

## Archive for January, 2009

January 31st, 2009

### **Two**

What's so special about two? One, two, three. Recently, I was looking for a scripture in the concordance and I came to the page with two. My attention was arrested by the number of entries – over 800. What could be so special about the number two? And what does it have to do with Montessori? Let's discover.

Adam and Eve become the first "two." Noah took two of every animal into the ark. The commandments given to Moses were on two tablets. Rahab hid the two spies. Solomon was going to divide the living child in two. The temple was built with multiples of twos – two wreaths, two bowels, two pillars. Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 4 "Two are better than one." Amos 3:3 says, "Can two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?"

The New Testament picks up the two story. Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee sees two brothers. The sermon on the mount tells us "No one can serve two masters." Jesus reminds us, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father." There were five loaves and two fish. He sent out the disciples "two by two." He tells the story of a man who had two sons (the prodigal.) The widow gave her two mites. When asked what was the greatest commandment, He says, "Love the lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. And love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments." Right before His arrest He says, enigmatically, if you don't have a sword buy one. "The disciples said 'See, Lord here are two swords. That is enough,' He replied." He was crucified between two thieves. When the women went to the tomb they were met by two angels. He appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. After Jesus was taken up into heaven there were two angels speaking to the disciples.

Obviously, some two's represent a choice between alternatives. You can't serve two masters, a man had two sons, the two thieves chose different destinations. Choice is always a Biblical opportunity – Baal or Jehovah, good or

evil, life or death. While other two's represent a unified couple. The two shall be one flesh, can two walk together unless they are agreed? Again, there is a second Biblical choice and that is to enter into unity – with God and with each other. Marriages thrive when we go from me to us. Our lives thrive when the prayer becomes "Our" Father; when we seek to bless Him instead of seeking Him to bless us. The definition of love then becomes: When we want the best for someone else.

How does this two relate to our everyday Montessori world? There are wonderful teachers in traditional settings who truly do love their children. But the structure of their academic world is not based on a child but on a classroom of children. Even if they wanted to individualize the system makes it extremely difficult. The primary credo in Montessori is: "Look at the child." Not a class, not a group but a child. The child and the teacher; one on one – makes two. Our challenge from both our religious heritage and our traditional upbringing is to understand the profound concept of individualization found in Montessori. We live in a world that mischaracterizes "freedom" as license (do whatever you want to do) whereas Montessori uses freedom to transform the individual into a being of consummate personal responsibility. Traditionally, religion emphasizes conformity to orthodoxy – this is how we believe and how we act. Much of our parenting emphasizes the same approach – because I said so, it's good for you and if every body jumped off a bridge ...

Montessori, like Christianity (from which it sprang) is based first on a relationship and then on a series of underlying principles. If you adhere to the principles but forgo the relationship you lose what is living and dynamic. My freedom in Christ actually requires more of me than if I were just slavishly to "follow the rules." The establishment of self-discipline in a Montessori student is a far greater self-demand on the student than any external discipline could be. The ability of a Montessori teacher to individualize the instruction and relationship with each student is therefore not a signal of weakness, indiscipline or non-conformity but a recognition of the unique God given personality and gifts given to each child and the desire to

work in harmony with the nature and calling of the child.

There are still immutable laws that apply to all of us irrespective of our feelings about them. There is gravity, time, the seasons, etc. And in the spiritual realm God has his immutable laws of sin, repentance, forgiveness, love, faith etc. Dr. Montessori wrote that children have unlimited freedom – to do right. That is the same freedom my heavenly Father also gives me. And just as He woos me to do what is right, we woo our children. Most of us when we know the good, will choose it. (That is why the absence of Christian spiritual formation in a school makes no sense because you cannot choose that which is not present.) That is why the relationship between student and teacher is paramount. It is a relationship of two not of twenty. And each student's relationships – with you and with their classmates is always a relationship of two. "Follow the child" isn't a group activity but a personal voyage of discovery and service – one very dear to the heart of God

January 31st, 2009

## **The Widow's Two Coins**

In these interesting economic times the needs all around us continue to mount. And yet it is not the needs that should compel us to give but the knowledge that it pleases our Heavenly Father when we give. When the widow gave her two coins at the temple Jesus commended her giving – not out of her abundance – but out of her need

The needs of the Christian Montessori Fellowship are not the reason we are asking you to give. We are asking your support because of the work that the fellowship is doing all over the country and the world. If you have been blessed, taught and encouraged by what you've read in the Cobbler we ask for your support. If you feel that children all over the world would benefit from Christian Montessori education we ask for your support. If you think that there should be Christian Montessori training available, we ask for your support. If you think Christian Montessorians would be blessed by knowing that there are others who share your ministry goals and life, we ask for your support.

