

THE POWER OF ONE (PART 1)

BY GUY HAMMOND

By the time Canadian Ryan Hreljac was a pre-teen, he had done more good deeds than most people many times his age. Which is why, when he was only 12 years old, the United Nations honored him with the World of Children Founder's Award. It is the only international award recognizing children's advocates, and considered the equivalent of a Nobel Prize.

When Ryan was six years old, he had heard there were parts of the world that did not have access to clean drinking water. Having been told that one fresh water well could be purchased for only \$70, the child got busy doing odd jobs around the house and his Ottawa neighborhood raising the necessary funds. So enthused was Ryan with this success that he kept raising more money for more wells. By the time he was ten years old he had started a foundation called *Ryan's Well*. Now a young man in his mid 20's, Ryan Hreljac has increased awareness of water scarcity issues in more than 150 countries, raised close to \$7,000,000, and built more than 800 wells in Africa and South America that provide more than three quarters of a million rural villagers with easier water access, thereby dramatically increasing their quality of life. He has also been instrumental in building 1100 latrines on these same continents.

Because of his incredible accomplishments, Ryan has spoken at several major international events and conferences around the world and hundreds of elementary schools and college campuses across Canada and the United States. His story has been featured by hundreds of media outlets in as many countries and he has been interviewed scores of times by radio and television personalities, including three appearances on the Oprah show. Ryan Hreljac has met with royalty, Prime Ministers and Presidents and has inspired millions globally; it all started when a six-year-old tried to raise seventy bucks to build one well. It's incredible what one person can do when he or she sets their mind to it. Our world is full of stories of regular folk who, on their own initiative, accomplished remarkable things regardless of the challenges they faced. I call it The Power of One. We often underestimate the power of one person.

It has always seemed incredible to me that God needs people. Throughout history, God has always had a plan, but in order for his plan to work, he has always relied on imperfect individuals to carry out the plan.

- He used Abraham, a man who lied on more than one occasion that his wife was his sister to save his own hide, to be the father of a nation, and the beginning of the lineage of the savior of the world. The power of one.
- He used Moses, a child born in poverty and slavery, and who later became a murderer to save a nation. The power of one.
- He used Rahab, a prostitute to help give Israel victory in battle. The power of one. He used some poor fishermen and a thief of a tax collector to evangelize the known world.

While we often look at the apostles as a collective group, they each, in their own separate and unique way were used by God over the years after Christ's ascension to change the lives of countless people.

- Andrew, Peter's brother, preached in modern day Bulgaria and was eventually crucified, just like his master.

- John, the Son of Thunder, a man given to anger and yet considered the one *whom Jesus loved*, authored letters and books we read in the Bible today: John, 1, 2, 3 John and Revelation, was exiled to the island of Patmos and eventually died in Ephesus.
- Thomas the doubter made it as far as India where he preached the gospel until he was run through with a spear and murdered. I've been to the spot where tradition says his body was buried, just outside of present day Chennai.

The list goes on as to what these brave people accomplished and it is a testament as to the power of one.

Clearly these were all damaged men and women who were sinners and had the same kinds of weakness and faults and issues that we all experience, and with the exception of Moses in my above list, were all seemingly insignificant and unimportant folks with little to offer anyone. Yet God used individuals like this in the days of old, one at a time, to accomplish some magnificent achievements that changed the lives of numerous people, and he uses imperfect individuals, one at a time, to accomplish his will today, too. In the remainder of our time together today, and in our next devotional, we will look at 3 incredible examples of those who understood the Power of One!

The Power of One act of dedication

I like prayer. It boggles my mind knowing that I have this place to go where I can say anything that is on my heart and just communicate it to the creator of the universe at any time. It's pretty amazing, isn't it? I'll confess however, that there have been occasions when I've privately wondered whether my prayer is making a difference. One read of Daniel 6 however reminds me how important the act of spiritual supplication truly is. Daniel (the hero of the book) was among the Israelites taken captive from Jerusalem when King

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged it in 605 B.C. In Daniel 6, King Darius, a successor of Nebuchadnezzar, in a completely egomaniacal way, made up a law that anyone who prayed to any being or entity except him for the next 30 days, would be immediately executed by being fed to ravenous lions. I hate it when that happens! I think ole' King Darius' ego was going for a little bit of an overkill here.

Anyway, while everyone dropped to their knees to pray to the King, Daniel refused. It had been his custom to go to his room and bow to God while facing Jerusalem, three times a day. When he heard that this law had been passed, instead of acting like a coward, Daniel did exactly as he had always done; he went to his room and he prayed to his God and was willing to accept the life ending consequences.

As much as Darius regretted it, he threw Daniel to his death, but of course, as we all know, God was faithful to Daniel and spared his life. Daniel spent the night with starving and deadly lions and remained unharmed. Darius was so moved and in awe of Daniel's God, that he changed the decree and ordered that everyone must pray to the God of Daniel; a good career move, to be sure.

Because of Daniel's one act of dedication to pray to his God, Darius commanded an entire nation to follow God. It became the new law. One act of courage, one act of going against the flow for the sake of your convictions, one act of boldly sharing your faith, one act of prayer, one act of love, one act of righteousness, one act of dedication to our God. You see, it *does* matter how you live. You have no idea how your words will be used by God when the Holy Spirit tugs on your heart to open your mouth and tell someone about what Jesus means to you. You have no idea what your prayers will accomplish. Sometimes when we face temptation, when trouble comes, we can easily bemoan our situation and give in so quickly. How sad. We have no idea what good God has planned for our lives, what victories await us. We need only be faithful.

Christian, I know you have your struggles, your temptations, your challenges, your history, your feelings, your weaknesses, your emotions, your fears and insecurities; the list goes on and on. But God wants

to use your life to impact others and in doing so, glorify Him. Will you be willing to be countercultural and obey and praise God with your obedience as Daniel did?

We're told later in Daniel 9:20-23 *"While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill- while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed."*

When we pray, God listens. Do you know that God actually answers your prayers before you even pray them? (Isaiah 65:24). When we confess our sins, when we cry out to him because of life's difficulties and challenges, when we whisper our hearts' desires and dreams; when we praise him, God listens. Daniel is an incredible example of the power of one display of dedication.

In our next devotional we will consider two other aspects of the power of one!

Thoughts presented in this devotional are taken from the book *MESSED UP: Proof That You're More to God Than Your Mistakes* by Guy Hammond and published by Illumination Publishers. The book is a companion to the documentary movie *FINDING GUY* by One Compass Media.

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