



The Wake

Devotional April 8, 2011

At Oasis we are doing a series called “The Happiness Project”. As I was working through homework, and thinking along the theme this week, I was reminded a few times of one of my “happy places”. Do you have one of those: A place where you imagine yourself to be when you are trying to calm down, and de-stress and regain perspective?

One of the places I imagine myself is sitting in the hot sun in the back seat of our little ski boat. This “happy place” represents summer and sun, holidays and family-togetherness. When I was a child our family had many years of financial instability and the only holiday we could count on without fail was a week of camping with our extended family. We would spend as many hours as possible that week on my uncle’s ski boat, and when I was skiing behind it or warming up and resting on board between turns, it felt like every point of stress unraveled. A few years ago, my husband and I bought that boat from my uncle. It’s not new, it’s definitely not fancy, and it has left us stranded in the middle of the lake at a variety of times for various reasons but imagining myself on-board still makes me feel happy.

I heard two distinct stories this week that tie in with this image and they seemed to bring a few different ideas together, so I thought I would share them with you.

Last week my eight year old niece, Sofia, was at Pioneer’s Club and her teacher asked all the girls to think about someone they trusted, and explain why they trusted them. After giving it some thought, she stated that she trusts “Uncle Bob (my husband), because when he is driving the boat when I’m learning to water ski, I know he’ll drive carefully, and will stop as soon as I fall. Also, I know that when I’m on the tube behind the boat, he won’t drive too crazy and tip me off”. Sofia’s confidence in Bob’s driving and his care for her well-being allows her to push herself to do something which is a little scary for her – learning how to ski.

My brother relayed her response to me and Bob on Saturday night. The next day I was listening to the book called Integrity by Dr. Henry Cloud and was struck by another boating story. I’ll quote from the book below:

“One of my favorite things in life is to sit on the aft-deck of a boat going across the ocean and just watch the wake. It is such a beautiful ever-changing creation as the ship continues on its path. You can tell a lot about a ship as you look at its wake. If the wake’s in a straight line you get a feeling that the boat is steadily on course and that the captain’s not dosing at the wheel or that an engine or a shaft is not somehow out of whack. But, if that wake is wavering you begin to wonder. Also, if it’s smooth and flat you know something about the speed of the boat, and if it’s steep you can tell something about its drag.

In other words, what the wake looks like can tell you a lot about the boat itself. Now here's the point. With people, the same thing is true... Just as we leave the effects of our work behind in results, we leave the effects of our interactions with people in their hearts, minds and souls. We leave a wake of people behind as we move through their lives...

So, we must look over the transom and ask ourselves. "What does that wake look like? Are a lot of people out there waterskiing on the wake, smiling, having a great time for our having moved through their lives, or are they out there bobbing for air, bleeding, left wounded as shark bait. In other words, would they say that their experience with us has left them better off for our having moved through their lives, or would they say that it has left them worse off? Did they consider it a blessing that they were associated with you, or a curse? What is the nature of the wake? Are they smiling or reeling? And the big question is this: Would they want to do it again?"

Sofia has had a great experience with her Uncle Bob and I know that she will be willing to water ski on our wake again this summer. She has experienced a feeling of both physical and emotional safety as she has encountered him. Is this the case of other people in Bob's life and mine? Is it the experience of people in yours? As you move through the lives of your friends and family members, are you leaving a calm, reliable trail or a turbulent wake?

Reflect on the following verses with me:

Hot tempers start fights; a calm, cool spirit keeps the peace. Proverbs 15:8

The one who knows much says little; an understanding person remains calm. Proverbs 17:27

When good people run things, everyone is glad, but when the ruler is bad, everyone groans. Proverbs 29:2

A gang of cynics can upset a whole city; a group of sages can calm everyone down. Proverbs 29:8

Angry people stir up a lot of discord; the intemperate stir up trouble. Proverbs 29:22

A leader of good judgment gives stability; an exploiting leader leaves a trail of waste. Proverbs 29:4

This summer as I sit once again in my "happy place", I think I'll be doing more than enjoying the ride. I will be evaluating our wake.

Blessings to you today,

Kristal Toews