

# A Lesson From Bill

**O**ur ministry lost a great friend recently. Bill Bieschke was a brilliant bass player who had become a vital member of our music team over the last several years. He was only 48 when he suffered a fatal heart attack at his home. His wife Gwen told us he was up late practicing music for the next morning's church services after a long evening of teaching music students here at the church.

Bill spent a lot of years on the local music scene, playing with every type of pop, rock, jazz, and casual band you could imagine. He led a fairly typical life of a club musician for much of that time, until he eventually was led to church and to faith. After that, he still performed regularly all over town, but he was changed. He had long been a lover of people, a dependable friend and an all around great guy, as well as being a loving and grateful husband. But he found a new joy and a new way to express his loving nature through Christ and through caring for God's children.

His funeral was a large gathering of a few hundred musicians, friends, students, and family members, all of who were still in shock that he was gone. But there was also joy—he had long requested a “New Orleans” funeral when it was his time. So we played some fun music to celebrate his life, everything from jazz to rock to pop. The music of his funeral reflected his varied musical history, and the faces in the crowd reflected the wide reach of his life.

I chose to write this article not just to tell you about Bill, but to remind us about the life we lead when no one is looking.

## LABOR OF LOVE

Bill was one of the main instructors who had propelled our church's music school (Saddleback School of Music & Arts) to become a thriving and dynamic program, not only to train young musicians but to reach out to our community. I must admit that I sometimes overlooked the personal involvement he had and might have occasionally thought he was speaking as a musician just trying to hold on to a gig—not a bad thing at all, but not entirely fair in retrospect.

We were all affected in various ways by his passing, but what truly impacted my life was hearing directly from the students and parents that he was in direct contact with. These were stories that I never would have heard about had his passing not started the conversations: About the student from a troubled home to whom Bill gave extra attention and encouragement to, even checking in on him when the school wasn't in session. About the depressed student who's life was turned around by his



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musical encouragement. About the mother who specifically chose Bill to teach her son after he'd had a head injury because she knew he would take extra good care of him.

So, I have two things for you—both lessons I have reflected on since Bill's passing.

## ACTIONS THAT ECHO IN ETERNITY

First, what you do for others, even when no one is looking, matters. Sometimes, it is life changing and eternal.

“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’” (Mtt 25:40 NIV).

“...Then your Father, who sees what you do in secret, will reward you” (Mtt 6:6). This verse refers to our prayer life, but it reminds us that God sees everything we do.

## KEEP YOUR HEART

Second, never allow the “business” of church to overshadow the “ministry” of church. No matter how many staff or business meetings you attend, remember that you do this, in large part, to facilitate the ministry that other people do. As a leader, we must remember that we hold the key to many of the opportunities others have to minister, but too often we offer a big roll of red tape instead.

*“We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.” (2 Cor 5:20)*

How are you doing in facilitating your team members to do the work of the kingdom, to be Christ's ambassadors? And not just the work you ask them to do, but the hidden, unseen work that so often goes unnoticed—are you an encouragement or an obstacle?

When Bill was pushing for issues that, in that moment, mattered to him more than they did to me, it was often because he loved the students and the rest of God's people he was serving. He wanted to serve them, and it was often up to me to pave the way.

I wish I had the chance to tell him that what he did mattered, that he served the kingdom well. But I rest assured that he is hearing that from the Creator Himself. “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

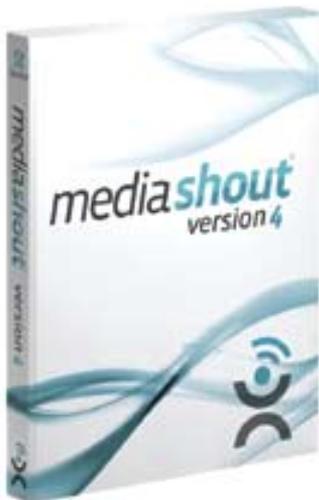
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