

## Article for 32963

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Because of our profession we are blessed to meet a lot of people. Sometimes it is on Sunday, however, most of the time it is on the golf course, over a dinner, or simply at Publix shopping on a Saturday afternoon. Not so long ago, we met a man who asked if he could tell us a little about his life. He said that he thought we (as ministers) might enjoy hearing his story, because it was really also a “God story.” When was the last time you heard, or better yet, experienced a good God story? We are not talking about just a warm fuzzy. We’re talking about something that leaves an indelible memory. Something so extraordinary that tears well up. Something so beautiful you stand in wonder and awe at the miracle of witnessing it. Have you ever experienced such a thing? Transcendent or glorious times like these seem to give us a peak, a hint, a whiff, of God’s own glory. But all too often, the moments pass, and we swiftly forget what we have been privileged to observe.

Just recently the results of a study were reported which had followed some twenty-four thousand people over the course of fifteen years. The researchers asked these people to rate their life satisfaction on a scale of 0-10, and the findings were fascinating. Apparently people have an emotional set point that is hard to change. Even though wonderful, fabulous, amazing things can happen in our lives - like finding the love of our lives, getting the job of our dreams, raising beautiful children - the rise in life satisfaction that results is only temporary. Pretty soon, we will be rating our life the way we always did. It seems that despite the extraordinary in our midst, we reduce it to ordinary blandness. We absorb all the goodness around us without granting it the awe and wonder it deserves. In other words, there are “God stories” happening everywhere, and we’re missing them!

So how do we become better at seeing and appreciating God’s presence and involvement in our lives? Perhaps one way is to train ourselves to see the ordinary blessings in our midst for what they are, and appreciate subtle beauty all around us. Dostoevsky once wrote, “Beauty will save the world.” And maybe that sounds like a silly, romantic idea, something like “stop and smell the roses.” But Dostoevsky meant more than that. He meant that beauty can become the central principle of life. He meant that beauty is not just something to be found outside us, but that beauty can be the principle which characterizes the way we do things.

If we clean the kitchen today, we can do it out of resentment. We can do it out of anger. We can do it out of self-pity. We can do it out of pride at how noble and selfless we are. But if any of those are our motivations there will be nothing beautiful in the effort. But if cleaning the kitchen, and everything else we do, is done with joy and gratitude because we are God’s children and part of God’s story, then our acts will be gracious, graceful, beautiful. We’ll begin to think differently about ourselves, our work, our relationships, our lives.

As Christians we can think of no more beautiful gestures than the ones Jesus made. Touching with healing, feeding with hope, reaching out with forgiveness, and embracing with love. This simple beauty transforms. It changes worlds.

Where in your life is there beauty - beauty on the outside, but more importantly, beauty on the inside? Can you see beauty in acts and gestures of great goodness? Seek it out this week. Polish it up, and show it to the ragged, desperate world. Make every gesture deliberate. Make every act loving. Make every event gentle. This makes everything you do more beautiful. And maybe, such beauty will help you to interpret your life story in a new way, and see God’s presence in it.

Want to hear a good God story? Embrace the ordinary, appreciate the mystery, and participate in beauty. What a story that will be!