These are critical economic times for all of us but every "widow's mite" makes a difference in

the work of the kingdom of God. You've given the gift of your lives to the great work that you find each day in your schools. We are asking for one more gift so that the work of extending Christian Montessori education can go on and bless hundreds, if not thousands (and eventually hundreds of thousands) of children.

Your membership in the fellowship is a modest \$25. Your sacrificial giving will have eternal consequences as we co-labor to make Christ known through this wonderful way of learning. You may go on line to [www.crossmountainpress.com](http://www.crossmountainpress.com) to access membership information or write to us at Christian Montessori Fellowship 22630 East Range, San Antonio, TX 78255

January 31st, 2009

## **Close Out 100th Anniversary Merchandise**

Wonderful opportunity to proudly wear a T-shirt or a sweat shirt commemorating the 100th anniversary of Montessori education. Visit [www.crossmountainpress.com](http://www.crossmountainpress.com) for great bargains T-shirts \$5, sweat shirts \$9, Monty bears are \$4 and banners are \$12. They make great gifts!

January 28th, 2009

## **Who Do You Work For?**

When two men meet for the first time one of the first questions asked is, "What do you do?" And then, "Who do you work for?" Even though these are not the first questions that women would ask, they are relevant to our calling and career. Who do you work for? Our first answer, obviously, is the name of our school. We know that is a surface answer. There are so many more reasons we work. In Montessori we would next say that we work for the children, which is a good answer and also true. On further reflection we would probably come up with the answer that we work for ourselves. We work for that personal feeling that we are using our God-given gifts in a meaningful pursuit. (When teen-agers first start working most of the time they are just trading time for money. The more profound aspects of work are not yet part of their understanding. However, if we can help them understand that no matter whom you work for – ultimately you are working for yourself. You are your own "real"

boss. And how you do your job has nothing to do with the job but with your own sense of integrity and personal responsibility.)

Next we would acknowledge that we are also working to provide for our families. This is often what keeps us putting one foot in front of another. It is not the high sounding anthem of a glorious quest but it is a reality in the day to day work world. We often don't consider the fact that our work (whatever it is) contributes to society at large. People working at the power plant make it possible for us to do so much. Farmers provide the food we eat so we may pursue other areas of interest and expertise. Work contributes to the common good. Each of these concepts of who we work for is valid and sometimes motivating. (You get real motivated to work when the boss says if you don't work – you are going to be fired!) But there is one other concept in the question of who do you work for that is far more significant and far-reaching. In Colossians 3:23-24, we are reminded that, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men ...it is the Lord Christ you are serving" And in Ephesians 4:11, "It was God who called some to be ... teachers." Your gifts, your opportunities, your passion and talents are all given so that you might bless His children. There is no higher calling, no greater responsibility and no greater affirmation that YOU are blessed and being blessed by our Heavenly Father to be able to bless His little children.

Yes, we work for our schools and for ourselves, our families and our communities but most of all we are privileged not only to work for Him but to work with Him to bring many children to Him.

January 28th, 2009

## **Smile**

A Bumper Sticker for all:  
Lord, walk beside me with your arm on my shoulder and your hand over my mouth.

A mother writes:  
Years ago when my two girls were small, they were taught how to say their blessing before eating their meal. One night as I was busy scurrying around the kitchen, I told them both to stay their blessings without me. I took a moment to watch them as they both squeezed

their eyes tightly shut over folded hands. As my 4-year-old finished, her 3-year-old sister kept on praying.

Another minute or two passed before she lifted her head, looked at her plate, and in an indignant voice said, "Hey! My peas are still here!"

January 22nd, 2009

## **Help Support Christian Montessori Fellowship**

We are so excited to share with you the Christian Montessori Fellowship Toolbar. It will serve as a new way to support our ministry along with the Christian Montessori Fellowship Mall. With this Toolbar we will raise much needed funds to support Christian Montessori Education without you writing a check or selling a product!

This Toolbar will not replace your existing toolbar. The features on the Toolbar are all designed to help us raise funds in a non-intrusive way. THERE IS NO COST TO YOU. There are no pop-ups, adware, spyware or tracking and we also respect the user's privacy. It is easy to download to Internet Explorer or Firefox...just click the link below.

