

People, People, People

Not long ago, my brother-in-law was appointed as pastor of a small—really small—Nazarene Church in the southeast U.S.A. As we celebrated with him, I began to imagine what I would do if I were in his shoes. Immediately, the answer came to me. If God placed my family and me in that church, I thought, my first (and ongoing) priority would be to spend as much time as possible with the people in that church; whether sharing a meal at my house or theirs, going to birthday parties, watching movies, fishing together, etc.—anything to constantly build points of intersection between my life and theirs.

Then it hit me, the youth group I serve is probably the same size as the congregation my brother-in-law now pastors. So if, as the pastor of this small Nazarene church, my main focus would be time spent face-to-face with the flock under my care, why isn't that my main focus now? The truth is I can get lost in my office. Somehow, I've convinced myself that a carefully worded e-mail, fine-tuned message, or that perfect small group lesson is the essence of ministry. Can I be any more delusional?

People—not office work—are at the center of God's heart. Obviously, administrative tasks are part of the job and need to be done well, but don't let that take the place of time spent with people! The beauty of it is that face-to-face interaction doesn't require tons of money. Sure, it's helpful; but in the end, it simply requires making room in your life for another person.

Just two weeks ago, I had the privilege of counseling one of my students as he expressed to me his sense that God might be calling him to be a missionary. What surprised me is that we chose to meet for a completely unrelated purpose. God used me, because I made myself available to him. This serves as a reminder to me and my fellow youth workers that you never know the discipleship opportunities that will present themselves if you choose to live out God's mission by being passionately concerned about spending time with people.

Now...which one of my students do I need to connect with soon?

