

THE FRED FACTOR



In his book, *The Fred Factor*, author Mark Sanborn shares the principle of how passion in your work and life can turn the ordinary into the extraordinary. He does this through the unlikely example of his postman, Fred.

I see "*The Fred Factor*" as the parable of the Good Shepherd applied to effective leadership and management of precious resources. – JHC

Scripture:

Matthew 2

1. After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem
2. and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."
3. When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.
4. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.
5. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:
6. "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'"

John 10

1. "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.
2. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep.
3. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
4. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.
5. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."
6. Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.
7. Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.
8. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.
9. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.
10. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
11. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."
- ...
14. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me..."



WHAT DOES FRED KNOW ABOUT THEOLOGY?

Has anyone here ever received a "Freddie?" How about a member of your family? Has anyone ever been a runner-up for a "Freddie?"

Even being a runner up would put you in some

pretty good company alongside Southwest Airlines, the Marriott Hotel, Leapfrog Enterprises, Kaiser Hospitals and some outstanding individuals.

I'll tell you more about the man who inspired the best selling book, *The Fred Factor*, and who is the source of the "Freddies" in just a minute.

You need to know that Fred is not known as a great theologian. But his attitude toward customer service is head and shoulders above others in fields of human services, and today I would like to connect that model of service with one of our favorite stories from the life of Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." Learn from my example. You might say that both the good shepherd and Fred were outstanding in their fields – perhaps alongside "Clo the Cow." Perhaps you would not say that, and I am getting ahead of myself anyway. The "Freddie" is an award given for outstanding customer service in some of the best companies in America, and if you know someone who has one, you know someone who has been recognized by management and peers as a role model for the values of the company.

And that is our link to the Good Shepherd this morning.

FIRST THEY WERE SHEPHERDS

Jesus, King David, and Moses were the greatest motivators in the Bible. While their lives were separated by many generations, all three of them shared a single common motivation experience that seemed to prepare them unusually well for their work as spiritual leaders of adults.

- What was Moses' occupation in the desert after he escaped from Egypt, and before he became the man who led the Hebrews to the Promised Land?
- What was the training of David, who confronted the giant Goliath? Before he was a king, before he was a warrior, David did the same thing for his family that many young children did for theirs.

Before the great leaders of the bible were kings, they were shepherds.

**AND WHAT TITLE DID JESUS
CLAIM FOR HIMSELF?
HE SAID, "I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, AND I AM
WILLING TO LAY DOWN MY LIFE FOR MY SHEEP."**

TRAINING

In Bedouin culture, young boys and girls tended sheep. Families in biblical times believed that this work taught morality and responsibility. Caring for the demands of animals helped the children learn to be concerned about the needs of others. Perhaps the greatest joys in life are giving care and enjoying the company of others. Pets may teach the same lessons in our own age.

- The first visitors to the manger were shepherds.
- What is a manger? It is a trough for feeding for sheep.

- How does Jesus describe himself? He says, "I am the good shepherd."

Raise your hand if you spent any part of your youth on a farm.

I can now raise my hand to say that I have milked a cow, or at least helped get the process started, right here in Santa Rosa. Dairies are the second largest industry in Sonoma County, and we all know where the process begins.

Along the mountainside in the Judea hills are a series of horizontal paths. They run like stripes along the mountains and canyons and there are hundreds of them on every hill. I wondered what they were, until we approached a Bedouin camp. Just at dusk, I saw two boys in their early teens walking along one of these horizontal lines. Behind the boys were about fifty sheep. Our scripture lesson was approaching me on the hillside of Judea. Over time, the sheep had worn down the mountainside and created sheep trails that lead to and from the encampments. People have been tending sheep in Israel for a very long time.

SEEKING THE GREEN PASTURES

- Shepherds seek green pastures for their flocks.
- Shepherds seek paths of righteousness and safety, and they search for still waters that are safe for drinking.
- Anyone who has worked in agriculture knows of the mutual respect between the farmer and his animals.

THE SHEEPFOLD

When the sheep were kept in the sheepfold at night, the shepherd often laid across the opening to the sheepfold, acting as a gate both to protect the sheep from predators, and as a barrier to keep them from straying.

