

Sparky and the World Series

Showing love to another human being has its own reward.

The late, great baseball manager Sparky Anderson discovered that truth. Between the fifth and sixth games of a World Series several years ago, a newspaper story told about Sparky's devotion to a friend. Sparky at that time was manager of the Cincinnati Reds. He had attempted to win the World Series twice before and failed, but winning it this time, the story said, was not nearly so important to him as it once had been.

The reason for his changed outlook was a friend named Milton Bush, who lived in Southern California.

Sparky had discovered through a letter from a friend that Milton had cancer and was given about eight weeks to live. Every day during the playoffs and the World Series, Sparky Anderson called Milton to ask him how he was getting along, and to tell him he was thinking of him.

To the reporter who was interviewing him, Sparky said, "Somehow, winning the world championship doesn't have the intense attraction that it once had for me. Now I see what life means in a deeper dimension. Now I've somehow discovered what is really there. And win or lose, there's a new peace in me."

At a time when Sparky needed help, Milton had given Sparky a job. Sparky never forgot his kindness. Calling his friend day after day enabled Sparky Anderson to put his own life into perspective.

One of the stellar things that Sparky did while he was manager of the Detroit Tigers was to establish a charitable organization that helped provide care for seriously ill children whose parents did not have health insurance or the means to otherwise pay for the care. He continued to support the charity well into his retirement.

Showing love for other people and particularly those who cannot repay you is beyond measure.

A faithful missionary was asked, "What pay do you receive for the hardships you undergo and the sacrifices you make, living and working among these people?"

The missionary took a note from his pocket, worn by much handling, and read two sentences from it that were written by a Chinese student: "But for you, I would not have known Jesus Christ, our Savior. Every morning, I kneel before God and think of you, thank God for you and pray for you."

"That," said the missionary, "is my pay."

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter