40 plus years of pro-life service, we have created a variety of ministry opportunities for whoever might choose to join us, remembering that the numbers responding to our invitations, while not inconsequential, do not determine either the spiritual worth of the work or the pleasure God enjoys in our efforts. No, Jesus desires our best work and that’s all. He determines success on that basis alone.

So, of course, Vital Signs Ministries has done what we could to inform, inspire, equip, and mobilize the whole Church to relevant love and good deeds. But we didn’t wait for the whole Church to show up before we got busy doing what we could! We have continued to present relevant, biblically-centered, and practical ministry opportunities to whoever would answer the call. You’ve heard the phrase “Come one, come all.” Well, Claire and I always hope for the possibility of the “all” coming, but we are committed to serve Christ even when it’s only the “one” who shows up! We know that like the loaves and fishes, Jesus will multiply the effect of our investment beyond what we can imagine. No little people, no little places, no little ministries.

Therefore, while it is not wrong to dream, plan, and pray *big*, the true disciple of Jesus must be willing and able to do the things immediately before them, no matter how messy, tedious, or little they might seem. Be careful not to let the world dishearten you or allow the devil to steal from you those “small” opportunities God puts on your doorstep. For your every effort (no matter how little it may seem to you) looms very large indeed in both the pleasures of

your heavenly Father and in His cosmic plan...when it is performed in humble faith and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

With all this said, let me zip through a review of some of Vital Signs' "little ministries" from these past few weeks. First off, in the categories of education and equipping, there was the presentation Claire and I gave on September 7 to an audience of 50 some at the luncheon hosted by the Business and Professional People for Life. We talked about Vital Signs' long history of services to seniors, the biblical reasons why we maintain this commitment, and how others should (and can!) engage in similar actions. To the audience's delight, we even showed a sample of a "When Swing Was King" show. There was also my teaching the adult Sunday School class and then preaching the worship service at Herman Community Church on September 10. And our work on the blogs, the VSM website, sending out the Saturday Top 5, etc. fall into the education category as well.

And what about our "mercy ministries" to seniors? Those continue apace with our Sunday afternoon church services at Aksarben Village Senior Living and our schedule of "When Swing Was King" shows -- which are now back up to 11 facilities every month. These shows are still carefully and lovingly created, still extremely popular with the residents and staff, and still lifting spirits and creating opportunities for long lasting friendship. Furthermore, arising out of these outreaches are yet other opportunities for personal visitation, correspondence, special gifts, and events like last week's funeral service for one of our Aksarben friends which we organized and conducted.

September also saw us involved in the Vital Signs quarterly letter-writing parties -- one in the morning of the 12th and another that evening -- both of the events being in our home. 9 of us produced 116 letters, most of them being thank you letters and cards to the Nebraska state senators who voted to limit abortions, allow school choice, and prohibit the perverse practices of gender alteration on minors. Another of our quarterly events was on September 23. That was the VSM Book Brunch where we discussed Tim Tebow's *Shaken: Discovering Your True Identity in the Midst of Life's Storms*. We had an excellent time.

Our prayers and pro-life witness outside the abortion business continues every first and third Saturday mornings and the first and third Monday mornings where, like we have for over 40 years, we pray together, try to dissuade people from making abortion decisions, and present a winsome pro-life witness to the public. The numbers engaged in this are smaller than ever but, as I've said earlier, the Lord is still well pleased with this noble band of brothers and sisters in Christ who are keeping the banner of life held high -- even at the very doors of death. Please keep them in your prayers.

The final category of activity I'll describe from these last few weeks is that of our hospitality and encouragement ministries. In this deceitful and mean-spirited world, we believe ministries of godly fellowship are of greater value than ever. After all, out of his hate-filled desperation, Satan is working around the clock in these last days to denounce, dishearten, and derail Christ's ambassadors. Therefore, our "iron-sharpening" hospitality and fellowship must be purposeful, passionate, and constant. This last quarter has seen Claire and I writing personal letters (or notes within our Colorado cards) to 69 of the friends on our prayer

list. And, not counting the letters from the Vital Signs letter-writing parties, Claire and I wrote another 45 letters and cards this quarter. On another hospitality front, with our flooring project complete, we've jumped back into our "at home" brunches, desserts, and dinner parties in a big way. We had 6 such events in September with additional gatherings with friends at cafes and coffee shops. We hope each of our hospitality events are an effective "sanity check" and a stimulant to love and good deeds for our friends -- because we *know* they are to us!

Okay, I will close this month's letter with just a few invitations which will give you plenty of time to plan and prepare for. We would love to have you join us.

* The Christmas card edition of our letter-writing meetings will be on Monday, November 27. Morning and evening.

* The next Vital Signs Book Brunch will be on Saturday, December 9. The book under discussion will be a short but important one, Eric Metaxas' *Letter to the American Church*.

* What about being a kind of Vital Signs representative/cheerleader by encouraging your pastor, youth pastor, seniors pastor, or Sunday School leader to consider inviting us to present a special showing of our Christmas "When Swing Was King" in late November or December?

As you may know, we have presented "When Swing Was King" to church groups oriented to couples, senior and "baby boomer" events, and, of course, our extraordinary Christmas edition for the whole congregation.

The enduring popularity of "When Swing Was King" is due to the quality of the music, the uplifting impact of the photos, the fun facts provided in the narration, and the power of memory to inspire and comfort hearts. And an added bonus for church audiences is that the presentation provides a stimulating model of Christian compassion to those who society has so thoughtlessly marginalized -- a model that illustrates how creativity, beauty, understanding, and consistency can pay huge dividends in Christian ministry.

Just let us know if you're interested in taking our offer to *your* church leaders.

Well, that's it for this month. Thank you, dear friends and partners. We so appreciate your prayers, support, encouragement, and involvement.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denny". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the page.