

Cornerstone Conversations

Our youngest son Gareth loved to listen to stories when he was younger as most children do especially his favorites, and none more so than a little boy called Christopher, his father Wilbert was a son of a poor preacher in Wiltshire and as a boy Wilbert used to go visiting with his father, he especially liked riding on the trains and talking to the railway workers he met along the way.

Wilbert was a poor student and barely managed to finish college, he decided to follow in his father's footsteps because he liked the idea of helping people see God, but Wilbert was not a successful Pastor. In fact he got fired by his church and almost gave up the ministry.

But then an event took place that changed his whole life around, forever, you see his son Christopher, caught the measles and was confined to his bed, Pastor Wilbert amused him with a story he had made up about a little train engine who was sad because he hadn't been out of his shed for a long time.

Christopher just like our Gareth couldn't get enough of the story and wanted to hear it again and again, eventually Wilbert wrote the story down with some crude line drawings of trains with faces on them.

Wilbert's wife thought there was more to the stories than just family entertainment and persuaded her husband to submit it to a publisher, much to Wilbert's surprise the publisher liked it and in 1945, Wilbert Awdry's first book 'The Three Railway Engines' was published, book after book followed. All were stories about little train engines with different personalities who interacted in very simple, but very human, dramas. Every story rang with a message of morality, grace and redemption.

As Awdry himself said about his creation, "The important thing is that the engines are punished and forgiven – but never scrapped!"

Wilbert Awdry might not have been a successful Pastor, but he has been extremely successful in sharing the love of God in another setting, ask our Gareth and other children if they have heard of Pastor Awdry's creation, Thomas the Tank Engine, and you'll see just how successful he's been.

When he was asked what would he like on his gravestone, he replied, "He helped people see God in the ordinary things of life ... and he made children laugh."

Not a bad legacy, I wonder, what will your legacy be, each of us is called by God to serve and glorify him in all we do. That doesn't mean you have to become a Pastor, missionary, or go into full time service, you can serve God by doing whatever you do best.

If you're an artist, you can create art to glorify God, if you're a construction worker, you can build buildings to glorify God; if you flip burgers then you can do that to glorify God. And if you do, you can be certain to leave a legacy.

In Colossians 3:17 it says, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

As Thomas the Tank Engine himself once said, "Little engines can do big things."