

# The DIAZ Dispatch

February 2018



*A faithful friend for more than 45 years!*

## JUST A LADY ON A BUS AND A FAMILY IN LAKELAND

Tom Roy is one of many dynamic Christian leaders we have been privileged to meet on our journey with God. His love for both Jesus and baseball endeared him to us early in our ministry years.

After retiring from professional baseball, he felt called by God to start a ministry that would disciple baseball players. His mission was to reach the players with the Gospel, teach them about their new faith, and then train them to share the message of salvation all over the world using the game they knew so well. As a result he founded Unlimited Potential Discipleship Ministry (known as UPI) in the early 1980's.

Since baseball is one of the most popular games in the world, UPI has had the opportunity to go into countless countries and share the Gospel while teaching baseball fundamentals. This week they are wrapping up a week of baseball clinics in Germany, and are preparing for camps in Italy.

Not long ago, Tom wrote a blog that was a great encouragement to us. As we faithfully share the Gospel, expending our time and energy and pouring our hearts into the lives of the men and women God has placed in our path, we often don't have the privilege of witnessing the results. It can be discouraging and sometimes disheartening. But reading this story by Tom gave us great encouragement and the incentive to remain faithful regardless of the lack of feedback. We hope it encourages you, too!

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A few weeks ago I was told a story by a New York City bus driver. One day he was driving his regular route when a lady boarded the bus. She sat near the front and asked him to tell her when her stop was approaching.

The driver agreed and as he drove toward her stop she spoke to him about her faith in Jesus. The driver told me the strange thing was that a few days earlier he had told his wife, out of the blue, that he thought he should get a bible and read it. He had never owned one. When this lady began talking about Jesus, it got his attention.

When the bus arrived at the woman's stop, the driver opened the door and the lady stepped out. But just as the door was about to close, the lady reached into her backpack, took out a book and asked the man, "Would you like a bible?" Amazed, he took it.

That incident began the bus driver's journey toward faith in Jesus. He was a man who had grown up in a family who attended church regularly but had no understanding of the Bible. He began to read, searching for truth, until one day he gave his life to Christ.

Although at first this was not accepted by his family very well, he continued to grow in understanding and faith. A few years later his wife came to faith and eventually other family members. Today he is a man who lives for Jesus.

That story doesn't end there. Two years ago I felt led to help coach at a local college. My main objective was to get to know the players and hopefully have opportunities to minister to them. I worked with pitchers and sometimes led team devotions. This summer I was honored to be asked to officiate the wedding of one of the players—a fine young man, a good athlete and a lover of Jesus. I explained to the couple that pre marital counseling was required if I did the wedding and they agreed. I learned about the two of them, their family backgrounds and their individual faith journeys.

The wedding was held outdoors on a beautiful summer day. I had enjoyed meeting both families at the rehearsal the previous evening. At the reception I had some time to visit with the father of the groom. The player's dad was that bus driver! Most likely the lady on the bus never knew what happened after she gave that bible to my new friend!

Be faithful to what God has called you to do. You never know how God is going to use your witness.

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We are so grateful for the faithful family here in Lakeland who opened their home and shared the Gospel with a lost, young man who had been forced to drop out of college for a semester due to illness. His name was Ed Diaz. As a result, Ed has had the privilege of introducing many of you to the Savior. And the story continues – as long as you are willing to share it!



## THINGS I HAVE LEARNED *and* WANT TO PASS ON

by Ed Diaz (with a little help from Gwen)

### #4 - It's easy to lose your ball in the weeds of the "Social Justice" movement!

During my 3rd year of graduate school, I was very fortunate to have Dr. Philip Williams as my Greek professor. He had a great passion for the Greek language – and an even greater compassion for his students. During our first class, Dr Williams announced, "If you are an "A" student who is making "C's" in my class, then I am going to be worried about you, and we will have a meeting. If on the other hand, you are a "C" student and you are making "A's" in my class, I will be even more concerned – because that means you are probably committing adultery with your studies!"

Between my third and fourth year of seminary, Dr. Williams went to India to serve as a summer missionary. When he returned that Fall, we asked him, "What was your biggest take-away from your time in India?"

Without flinching he responded, "There is *nothing* we as a society can do to help the people of India." When pressed he explained, "No amount of money, clean water, infrastructure, or healthcare will save them. The only thing that can make a difference in India is the gospel of Jesus Christ!"

What an impression this statement made on me! I have been saddened so many times over the years to witness my brothers and sister in ministry lose their ball in the weeds of the "social justice" movement.

A little history here might help. The social justice movement actually began during the 1960's as "Liberation Theology." As the Catholic Church in South America declined, it began to try to attract people through social programs – free food, water, shelter, etc.

Unfortunately, this became an *end* rather than a means to an end, and the church failed to get around to sharing the gospel with the newly interested multitudes. In fact, South American Marxist leaders began to link arms with Liberation Theology, viewing it as a way to impact the masses and incite rebellion in order to overthrow oppressive regimes.

Throughout the last half century, Liberation Theology found its way to Europe, crossed the continent, and finally returned to the Western Hemisphere, arriving in the U.S. as the "Social Justice Movement" we are experiencing today.

A few years after leaving seminary, Gwen and I joined Search Ministries. Along the way, we became close friends with a wonderful man who had a great heart for the inner city. He moved his family into downtown Baltimore, and started ministering to the "down-and-outers."

Over time, our friend gained great recognition at the city and state level. Eventually many government programs were made available to his inner city work. The problem was this: in order to obtain necessary funding, our friend was forced to compromise his message.

Fast-forward 30 years, and now you would be hard-pressed to ever hear our dear brother speak of the exclusivity of Jesus Christ. His message has been muddled in the social gospel malaise. I am heartbroken over this – and I believe Jesus is too.

The Social Justice theology has chosen to interpret Scripture through the plight of the poor. Social Justice teaches that true followers of Jesus, must work toward a *just* society by bringing help to the poor and oppressed. They say that since Jesus was poor Himself, any legitimate church will give preference to those who have been marginalized. Therefore, defending the rights of the poor has become the central aspect of their gospel. In a nutshell, they believe that Jesus did not come to die for the sins of mankind. Rather, he came to free the oppressed!

However, Jesus himself said it best: "**You will always have the poor with you**" [Matthew 26:11].

There are many times when Jesus fed the multitudes, healed the sick and helped the poor. But his purpose was always to gain a platform to share the message of salvation. There is nothing wrong with providing fresh water and healthy food or building hospitals. These are noble endeavors. The Old and New Testaments are filled with mandates for us to do so.

But we must always let people know the reason that we care. It's because Jesus loved us enough to die for us. He is the *only* solution for their deepest needs. No amount of social programming can fill the void in human hearts. Only Jesus can!