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People Spot Missile: The Rest of the Story

I was preaching in a small Afro-American Church in Arkansas. I was preaching away. Deacon Eubanks comments out loud, “Brother I don’t understand where you are going!” I worked a little harder and about ten minutes later he slapped his hand to his knee and said, “Oh brother, now I understand.”

People are complicated. Did you ever notice that? Things may not always be what they seem on the surface. Have you ever looked at someone and said to yourself, “I simply don’t understand their behavior.” Then you learned more about that person and you said, “Now I understand.”

I have for many years loved the hymn “Precious Lord Take My Hand.” It touched my heart. Then I learned the rest of the story behind the writing of the hymn. Now I can hardly sing it without tears in my eyes. Tommy Dorsey, a former jazz musician and gospel singer wrote it. Not the Tommy Dorsey of Big Band fame. He was the song leader in a large Revival Meeting in St. Louis. He got a telegram that said, “Your wife has died. Come Home.” He drove all night to arrive in Chicago to learn that his wife and their newborn child had both died. He was in the depths of despair. He was contemplating leaving the faith and returning to his Jazz roots. About 10 days later he sat at a piano and inspired by the Holy Spirit and his own personal tragedy wrote that beloved hymn. It was for him an act of restoration. Now you know the rest of the story.

Have you ever read the book or heard the song, “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer?” Of course you have. In fact I am old enough to remember Gene Autry singing it when it first came out. There are several stories. I have written what sounds like the rest of the story.

Bob May was a small boy and frequently the victim of bullying. He grew up, completed college and became a copywriter for Montgomery Ward. His first wife died of cancer when their daughter was four years old. One version suggests that he began telling the story to his daughter to comfort her as they grieved their wife and mother’s loss. Another suggests that he tested the story on his daughter. Each time he told the story he embellished it until it took the form of a book. The book was in essence his autobiography told in fable form. The book was then published by Montgomery Ward who produced 6 million copies. A major publisher requested the rights which were then given back to the author. His brother-in-law wrote the song recorded by Gene Autry. Now you know the rest of the story.

I was sitting at a table with about a dozen pastors from a variety of denominations. One of them

spoke up and said, “The ministry would be a great job if it wasn’t for the people.” We all laughed. I stopped laughing when I realized he wasn’t kidding. Without people there is no ministry. My friends, we are in the people business. Because we are in the people business, we need to look for the rest of the story in the lives of our people. That is the only way we can truly minister.

Remember, that only 10% of the iceberg is above the water. As you deal with people, look for the rest of the story in their lives and journey. It is so important to remember that we are in the people business. Without people there is no ministry.

A Thought: “Churches are never perfect. They are made up of imperfect people. However, a church can be very healthy, vibrant and vital as she ministers to imperfect people” Jim Moss, Sr.

I am now available to present “Starting a New Service”, “Churches Have Personalities”, “People Spots”, “Does Your Church Really Care About People?” and “A Christian Perspective on Leadership Skills.” “Stewardship and Managing Debt” jm Volumes 1, 2, 3, and 4—“A History of the Civil War as Presented by the Church Advocate!” are now available. It is a history without the varnish of revision.

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