PASTOR

I am the "pastor" of this church. It is the most important thing I do – more important than any administrative or teaching responsibility. "Pastor" comes from a Latin word. "Pastor" means "shepherd." The shepherd cares for the sheep, and the good shepherd seeks the lost sheep.

Sometimes the shepherd has to find them in unconventional ways, leaving the flock, and seeking the sheep who are not part of the flock. Shepherds don't herd sheep, but they lead them. They know his voice, and they know his heart. There is no higher praise nor award than to be called the good shepherd. It can't be bought, it cannot be inherited, it must be earned.

Our elected Deacons and Elders are shepherds, our committees for missions, education, buildings, and worship are shepherds of borrowed resources. From time to time each of us is pastor to each other. If someone comes to you for help, in the name of the Lord,

remember what a privilege it is to serve in the Lord's name. Respond generously. Be more generous in your response, than the seeker is in their request.

BEFORE WE ARE KINGS, WE MUST BE SHEPHERDS; IF WE ARE KINGS WITHOUT HAVING BEEN SHEPHERDS, THEN OUR KINGDOM HAS NO FOUNDATION.

WHICH BRINGS ME TO THE FRED FACTOR

Mark Sanborn is recognized internationally as a motivational speaker and leadership trainer. His client list includes Exxon, Airtouch Cellular, BMW Financial, Price Costco, ServiceMaster, and Hewlett Packard. He has authored books on Best Practices in Customer Service, Making Teamwork Work, and a book he calls "*The Fred Factor*."

In the introduction he acquaints us with the real life Fred, and tells us how they met:

The first time I met a "Fred" was just after I had purchased what I called a "new old house." Located in a beautiful, tree-lined area of Denver called Washington Park, the house had been built in 1928. A first-time homeowner, I'd only been living there for a few days when I heard a knock on my front door. I opened it, and saw a mailman standing there

"Good morning, Mr. Sanborn!" he exclaimed cheerfully. "My name is Fred and I'm your postal carrier. I just stopped by to introduce myself, welcome you to the neighborhood and find out a little bit about you and what you do for a living." Of medium height and build with a small mustache, Fred was an ordinary-looking fellow. But, while his physical appearance didn't convey anything out of the ordinary, his sincerity and warmth were noticeable immediately.

I was taken back. I'd been receiving mail for most of my life, but I had never received anything like this kind of an introduction from my postal carrier. But it did impress me as a nice touch.

I replied, "I'm a professional speaker. I don't have a real job."

"If you're a professional speaker, you must travel a lot," said Fred.

"Yes, I do. I travel anywhere from 160 to 200 days a year."

Nodding, Fred went on. "Well, if you just give me a copy of your schedule, I will hold your mail and bundle it. I'll only deliver it on the days that you are at home to receive it."

This was amazing! But, as I told Fred, that was probably not necessary. "Why not just leave the mail in the box on the side of the house?" I suggested. "Then I'll pick it up when I came back into town."

Fred explained, "Mr. Sanborn, burglars often watch for mail building up in a box. That tells them that you're out of town, and you might become the victim of a break-in."

Fred was more worried about my mail than I

was! But after all, I realized, he was the postal professional.

He continued, "Here's what I suggest. I can put mail in your box as long as the lid closes. That way nobody will know that you're gone. Whatever doesn't fit in the box, I'll put between the screen door and the front door. Nobody can see it there. And if that area becomes too full of mail, I'll just hold the rest of it for you until you come back into town."

At this point I started to wonder: does this guy really work for the U.S. Postal Service? Maybe this neighborhood had its own private mail delivery service. Still, Fred's suggestions sounded like a terrific plan to me, so I agreed to them.

Two weeks later I returned home from a trip. As I put the key in my front door lock, I noticed that my doormat was missing. I was puzzled; I doubted that anyone was actually stealing doormats in Denver. I looked around on my front porch and I found my doormat in the corner.

It was covering something.

Here's what had happened: While I was gone, UPS had misdelivered a package sent to me. The box was left on somebody else's porch five doors down. Lucky for me, Fred the Postman was on the job. Noticing my box on the wrong porch, he picked it up, carried it down to my house and put it out of view. He also attached a note explaining what had happened, and then tried to make it less noticeable by placing the doormat over it. Not only was Fred delivering the mail, he was now picking up slack for UPS!

