

# “It Matters to This One”

## a parable of hope

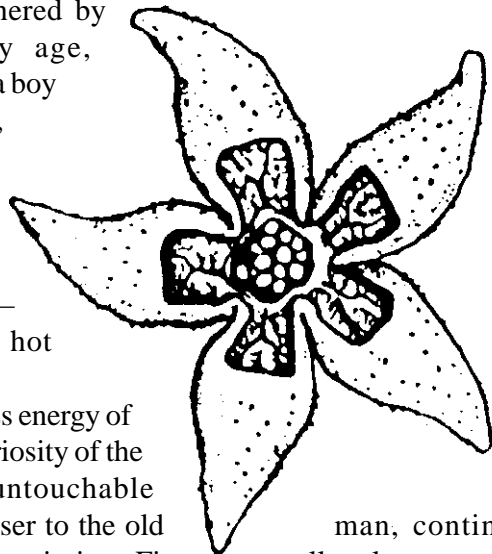
by Daniel John Yeary

The old man, weathered by life and hardened by age, watched with interest as a boy ran along the sea shore, picking up starfish and throwing them back into the sea. The shoreline was covered with thousands of starfish—stranded to die on the hot sands.

The seemingly tireless energy of the boy awakened the curiosity of the old man’s otherwise untouchable spirit. The boy came closer to the old man, continually, close enough to be heard, the old man spoke: “What does it matter, son? There are thousands more you will never save.” The boy, without hesitation, knelt to pick up another starfish, and tossing it into the sea, responded, “Well, it matters to this one.”

There is something wonderful in the human heart that compels us to comb the shores of life in search of stranded starfish. Tossing

(continued)



even one back into the life-giving sea does, indeed, make a difference. We must believe that.

There is also that in the human spirit so cynical that we are paralyzed by the size of the task and our success-oriented psyches. Because the job is impossible and the task insurmountable, we choose to do nothing. Or we assume that the world is full of individuals named George who will do something.

Exercising the good and exorcising the bad is the crux of our massive crisis. There never seem to be enough spirits willing to spend their time slinging starfish back into the waters of life; but, the lack of available hands is no excuse for avoiding the hunger surrounding us. Not when Jesus Christ walks the shore as our companion.

When Jesus asked his disciples about the availability of food for 5,000 followers, he received excuses ranging from the economic to the impossible. But—Jesus was like a “beachcomber on a mission.” His “starfish rescue” was made from the minimal gift of five loaves and two small fish. The point is obvious: in the hands of Jesus there is a difference. Those who give their gifts for his purpose make a difference, no matter how small the gift.

Nothing we do for Jesus is ever done in vain. Jesus did not say, “Satisfy my sheep,” or even, “Protect my sheep.” He instructed us to feed them.

In my imagination I have always pictured the lad whose lunch was multiplied by the Master, running home and bursting through the door shouting, “Hey, Mom! Guess what me and Jesus did today!”

Such is the spirit of those who know that it does, for certain, “matter to this one.” Saving starfish or feeding Christ’s sheep—it is what we must do. It does matter.

—Daniel John Yeary was a pastor in Coral Gables, Florida when he wrote this. He is now retired in Central Texas. The illustration was inspired by “The Star Thrower,” by Loren Eiseley. This parable was originally published in Seeds Magazine, Volume 14, Number 1, January 1992.