### **Click Here to Download Toolbar**

By using the Yahoo search engine that is conveniently located on our toolbar, you are helping us raise dollars for our Organization! You will acquire the same information you receive using your current search engine. Every time you click on a sponsored link (anything listed in the shaded area with bullet points or anything listed on the right side of the page) you are raising 10 cents per click for our Organization! NO PURCHASE NECESSARY.

Performing 2-5 searches a day on something you are interested in and clicking on sponsored links, because those links help you with the information you are looking for, will help us reach our goals faster! This should only take 5 minutes. It's that EASY! What are you waiting for? Click on the banner above to download our Toolbar and start helping us raise money. If you have any questions or special support needs do not hesitate to contact OurGV Rewards at support@ourgvrewards.com

With a direct link on the toolbar, you now have even easier access to the Christian Montessori Fellowship Mall to Shop and Fundraise! We invite you to visit the Mall for your everyday needs as well as for special occasions. Remember that every time you shop at over 1000 stores in your Mall (to make purchases you are going to make anyway) you are generating funds for our organization!

We are proud to have you as a Supporter! We hope you are equally proud to have our toolbar on your computer. We encourage you to share this toolbar with your friends and family so they can help our organization fund its needs

Thanks for your help and support,

Barbara and Edward Fidellow

P.S. If you are interested in a tool bar for your school or church contact us for further information.

January 8th, 2009

## **A Woman!**

There is an old joke that says it really is a woman's world. When a man is born they ask, "How is the mother doing?" When a man gets married they ask, "How did the bride look?" When a man dies they ask, "How is the widow doing?"

But so much of the world is not a woman's world. By size and strength men dominate. War and violence seem to be particularly related to men. Competition and power seem to be what drives many men. The Fall disfigured not only man's relationship to God but his relationship to women. Sin certainly hurt what God had intended in man and woman's relationship. And redemption must include a restoration of that intention. Eve made from the rib - close to the heart - is a side by side partner. That was God's intention then. It is His intention now.

Though men "run" the world, it is women who make that world worth running. It is a wise man who understands the value of a God-given relationship with a woman. Scripture is full of revealing relationships where the woman is key to God's plan. Eve was certainly the first example of what God intended.

Abraham and Sarah reveal another part to God's plan. God told Abraham that He would make a great nation arise from Abraham's loins. When it didn't happen with Sarah, Abraham undertook to fulfill God's plan on his own. He had a son - a son that came from his own loins. But that was not God's plan because it neglected the fact that God intended the nation to arise from Abraham's loins AND Sarah's womb. Yes, the man is important in God's plan - but so is the woman.

Jacob worked for his uncle Laban for seven years because of A woman. When he was tricked into marrying Leah, he was willing to work another seven because of A woman. Women are important to God. They are important to His plan and to His purposes. We tend to skip over the genealogies in the life of Christ but God doesn't. There are amazing lessons God teaches us. There are four women in the genealogy (six with Sarah and Mary.) Each is A woman important to God. Each has a unique story in God's plan. And none of them we would include because of our own righteousness of wanting to keep Christ's genealogy "pure." But God judges with a different heart and measure. Christ is the fulfillment of all that is human and all that is divine. And His grace of forgiveness and redemption is displayed in Christ's genealogy. The first woman mentioned is Tamar, the daughter in law of Judah, one of Jacob's sons (Genesis 38.) After Tamar's husband died and also his brother, Judah did not give his third son to marry her because he was afraid that the third son would also die. So Tamar put on a veil and waited for Judah. He thought she was a prostitute and said to her, "Come now and let me sleep with you." "And what will you give me to sleep with you?" "I'll send you a young goat from my flock." "Will you give me something as a pledge until you send it?" "What pledge should I give you?" "Your seal and its cord and the staff in your hand." The deal was struck. The next day Judah sent the goat but the servant couldn't find the "shrine prostitute." Three months later when Tamar was discovered pregnant Judah was going to have her killed for this disgrace. She sent him a message, "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," displaying his seal, cord and staff. "She is more righteous than I since I would not give her to my son."

Tamar is not exactly a Bible story you want to share in Sunday school with your children, is it? Not exactly the genealogy from which to

create the lineage of the savior of the world. But it is a remarkable display of God's redemption – through A woman.

The next woman is Rahab the harlot who protected the Hebrew spies. And she enters the genealogy. I'm not sure I am happy with God's pattern of forgiveness and redemption but it is His pattern.

