

REFLECTIONS

August 3, 2008

**May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon
us; establish the work of our hands for us —
yes, establish the work of our hands.**

Psalm 90:17

An Ordinary Day's Work

"I'll always remember what you told me," Nick recalled. His words stopped me in my tracks. I was stunned not by what he remembered, but that something I said seemingly had an impact on his life. To him my words had been profound; yet I did not remember ever offering him any life changing wisdom. Little did I know then how words spoken in an ordinary day's work can have such an impact on those around us.

And so it was in an ordinary day's work when a little known college professor took the podium. Randy Pausch gave lectures for a living. He was an excellent teacher—extraordinary perhaps, but still of little renown except to his students, colleagues, and a few others. On this occasion Randy had accepted an invitation to participate in a tradition known as the last lecture. These programs, common to many schools, offer opportunities to pass along the life lessons one would choose to share with others as if it were their last lecture. Only for Randy this one *would* be his.

When he took the stage he was not a public figure. And of those in the audience that knew him, few were aware of his terminal illness until Randy disclosed it early in his talk. "When there is an elephant in the room, introduce it," he said referring to his illness. But Randy had not come to talk about dying. His message was about living.

"We cannot control the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand." And so his lecture went, listing one principle for living after another until he summed it up. "[This lecture] has not been about how to achieve your dreams. It's about how to lead your life." And his message changed many of them.

Few of us have a stage set for our last lectures as Randy Pausch did. And most of us will not influence the lives of millions of people with a single lecture the way he did. But each of us delivers a piece of our last lecture each and every day.

Our lectures are in the words we say and the deeds we do in an ordinary day's work. Those are the messages that define our lives and influence the lives of those around us. And it is surprising to learn how far the messages reach until one day someone stops you in your tracks with words like, "I'll never forget what you told me." And you likely didn't say them on a stage set for a last lecture for many to hear.

The greatest influence we have is set on the stage of an ordinary day's work.

"You are the light of the world,"

Richard +

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