



More Than Meets the Eye

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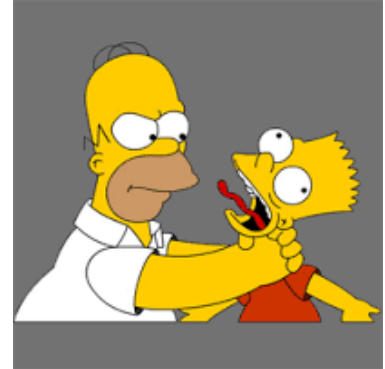
The above picture is a snapshot of my sons. The week before Christmas, I spent an hour at one of our local Walmart stores ringing the Salvation Army's Red Kettle bells with my sons, Connor and Carter. For a number of years, College First Church of God has taken a day's worth of bell ringing time slots and this was my first time to participate in the bell ringing. Carter actually provided the motivation to get involved; upon hearing about this opportunity he said "Dad, I want to do that."

It ended up being a rainy, December, Saturday afternoon but we had a wonderful experience. My boys kept their bells ringing throughout the hour, we got to see several friends, and we raised a lot of money for the Salvation Army and their good work (note: I've never done this before, but I've got to think throwing in two small, cute bell ringers has to help the economics of such a venture – I couldn't believe the numbers of 5's, 10's and 20's that were placed into the kettle). I'm grateful for my kids' desire to

serve others and their willingness to try new things. At the end of our shift, I took this picture of my boys and posted it on Facebook with the following caption: "Proud father moment today... They did a super job ringing the bells."

This was a beautiful, memory-making moment for me and my boys. But it's just a moment. It's a snapshot in day. One hour of a weekend. It was several days later when I began reflecting on this photo in the context of the rest of the weekend. This photo provides quite a contrast to the rest of our weekend. In the above photo you see two pleasant children with hearts bent on serving others. If we had taken pictures from the hours before or hours following, you would have gotten a much different picture.

I don't know if it was the fact that Christmas was only a week away, or the fact that school was going to be out in a couple of days, or perhaps Grandma sugared them up more than she usually does, but this photo stands in stark contrast to the attitudes and behaviors observed in the Finley household the rest of this particular weekend. There were problems with showing respect, problems with listening, problems with being kind to others and a lot of problems with being obedient. We don't have any photos of those moments (ironically) and if we did, they probably would not have been posted to Facebook.



Before you think it was just my children that were having a tough weekend, it was more than just the kids. As we were driving to a friend's house that evening, after screaming at another driver, I mumbled something to the effect that I might have some "anger issues" to which Brenda just shook her head in shocked disbelief. The above photo captured a beautiful moment in a weekend that was really less than beautiful or memorable in any good sense of being memorable.

We live in an age of image management/enhancement and social media just serves as a perfect tool for such efforts. I show you the parts of my life that I want you to see to build the image I want to project. There is often much more than meets the eye. We're all susceptible to the temptation to manage our own image: to put out the best possible spin or presentation, to make things look better than they actually are.

I don't think that the solution to the problem means that you air all of your dirty laundry, there's more than enough of that out there on social media and it isn't helpful either. Both approaches find their origins in narcissism.

Do you have anyone in your life who gets to see the real you? Do you have anyone who knows you deeper than what can be seen on your Facebook page or Twitter account? Do you have others in your life who know you beyond the snapshots you curate in order to manage your image?

I'm grateful for the friends that God has given me who do get to see me in my less than stellar moments. I'm grateful for the love and grace they demonstrate to me as well as the challenge they offer.

It's a real temptation: to make you believe that I'm someone or something that I'm not. It's a subtle temptation as well. Often I'm not even aware of my attempts to manage my image.

Our world has a desperate need for authentic people who are willing to let others see that there is more than meets the eye. We've got a desperate need for leaders who are willing to give others access to their lives so that they can learn from both the good and the bad moments.

It may mean a testing of our motives as to why we post the things we post in social media. It may require us to invite others to speak into our lives where we'd rather live in isolation. Do I just invite others into my successes or do I invite them into my failures as well? What will it take for us to lead more authentic lives?

I want to be the kind of leader who lives a life that is deeper than just a carefully managed image on social media.

Christ's Peace,

Lance