

FOCUSING ON THE BENEFITS, TOO

During this past week if you have happened to stop into a Tim Hortons like I have on many occasions, you may have seen some of the staff wearing colorful shirts advertising their promotion of Harry Potter themed donuts and drinks. Some of the shirts the staff are wearing are blue, others are green, some are yellow, and still others are red. During my first visit to Tims on Monday, I asked one of the staff if she had gotten a Harry Potter shirt for her 10-year-old daughter. She acknowledged she had not but had put a request into her manager if there was a small sized shirt left over.

After hearing her response, I said to her, "I imagine your daughter gets a lot of your shirts from here once a promotion is done?" Throughout a year, I will see the staff wearing various themed shirts whether it is promoting the sale of "Smile Cookies," their annual Camp Day, or other promotions. This lady smiled and said, "It's not just my daughter who loves to wear my old shirts from these promotions, but my husband does as well! In fact, both of them will often use them as their sleep shirts." Getting to wear these promotional shirts afterward is just one of the benefits these employees and their families receive from working at Tim Hortons.

Often, I find my interactions with certain of the staff at Tim Hortons focusing on some of the sacrifices and unpleasant aspects they encounter during the course of a shift. I do not blame these employees for focusing on the sacrifices they have to make and how stressful some customers and shifts can be. Sometimes we do this as believers too when it comes to what we consider to be the sacrifices we make to follow Jesus. Peter brought up to Jesus one time the sacrifices he and his fellow disciples made to follow Him. Peter had this conversation right after he witnessed the rich young man's refusal to sell what he had in order to follow Jesus. Peter reminded Jesus that he and his fellow disciples had left their homes as well as their careers to follow Him. Jesus did not dismiss the sacrifices these disciples had made, but He wanted to remind them about the benefits that come with following Him:

Yes, and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God will be repaid many times over in this life, and will have eternal life in the world to come. (Luke 18: 29-30)

Jesus was being very truthful here acknowledging there are sacrifices when it comes to fully living the Christian life, but **He also wanted to turn Peter's**

focus toward the benefits that come from having a relation with Him.

Jesus reminded Peter that any believer who gives something up in order to follow Him will be repaid with blessings, not just in this life, but also in the next. This was an important moment for Peter to be reminded of this truth. He had just witnessed the rich young man thinking that the sacrifices required to follow Jesus were too much. He chose to focus on these sacrifices and the temporary benefits of holding onto his wealth as opposed to the everlasting benefits and blessings that come with discipleship. Jesus did not want Peter to become focused on the sacrifices involved in following Him and give up pursuit of the eternal blessings that come from the life choice of discipleship.

It is equally important for us as followers today to keep our focus on the benefits that come with a relationship with Jesus. Some benefits include:

- **Having a secure relationship with Him both now and forever,**
- **Having His Spirit and presence in us providing us with wisdom, direction and guidance,**
- **Seeing Him work through us to build His Kingdom on Earth,**
- **Experiencing the peace and assurance that comes with forgiveness of our sins, and the promise of eternal life.**

It would be easy for us at times to think we are giving up more than we are receiving back when it comes to following Jesus. We may think we are missing out on pleasures others are experiencing in the here and now. **When we experience these thoughts, we need to switch our focus onto all the blessings and rewards that come from a relationship with Jesus.** By so doing, we will find ourselves no longer focusing on the sacrifices but instead finding ourselves giving thanks for the many blessings we experience from the hand of the Lord each and every day. This journey in our thought process will also help remind us that no lifestyle can ever provide us with more benefits than what Jesus gives to us.

From time to time, I see this Tim Hortons employee's daughter sitting at a table waiting for her mom's shift to end. I hope one of these times I will see her there wearing one of the Harry Potter shirts. Wearing it will be a benefit she experiences from having a mom who works there. Seeing this transpire and the smile it will bring to me is a benefit I will experience seeing God at work.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean