

3/1/2000

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

“Our Gang”

It was Saturday evening, February 25th, in this year 2000. It started at 6:00 p.m. in the Le Bossier hotel. The occasion was the annual banquet of Elizabeth Baptist Church. The banquet attendance hovered around the one hundred mark. I was struck by the people. Many banquets, especially church banquets, which I have attended have the “have to be here” atmosphere. Not so with these folks! They were joyfully alive. I could *feel* it. This was going to be no ordinary night.

Now the Reverend Doyle Adams is the pastor of Elizabeth Baptist Church. And Rev. Adams is no ordinary pastor. That fact should provide the first clue that extraordinary happenings were in the air. Doyle is a young man who has served Elizabeth Baptist for eleven years as pastor. He and his lovely wife Mararia, met at Louisiana Tech where Doyle was attending on an academic scholarship in engineering. In his spare time, he had “walked on” the football team where he was a four year starter at cornerback. Doyle is also a Vice President of Am-South Bank. He is no ordinary fellow. This was no ordinary church.

How can I describe *electric*? It was more than an expectation. There was a sense of positive certainty that *something* was going to happen and we all needed to pay attention. I had been asked to come and to “share what the Lord had put on my heart.” That kind of invite is always a little bit dangerous to give to a preacher. But combine that opened ended summons with the ingredient of what I can at best call the *marching spirit* of these Elizabeth Baptist folks and you are going to have an explosion! It wasn’t long in coming. Here is what happened.

What was “on my heart” was the absolute *fact* that we have in the Shreveport-Bossier community literally *scores of thousands* of people who are utterly committed to caring. We are surrounded by people who are dedicated to helping one another every day of their lives. Go to a movie. Sit in that crowded theater, and imagine that the lights would go up and you could stand before them, with their full attention, and ask, “Would *everyone* here who *is doing something* to help others, or *has done something* to help another, or *is willing to do something* to help another, please stand up.” I promise that we would be stupefied with the overwhelming response. A crowded elevator, a busy sidewalk, house to house, a football game, your church sanctuary, your club, go anywhere and we will be enveloped by a cloud of caring people who are helping others.

You know in your hearts, you who are reading these words, you know that what I am writing is true. If somehow we could surface that declaration of concrete compassion we would *see* a reality that would astonish us! We are surrounded by caring people.

Yet, in this crucible of life, ever the wisest of our human race have recognized that a real war is waging for the souls of men and women and girls and boys. William James, perhaps the greatest genius of human psychology our soil has yet produced, said at the turn

of the last century, “Maybe life is not a real war of good against evil, and light against darkness. But if it is not, it certainly *feels real!*” The battle rages around us and the destructive forces that keep us from being less than what we could be are all too visible. We read about these dark minions of disintegration. We watch them stride across our television sets on the evening news. Evil captures the spotlight of our consciousness and is stingy to share it. Our attention is riveted to the ugly and we become discouraged then cynical and finally despairing.

If we can be kept from doing good for another then the world will plunge even faster into darkness. *But scores of thousands of people in our community will not surrender to the utter bondage of self centeredness. Scores of thousands are committed to helping each other!!* Evil has failed to keep us from caring for each other. So what is the fall back position by the forces of darkness which have failed to keep thousands and thousands of us from a dedication to caring for one another? Listen very carefully.

If we cannot be stopped from doing good, then the strategy of disintegration is very simple, *we must be stopped from knowing the good that others are doing!!* We are surrounded by caring people!! We just don’t know it. We have no way to recognize each other. We pass each other by. We sit next to each other on a plane. We stand in line together at the grocery store. We wait behind a car of caring people at a traffic light. And we have no signal that helps us know that we are together in the same army. We are on the same team but we have no uniform to spot.

We are going to change that.

We are setting out to make the *scores of thousands of caring people visible to each other* here in Shreveport and Bossier. We are launching a WE CARE CAMPAIGN with the motto: “Care Where You Are.” We will give everyone the opportunity to join this Renewal Team. Just give us your name, one thing that you are doing to care for another, or just state that you are *willing to care* for others. We will give you a small but great “We Care” decal for the back window of your car. We will give you an attractive “We Care” pin for your lapel or collar. And we will begin to become *visible* to each other.

This is dynamite. Imagine walking into an elevator and black and white, young and old, male and female, are wearing the Renewal Team pin, you can see your teammates! It will be like that all over our community!

When I spoke to Elizabeth Baptist about “what was on my heart,” I finished. There were not any Renewal Team cards to sign, we haven’t printed them yet. But I invited Elizabeth Baptist to be the first to join the march to visibility. There was an explosive stampede! Those great folks signed their programs by the tableful and handed them in. We are getting them decals and pins.

Saturday, February 25th, 2000. Mark it. We started with an earthquake and we will build on up to a great climax in this drama of life!! Our gang, our caring gang is *bigger* than all the other gangs. And we’re gonna win!!! For heaven’s sake *get visible* so you can encourage your teammates. Join the Renewal Team!