

**First Word: Share a surprise within your ministry**

Russ: Just as young people need daily doses of encouragement, so did I as a rookie coach at a new school. It was nice to see that some kids recognized that need and encouraged me.

**First Word: What areas of weakness come up in your ministry?**

Russ: I am always more secure as a helper doing servant leadership rather than being up front directing the whole group. I have had to be honest in admitting I need cooperation and help to get the job done for bigger groups.

**First Word: What one Biblical moment of service would you want to witness?**

I would go back to when Elisha served Elijah. Elisha asked God to provide a double dose of His Spirit, so he could carry on the work of God.



**First Word: Describe a relationship / situation in your ministry that has challenged or touched you.**

When our hospitality house track team travels to regional and national meets, we get to build relationships with the kids and other coaches. On one particular trip I chaperoned, an argument occurred that almost ended in a fight. I felt like a poor leader. The next day one of the combatants, a Christian, apologized and defused the situation by relinquishing some of his "rights". That evening we got to talk about end times prophecy in the Bible and what it means to be a Christian. This went on for an hour or more and was the best time of sharing between guys that I have ever experienced. God took a bad situation and turned it into a great one.

## It's A Wonderful Job

Just as George Bailey wondered if his one life made a difference in the world; I wondered what would have been different if I had not been given the job of Community Liaison.

1. I would have missed meeting and tutoring dozens of kids at Hale Elementary.



2. My long-time relationship of mentoring Dakota Darkstar through *Kinship* might not have occurred.

3. I would not recognize the many McCrae basketball kids I see in the neighborhood or be joyful in the one whose grandmother proudly told me, "He's now getting mostly A's at his new school."

4. The *Children's Gospel Mission* would be unknown to me. The numerous times I got to share the love of Christ and His gospel message would be stillness and a little less love to those who desperately needed it.



# I n S e a r c h o f C o m m u n i t y

Eric Twietmeyer

It's 10:00 am at the Lyndale Starbucks. People lounge on cushy seats while sipping overpriced beverages. A woman works on her computer. A man explains his business deal on the cell phone. A woman walks in with her little girl who draws attention with the banana that she is partly eating, partly using as a cosmetic enhancement. The mother strikes up a conversation with another woman and then heads out the door with the little girl. Three college student readers are enthralled with post-finals liberty. It's a place full of vitality, as people discuss the issues of life. Sometimes it's the place I come just to be around people, a low-level form of community.

The great thing about Starbucks is that it serves the needs of those who want connection, and those who want solitude. It attracts men and women and let's them be themselves at the cost, if you're a faithful patron, of \$3.

I am a fan of relating and relationships, but over the past few years, I have realized that I often cope with life as an introvert. Living life as a single, I've learned to like my space, my time, and control over my social environment. Something tells me, however, that this is not reality. All it takes is an overwhelming feeling of loneliness to overtake me, and I want to move out of my isolated position. Or I want someone to break in, call me, and bring me back to the world of relating.

The irony is that a sense of community is also what I crave. I long to come to a place where it is the expectation that I am important to the group. Another irony is that there are many parts of life that simply will not work without others. We could not even begin to endure the loss of a loved one without others' comfort. We often can't move to a new home or job without others' encouragement or help. We can't sustain many personal injuries without others. Life can't be lived without community nor is it much fun.

The ideas of acceptance and community and togetherness are actually God's ideas. He made Eve for Adam. He called and created Israel to be His people. He breathed life into the church to become the body of Christ in this world, a living and breathing organism.

In the past 4 years, I've surrounded myself with men whom I respect and have come to love. We meet regularly, often over a meal, and pray for each other. We take time to listen to each other. It's community in an intentional sense, and it really helps me. I think it helps all of us. It's a start to letting each other in on our real selves.

As the summer grilling season begins, I sense a challenge for us to think through a few questions: Who do we go to in a time of great need? How can we encourage ourselves and others with our individual importance to the group? Are we open to taking steps of letting go of personal space and control for the sake of loving others? Are we ready to let God meet our needs through the loving care of others?

Well, my green tea is about gone, and the Starbucks crowd is almost completely different. May God move in us to bring about a strong sense of unity and togetherness. "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." - Eph. 4:16.

