

# ***REFLECTIONS***

March 11, 2007

**Sing to the LORD, all the earth;  
proclaim his salvation day after day.  
Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.**

*1 Chronicles 16:23-25*

## **Personal Referral**

We found a new restaurant recently. Someone told us about it or we probably would never have gone. Could there be a more persuasive endorsement than a personal referral? I don't know about you, but I am far more likely to try a restaurant, see a movie, or select a personal service provider on the basis of a recommendation from someone I know than from any form of advertising and promotion the enterprise may offer. No other promotion is more convincing than personal referral.

One reason personal referral serves as such an influence is that it almost always carries with it the personal story of the referring person. In the course of helping us address our own needs, they share with us the personal experience they had when confronted with similar circumstances to ours. In other words, they told their own story.

I have always enjoyed a particular piece written by Fredrick Buechner. He entitled it *Our Stories* and I will take the liberty to share just a part of what he wrote:

*But I talk about my life... because if, on the one hand, hardly anything could be less important, on the other hand, hardly anything could be more important. My story is important not because it is mine, God knows, but because if I tell it anything like right, the chances are you will recognize that in many ways it is also yours.<sup>1</sup>*

Now what strikes me is that each of us recognizes our own story in the stories others tell about themselves. That is what makes personal referral so effective. And if that is so, then it explains why some of the most convincing spiritual encouragement we can give does not come from a Bible quotation, or even the explanation of how Jesus gave his life for our sins. The most convincing stories we can tell are how Jesus has changed our own lives. The stories are easy to tell; and they are important for us tell not because they are our stories, but the chances are those who hear them will recognize that in many ways they are their stories too.

The power of personal referral—I wonder how many lives we can change with it.

*“You are the light of the world.”*

*Richard* +

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<sup>1</sup> *Listening to Your Life* Fredrick Buechner, copyright © 1992 by Fredrick Buechner, HarperCollins Publishers, 10 East 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, New York, NY 10022

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