

## Whoever Wants To, Will

“Whoever wants to win a soul will. The rest will make excuses.” That’s a powerful and sobering consideration. And a thrilling one too.

There are lots of things I want to do. I want to visit Scotland and Belgium, the homelands of my forefathers. It would be exciting to see the towns where they lived and some of the countryside they roamed, and perhaps even meet a distant relative or two. But how much more thrilling it would be to see someone that I invited to the services when their hair is wet, and their shirt collar is damp, and their eyes brim with tears because they’ve just become a disciple of the Lord. If I really want to see Scotland, I will. I’ll save the money, and meanwhile learn more about where my family came from. Jenn and I will get our passports, plan the time, and make our reservations. If I really want to go, I will. And if I really want to choke back my own tears, and say, “I’m so proud of you!” as I hug that one out of a hundred prospect I’ve brought to the Lord, I will.

I want to build a deck. I recently bought four books with pictures and plans of decks and patios. I’ve looked at scores of pictures and sketched dozens of plans. I’m looking for the one that’s right. If I keep looking and sketching, I’ll find it. How many sentences will I start with, “If you’re ever looking...” or “There’s this fella at church who...” before I say it the right way, to the right person, at the right time. If Brother Comer’s figured correctly, I’ll start a hundred invitations that way. If I want a shady spot outside to sip iced tea with Jennifer when the June heat arrives in Houston, I’ll keep looking at pictures. If I want to know the thrill of looking across the auditorium during the song service and catching the eye of someone who was ready when I invited, I’ll keep inviting. That moment when our eyes meet and we smile at one another across the building because we’re family now will make it easy to invite a hundred more. If I want to experience that joy of all joys, I will.

Jenn and I recently spent a weekend in Tennessee with our family. My little nephew, Forrest, is just passed a year and a half old and is the first of his generation in our family. He calls me, “J-J” just like my sisters did when they were little. On a sunny Saturday afternoon Forrest and I watched the minnows dart in the shallows of the creek. We threw in some rocks and giggled when they splashed water on us both. We stuck our fingers in the clay and drew pictures and then wiped them on our jeans. I don’t know how long we played, but it was not long enough. As Forrest smacked a long stick on the water and with mud-smudged cheeks smiled up at me for approval, I thanked God for the joy of that little boy and that memorable moment. Someday soon on a sunny Sunday afternoon I want to eat at Johnny-Tamale’s and talk about Dee’s sermon that morning, and about how good Manley May led the song service, and Garrett Timmerman the prayer. And it’ll be a special thrill because the person across the table will have a spark in their eye and a shared enthusiasm for such conversation. It’ll be a memorable moment spent with that one out of a hundred soul who was looking for the Lord, when our paths crossed. We’ll fight over the bill, and laugh about taking a Sunday nap, and say, “See ya tonight.” And we’ll shake hands and I’ll thank God for the joy of that one out a hundred souls who was seeking the Lord. If I really want to experience the satisfaction of that moment and that prayer of thanks, I will.

I want to go to Scotland. I want to build a deck. I want to spend more time with my little nephew, Forrest Andrew Pickrell. But you know what I really want? I want to share with somebody the joy of forgiveness, the thrill of worship, the promises of the Bible, the faith of God. I want to hear them say to the waitress as we’re leaving Johnny-T’s, “If you’re ever looking...” That would be just fine. If I really want to hear that, I will.

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