His actions really struck me. Finding examples of what's "right," or even praiseworthy, is (difficult). Yet here was Fred, a gold-plated example of what personalized service looked like and a role model for anyone who wanted to make a difference in his or her work. Because of Fred's example I started sharing my experiences with him in speeches and seminars I presented across the country. Everyone, it seemed, wanted to hear about Fred, whether they were in a service business or manufacturing, high tech or healthcare. Audiences were enthralled and inspired.

A worker wrote to tell me that Fred's example inspired her to "keep on keeping on" and doing what she knew in her heart was the right thing to do, regardless of recognition or reward.

A manager pulled me aside after one speech to tell me he never realized that his career goal all along was to be "a Fred." He believed in excellence and quality as the goal of every person in any business or profession.

And I was delighted to tell him that several companies created a "Fred Award" to present to employees who demonstrated the same spirit of service, innovation and commitment that he did. Someone once sent Fred a box of homemade cookies, care of my address!

...Over the next ten years, I received consistently remarkable service from Fred. I could always tell the days when he wasn't working my street just by the way the mail was jammed in my box. When Fred was on the job it was always neatly bundled.

...To this day, I can't tell you what motivated

Fred. I know he didn't get paid more for his extraordinary work. I doubt he received any special recognition from his employer (if he did, I never heard about it). I know he wasn't privy to any exceptional training or incentive programs.

One thing I do know: Fred, and the way he did his job, is a perfect metaphor for anyone who wants to achieve and excel in the 21st century.

What examples can you think of for outstanding customer service in our community? I'd like to hear those examples right now, and we'll include those in our printed sermon notes:

**CLOVER STORNETTA FARMS
SAFEWAY
LES SCHWAB TIRE CENTERS
BIG O TIRE STORES
OAKMONT VILLAGE MARKET
LONG'S PHARMACY**

A TEACHER IN COLORADO

I have an example of a man who bridges between customer service in big business, and being the good shepherd for those who need him at a critical moment in their life. His name is David Sanders.

David Sanders was a teacher and a basketball coach. He was a father, and recently a grandfather. As a coach, the basketball team practiced under his direction. As a science teacher, he instilled a love for science and nature in his students. As a father and a grandfather, his family could see his love for children. You might say that David Sanders was a shepherd, but on a morning several years ago, he did not know that he would have to lay down his life for his flock.

He heard shots and perhaps explosions in the hallways of his school. There was an emergency plan, and he knew what to do. He told his students to get down on the floor in the classroom.

Suddenly gunmen, students, burst through the doors of his classroom. Shots rang out and David fell to the floor. He had taken two bullets to the chest. He could not catch his breath.

"Stay down," he told his students after the gunmen left his room. "Keep quiet. Stay in the room. Don't leave. Don't panic. Stay with me."

Students tried to stem the flow of blood from David's chest. He bled for three hours. When the siege was over David was dead. The students in David's classroom were safe. They, at least, had survived. The school where David taught was in Littleton, Colorado.

They said he always wanted to teach; he always wanted to coach. He had a real fondness for his students; he was an inspiration to many.

He lay across the entrance to the sheepfold, while the wolves prowled the hallways, until at last the morning came.

SOMETHING IS WRONG

Something is wrong in America. It's not a simple wrong. Yes, our movies and television are too violent; yes, we need more quality time with parents and children; yes, we need to worry less about prayer in school, and more about violence on the Internet. Yes, children do not need to carry guns. Yes, people do not need everything they ask for. Yes, special interests do not need to insist that we are a nation of victims. It is a long list.

But somewhere on that list, we need to ask not only who is my neighbor, but also who is my shepherd? Churches like ours need to provide positive answers to that question. We are the shepherds. The neighborhood around our own church is a good place for us to start. There are plenty of signs of hostile children, immigrants in search of work, broken families, weapons and pornography around us.

Jesus' final instruction to his disciples was, "If you love me, feed my sheep." Our greatest task is to feed even those who don't know they are his sheep. You are the Good Shepherd, and people are depending on you.



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