

In discussing my feelings surrounding sharing this reflection with my friend Rick Jordan, he told me it was okay to break the ice by confessing my nervousness and to blow my own cover right at the start. So this is me blowing my own cover. I am super nervous so thank you for bearing with me. Rick also said something to me that was very encouraging, he said, “sharing your heart is an act of love, and you excel in acts of love.” So I thank Rick for giving me the courage I need to stand up here in front of you all today. Rick is a great example of what this reflection today is all about, the Power of one.

We often hear of Jesus being referred to as a shepherd.

When I think of the Lord as a shepherd, I think of a shepherd who knows each one of his sheep intimately. A shepherd who calls them each by their name. A shepherd who understands each one’s unique needs. A shepherd who provides for the sheep and protects them. A shepherd who cares for and comforts each one. Some of the sheep may require more attention and some less, but none of them are any more or less important to the shepherd.

Jesus tells a parable about a shepherd, but there’s one problem. One of the sheep has gone missing. So the good shepherd leaves the 99 to search for the one that is

lost. That shepherd must have thought that one sheep was pretty important to leave the other 99. I have been guilty of minimization, saying things like, “I’m just one vote” or “I’m just one person” but I feel like that does not quite do any of us enough justice. When our shepherd looks at us our shepherd doesn’t see, “just one”, instead our shepherd sees “one”.

What do we know about the number 1?

We know that 1 is the smallest positive integer which makes it fundamental. We also know that it often represents unity. In fact, it is used to symbolize the unity between God the father and Jesus the son. We know that we are all members of one body under Christ who made one sacrifice to atone for the sins of all. One Lord, One faith, One baptism. Though small, the number one as we can see, has some remarkable implications.

1 can also represent a moment in time. For instance, when we say, “Hey, do you remember that one time when.....?” The moment your life changed (for the better or for the worse). A moment of great joy or profound sadness. A moment of great success or epic failure. The moment you made a new friend or the moment you

lost one. The moment your heart shattered or the moment that someone came along to help you pick the pieces up off the ground.

No one tells you how hard it can be to rebuild your life after someone has destroyed it.

To discover your identity once the world has told you to be someone else.

To find your voice once it has been lost.

To love again after your heart has been broken.

Life is messy. It's complex. Life is filled with extreme highs and extreme lows and everything in between. Everyone has their own battles, their own demons that they are fighting and there's no guidebook to life. No two roads look the same. They have different twists and turns, bumps in the road, and those darn potholes.

We all know how that goes. One minute you're getting along just fine and then you hit that pothole and your tire blows out, possibly ruining your whole day.

Most of you probably don't know this, but I'm a big fan of the Conjuring movies.

There is a scene at the end of the second movie that was very powerful to me.

After the girl, Janet, has been saved by the Warren's, she says to them, "I'm so lucky. You said one person could change everything, but I've got two."

Let's think about that statement for a minute.

One person can change everything.

Let that really sink in.

In the movie, Ed and Lorraine Warren literally saved the girl's life but I think there's more to it than that. The Warrens didn't just save her life, they believed in her. They listened. Like a good shepherd, they were there and they did life with her, through the ups and the downs. They showed her that they cared and they took a chance.

Outside of literally saving her life, these other things may not seem extraordinary, but I bet to Janet they were.

But let's think a little closer to home.

I would like to share a story about a girl.

A girl who, like the one sheep, was lost. Who was broken, who was aimless.

She never felt like she quite fit in anywhere. She was searching for a place to belong. She was a single mother hoping to raise her son in a loving community and one day, she posted on Facebook that she was looking for a church that was progressive and not too political. Lucky for her, a friend from college replied to her status recommending to her a church that their family had recently started attending. She watched a few sermons online and then one day, she decided to visit the church in person. The people were very warm and welcoming but there was one deterrent which made her hesitant to commit, which was the distance. It was almost a 30-minute drive one way. She thought, well, maybe I can find something closer to home but one person took the time to get to know her better and encouraged her to get out of her shell and give the church a try. She took these words to heart. She agreed to stay for one coffee hour and now she's been there for over a year. As a result, she gained one person, who listened without judgement. Who showed her they cared. Who believed in her more than she ever believed in herself. Who encouraged her to grow and showed her that it was safe to open her heart up to others and that is the story of how one became many.

Now she has many friends. She's built many meaningful relationships and made many unforgettable memories. One Facebook post, one reply from one friend, one person to encourage her to get out of her shell, and one chance she took to make her the girl you see today who is standing in front of you. THAT is the power of one.

This reminds me of a concept that I learned about in 1st grade called the butterfly effect. The butterfly effect is based on the idea that small changes in a complex system can produce large scale unpredictable outcomes. The butterfly effect is based on the notion that something as seemingly insignificant as the flapping of a butterfly's wings can impact the formation and trajectory of a tornado.

It only takes one.

One hug, one smile, one listening ear.

One text to tell someone that you're thinking of them.

One phone call to a loved one at the end of a bad day.

One kind gesture, one act of service, one thoughtful surprise, one compliment.

One person to build someone up. To help them find their voice. To help them rebuild their life. To help them find themselves again. To help them mend their broken heart.

And just as it only takes one to build someone up, it only takes one lie, one rumor, one insult, one betrayal, one rejection, one microaggression. One act of manipulation or violence.

One person to tear someone down.

If something as seemingly insignificant as a butterfly flapping its wings can have a large-scale, unpredictable impact on the larger system, just imagine for a moment the impact that our words, our actions can have on one person and even on a larger societal scale, even worldwide.

You see, I believe Jesus too, recognized the power of one. Throughout his ministry, Jesus was very intentional with his words and his actions. He understood the impact they would have for generations to come. He recognized and demonstrated the power of one kind gesture to give hope to the hopeless, one act of service as he washed the feet of his disciples, and one loving sacrifice as he laid down his life for us. Alternatively, Jesus experienced the power of one betrayal by Judas as he was handed over to the authorities for the price of 30 pieces of silver.

The power of one rejection as he was denied by Peter. The power of one rumor as he was dismissed as a blasphemer. The power of one insult as he was mocked and humiliated. The power of one act of violence as he was beaten and tortured in the final moments of his life.

So, this is the opportunity that I see before us, what I feel Jesus would call for us to do: to evaluate our own words and actions. To consider the impact that they may have, in building people up or tearing them down.

To consider the power of 1.

Not everyone gets many people or even 2, but you can be 1.

Thank you