



Lent Week Six

Barry Steiner Ball interviews David Stilgenbauer
and George Hohmann

1. David states a very simple fact, it is important for at risk children to “see people who are not paid to be there.” Think for a moment about the lives of these children. Parents who maybe too ill with addiction to care for them. Paid social workers who hopefully check on them. Paid school teachers who try and teach them. Paid health care workers who see them as patients. Paid police officers who enter their homes to break up fights or arrest the adults in the children’s lives. Who do these children have to sit with them and say, “I am here for you simply because I care?” Building a long-term relationship with a child can change their lives and our lives. Jesus spent about three years with his disciples and changed the world, what could happen if we gave a child three, four or five years?
2. George helps children write an essay. The writing skills the children develop are very helpful for the children’s future academic success. The completed essay when published will give a great sense of pride and accomplishment. However, the question the essay answers is life changing, “what do you want to be when you grow up?” The children are given an opportunity to dream dreams and set goals and be excited about their future. Where else in their daily lives do they get this opportunity? Who will help them focus on their goals and work towards them? What did you want to be when you were in the 5th grade? Who helped you along the way work towards a goal? Is it possible for drug endangered child to have a better life than what they are currently experiencing? Who is responsible for helping the drug endangered child dream dreams and have hope for the future?
3. David and George both talk about there being no guarantees that one’s heart will not be broken when working with children. So often in our church’s culture, a new program will be ended as soon as the first pot hole is hit. The naysayers will shout loudly that the effort to help was a waste of time and we should retreat to our sanctuaries and do what we have always done before. Our hearts can be broken, but David responds to this possibility beautifully, “it’s a risk we have got to be willing to take.” In Luke 19: 41-44 Jesus has his heart broken as he cries over Jerusalem. Does this mean his ministry was a failure? Does this mean that Jesus gave up and focused solely on his comfort? Stepping out in faith means just that, we are living, acting, loving by faith. This Lenten program is called “What If?” and is intended to be a positive question. What if we all answered God’s call? However, when considering starting a new program the “what if” question often becomes negative. What if my mentee rejects my efforts? What if my mentee does not succeed? What if I get sick and cannot be a mentor for five or six years? What is the only guarantee we truly have (besides taxes and death)? Why are we so hesitant to trust that God will be with us wherever we go?

4. This video was taped in a well apportioned Sunday School classroom and yet, the conversation is about reaching children in their public-school classrooms. When we listen to David and George talk about their experiences in their programs they say nothing of memorizing Bible verses or singing hymns or taking up an offering! Are David and George truly providing Christian Education? Can sharing God's love be done without doing a Sunday School Bible lesson? There is a very familiar quote that goes, "you may be the only Bible someone ever reads." What type of Bible lesson are George and David teaching? If you were drug endangered child living near a church and watching the church members come and go, what Bible lesson are you seeing?