The next woman is Ruth. At last we have someone we can admire for her devotion and loving care of her mother in law. But she was not a Hebrew. She was a foreign woman. And yet God includes her in His lineage.

Then we have Bathsheba, an adulteress. Yet God chooses to put her son on the throne and in the genealogy of Christ. It makes me wonder if God has any standards for purity or integrity? Because it is not who I would have chosen. And yet THAT is the amazing point of forgiveness and redemption that comes to us through Jesus. A lineage of men (and women) who are imperfect, flawed, lost and in need of a Savior.

And then Jesus is born of a virgin – fully God and FULLY man.

Why am I writing this to you today? God put it on my heart to write to you what has been on my mind for several years and to share with you this encouragement. Most teachers are woman (all mothers are women) and women play such an integral part in God's plan. Men make lots of plans but it is the woman who keeps life "together" while men play war, play business and play life. Without the contribution of women – the plan of God, the kingdom of God does not come in its fullness. You have a decisive part.

Barbara and I will celebrate 41 years on Valentine's Day. It took me twenty of those years to recognize that her gifts were different than mine. (Quick learner!) But it has been in the last handful of years that I have begun to truly appreciate the gift of God in my bride. (They say that behind every successful man – stands a surprised mother in law.) It is not who stands behind a successful man but who stands beside him that truly provides "the wind beneath my wings."

This great venture of Christian education is supported by thousands of women (and men.)

Your service to and love for your children warms God's very heart. Please be encouraged in the great work that you find to do in your classrooms each day. Time will not reward the Christian educator but eternity will pay untold dividends for your faithfulness and love. God has great confidence in you and your calling. In this New Year please know that you are part of that great genealogy that is bringing new sons and daughters into the family of God.

January 1st, 2009

## **NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS AND THE FIRST TUESDAY**

This article was published in the Dallas Times Herald January 1, 1991.

One of the best things parents can do for their children is to teach them about the principle of the First Tuesday. Now we are all familiar with New Year's resolutions as a way to improve ourselves but the principle of the First Tuesday affords a better chance of success.

This year New Year's happens to fall on the First Tuesday and that makes it a great way to begin the year. Since most of us need deadlines to accomplish our goals New Year's has become a time of new beginnings. But the problem with New Year's resolutions is (one) resolutions are hard to keep and (two) New Year's comes only once a year (well not counting Chinese and Jewish New Years). So most of us are defeated before we start because we may last 5 or 6 days on our resolutions before we fall off the wagon, stub our toe or lose our patience. And since the next deadline is 359 days away, we never make any significant changes.

And that is the beauty of the First Tuesday principle – which is not to be confused with the fourth Thursday of Thanksgiving or the first Tuesday in November following the first Monday for elections or Heaven help us when does Easter fall? The First Tuesday Principle is this: On the First Tuesday of each week – WAIT a minute, you say, there is only one Tuesday in each week. Yes, but that is the beauty of it because every Tuesday IS the First Tuesday.

Now the real beauty of the First Tuesday is that it is not Monday. Got that? There are too

many things to start on Monday – back to work, school, or any number of things that steal our attention from significant change. By Tuesday, we've gotten rid of Monday, we still have energy, hopefully, to tackle something as big as change. Now if we set our new resolution into effect on Tuesday and we last all of 4 days it's okay because we now have the weekend to complain about what a sorry sort we are or indulge or whatever. And Monday is given to getting the week started and that's okay because the First Tuesday is coming and we can start over again.

Now next week if we last 5 days our competitiveness kicks in because we all like to win. So the next week we gun for 6 days. And when we make it (and it may take us a month) we start talking about streaks or even better play-offs (sorry, too much football on the mind from New Years). What happens if we make 7 days? Right, we start a streak. If the streak lasts 10 or 11 days we still have the First Tuesday to get another streak going.

What we have done is to take an impossible goal of "change for Forever" and break it up into a manageable First Tuesday. It would be wonderful if we had the strength of character to make wholesale changes as necessary but since we don't the best part of the First Tuesday comes in realizing that if we can even modify our behavior by 4/7 we are on our way to significant change. Eventually the good habits we establish (not all habits are bad) will begin to take over and effect a lasting change. We may like the results of the 4/7 so much we will eliminate our own resistance to change and get on with our lives.

The First Tuesday is a charm. It teaches us to forgive ourselves but at the same time to hold ourselves accountable to the next deadline. But for those who don't want to change, the International Date Line offers some possibilities for a Second Tuesday but for some of us they just wouldn't be far enough apart.