

WHO CARES?

This past week I experienced three separate and unique instances of strangers making contact with me and each one of these contacts gave me a good feeling that... 'someone cares.'

The first contact was from a person whose column I have often read in the local newspaper; Al Reimers by name. Yes, as I found out, there really is an Al and it was curiosity that spurred him to action causing him to stop at our place and come to the door. The name ("Pastor's Rest") of our home that he had passed on many occasions had been bugging him and he, being a pastor himself, decided to investigate. "Curiosity," admitted Al, "finally got the better of me."

The second contact came from an article I wrote about an illness, which is called "ARDS" (Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome) and was published on the www.ardsil.com web site. A lady, let's call her Ann, read the article and was moved to get in touch with me. Ann is a person in her senior years and has some pressing issues and challenges that are unresolved. She indicated that perhaps a dialogue with me might help her to come to terms with some of these challenges and enable her to move on with her life in a more positive way.

The third contact also came from an article that I had written a couple of weeks ago and had long since forgotten. Out of the blue arrived this brief but rather sad e-mail which simply said:

I just read an article about your ARDS disease and want to let you know I will pray for you and hope you regain your health. My father wasn't as lucky and passed away August 26, 2001, due to improper care after having ARDS in a rehabilitation unit.

Three strangers made contact with me, and each one of them touched me on a different level. I had unwittingly and unintentionally broken into their lives through 1) A sign outside our home and 2) two letters, one of which was published in British Columbia and one in Chicago, Illinois.

One of the nicest things that can happen to us is when people care for us and reach out to show that they care. All too often we might experience that caring feeling towards someone who, if we are lucky, at that exact moment in their lives, needs some re-assurance or love shown towards them. Sadly, all too often we fail to follow up on our instincts and an opportunity to help, or even just communicate, is temporarily lost.

There is a saying that most of us have heard and it is: "How will you know I care unless I tell you!"

A woman was out shopping one day and decided to stop for a cup of coffee. She bought a bag of cookies, and put them into her purse then entered the coffee shop. All of the tables were filled except for one at which a man sat alone reading a newspaper. Seating herself in the opposite chair she opened her purse, took out a magazine, and began reading.

After a while, she looked up and reached for a cookie, only to see the man across from her also taking a cookie. She glared at him; he just smiled at her, and she resumed her reading. Moments later she reached for another cookie just as the man also took one. Now feeling quite angry, she stared at the one remaining cookie -- whereupon the man reached over, broke the cookie in half and offered her a piece. She grabbed it, stuffed it in her mouth as the man smiled at her again, rose, and left.

The woman was really steaming as she angrily opened her purse; her coffee break now ruined, and put her magazine away. There in her purse, unopened, was her bag of cookies. All along she'd unknowingly been helping herself to the cookies belonging to the man with whom she had silently shared the table.

The moral of my story is quite simple. Let's be honest with ourselves. We are all scared about the risk of rejection, and the very thought of approaching a stranger or even someone we know to say: "Hi!" or be complimentary, can make our mouth dry and our palms sweat. Then we remember that in our world today we are cautioned about expressing feelings towards another in case they are misconstrued. Game over for our thoughts of friendly communication!

You know, it is here we can learn a great lesson from our young people who might tell us to "Chill Out," and go with the instinct.

Three very different people came into my life this week because they went with their instinct and acted, and each one of them left me with a precious gift. Instant friendship, prayers for my good health and being made to feel that I can contribute in the life of another are all my gains.

"How will the three of you know I care unless I tell you?" I have already told them how much I appreciated their thoughts and actions, and we will continue to correspond.

More importantly, "How will others know you care unless you tell them?"

- Pastor Ian.