

Women in Focus
April 2008 Devotional

Focusing In . . .

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you're walking along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deut 6: 4 - 7

Henry Fox Talbot invented photography and initially called the product, Sunshine Sketches rather than photo-graphs, because the process used the natural light of the sun to capture the images. The Canadian author, Stephen Leacock entitled a book of prose with the same name, "Sunshine Sketches" as he wrote stories about the people in and around his community.

I just love that phrase, Sunshine Sketches! I think it exactly describes what we as followers of Christ are called to do – to create sunshine sketches of the people we meet. One of the best ways to honor a person is to listen to their story. When we give our attention and focus to the one we are with, we “appreciate” them, in the sense that we add to their value and significance. We invite them to capture an experience or moment in their life and recreate the image – a sketch of their history. In the process of the telling, we are essentially invited to enter into those stories and find a piece of ourselves there, and thus we, in turn, are “appreciated” by their trust. Community is created.

By our listening, we help to preserve these Sunshine Sketches as we imprint them in both our memories and hearts. And as we know and recognize that God is present in every story, we have the high calling of sketching out that holy presence that may have previously been missed or overlooked. We help identify where the light of Christ shone through in the life and story of another. And when given the opportunity to share a piece of our own story, we can capture the image of God that has been stamped upon our lives. Scripture is essentially a collection of Sunshine Sketches – as the stories are captured by the light of Christ shining through the lives of saints and sinners alike.

“Shema” or “Hear” is the command given to Israel in Deuteronomy 6:4. In the Hebrew language the imperative comes through: You listen! You love! You impress or imprint. Sketch the stories upon your children. You tell the stories and tie them on your forehead. We are to listen, not only for God’s voice in our own lives, but for the God’s word found in the stories of others. Jesus had the wonderful skill of asking the kind of question that brought forth the other’s story while shining his light – “sonlight” into their lives. What a privilege we have been given to follow in his footsteps by becoming his sunshine sketchers!

By grace alone,

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