

I have a friend named David who loves to play practical jokes. When he 'got' me, I would try to respond with another joke, but he was always ready to go a higher level. This escalation finally came to an end the time he wrote the initials of several of us in the new concrete bumpers that were being poured in the parking lot where we work. He was doing it to "help" us mark our spot, of course, but the fact that it was someone else's property bothered us a lot more than it did him!

There is something in man that drives him to make a mark in the world. This goes back to the earliest period in man's history, when he painted pictures on the walls of his cave. And the American Indians have created the most incredible pictures on the rock faces of the cliffs in the Southwest, and drawn images so large on the desert floor that you have to be in an airplane to recognize them. To see this effect, just give a boy a crayon, and look out for what happens next. For instance, my grandparents gave my Dad a hammer when he was a boy, and they found that he made his mark in the walls all around the house.

The purpose of man's efforts could be to mark his territory, or just to show that he existed. Sometimes he makes a mark to show the way, or to label something so that it can be classified properly. It can be the measurement of his growth, like when I used to mark my height on the doorfacing as I grew up. It is a part of his nature as God's special creation, even though animals mark their territory so some extent. A bear will stretch as high as he can to mark a tree to proclaim his strength. And of course we know all about how a dog marks his territory.

But a man rises higher than this in wanting to make a significant impact during his life. He wants to accomplish great things: build tall skyscrapers, write the greatest literature, go to the moon and then the stars. Shelley wrote of this in his poem Ozymandias: "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" Perhaps it is the fear of being forgotten or thought insignificant that causes us to do this. Remember that Saul (1 Samuel 15:12) and Absalom (2 Samuel 18:18) both made a monument to their own honor.

We all want to make a difference. We may feel insignificant in the world view. Or we may think that we are uniquely important, and that we will be preserved to fulfill God's purpose for us. But God can both cause our seemingly insignificant effort to be meaningful, or he can just raise up someone else to replace us. I am struck by the passage that Christ said, "I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham (Matthew 3:9)." God needs us, but his plan will not be impacted if we are not there. We must just do the best we can, and let God grant the increase.

Who knows what of our efforts will be remembered, anyway. When they found the the footprint of ancient man in the African savannah, the odds are it was just another day in his life; but the footprint has lasted 700 times more than all of recorded history. As John Rennie wrote:

*"So future anthropologists may not be assessing the heights of our accomplishments from the Mona Lisa, or Shakespeare, or the Golden Gate Bridge, or a space shuttle. They may be measuring the tooth marks on our chewed pencils; checking the metallurgy of old screwdrivers; deducing the economy from phone books in landfills. Perhaps the act for which you will be longest remembered was something you wrote in a wet cement sidewalk when you were six years old: I WUZ HERE."*

The important thing is whether we are making a difference – to God. It doesn't matter if the world remembers us as long as God remembers us with favor. And this means we must be concerned not with our mark but with God's mark. Whatever we do should be for His glory. He is the master and we are His stewards, looking for every opportunity to declare the Goodness and Love of God.

My friend David gets very nervous now every time they pour fresh concrete at work. He is afraid that we will write his name in it in large letters and thus perpetuate his memory. The marks that he made for us are faint, but still readable after all of these years. The best way for us to make a mark that is pleasing to God is to leave His fingerprint on those around us. We can best do that by imitating the True Love of God. This is the mark of a Christian, as Jesus said in John 13:35, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

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