

Encouragement

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Good Morning Friend,

Do you remember Evel Knievel? He is the man who did numerous daredevil stunts on his motorcycle back in the sixties and seventies. He gained his fame by motor-jumping over rows of buses and trucks . . . first, over a few and then over more and yet more. He also jumped over river canyons, occasionally missing his goal. His injuries were multiple including 37 broken bones over the years; a 30-day coma; and other *near-death* experiences. I had forgotten about him until several days ago when his name was again in the news. After a twenty year retirement, he has just announced that he is planning a comeback for just one more thrill. He knows he is putting his life on the line but he wants to capture the feeling again.

Whenever I would hear about his fetes, spectacular as they were, I would respond with these thoughts . . . *but why?* And . . . *so what?* Now he is ready to try again. Still my responses are the same . . . *but why?* . . . *so what?*

Let's think about risk for a moment. Life can be risky. Ministry can be risky. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 8:35 tells us to expect tough times, and then he mentions these specific trials . . . *trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and sword*. Sometimes we will unexpectedly encounter them. But always we need to be armed with the possibility of danger. Acts 15:26 focuses on two men who encountered and accepted danger as a part of their ministry . . . *Paul and Barnabas, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

- JESUS faced danger and risk. Jesus, *who for the joy set before him endured the cross . . . endured opposition from sinful men* (Hebrews 12:2-3)
- PAUL AND BARNABAS (ACTS 15:26 . . . see above text)
- THE PSALMIST states in Psalm 44:22 . . . *For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered*. (quoted also in Romans 8:36)

We need to add the names of Martin and Gracia Burnham to the roster of Christians in our generation who have accepted risk and danger as a part of ministry. For them it was not only risk and danger but also death. They, while serving Christ in the Philippines, were kidnapped by terrorists in 2001. After 13 months in captivity, Martin was killed by gunfire as Gracia was also shot and injured.

A few days ago, on June 14, 2002, several thousand gathered for the funeral service of Martin in

Wichita, Kansas. The service was conspicuously filled with sorrow mingled with joy . . . loss mingled with triumph.

Perhaps it was the late Dr. Herbert Kane who first introduced me to this phrase . . . THE THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING. I have heard it frequently since then. This theme has frequently been pressed on me by the Lord. Every Christian needs to be searching the Scriptures to thoroughly and accurately develop a theology of suffering that is biblically sound.

Soon you will read about Evel Knievel's latest fete. He will again face risk and danger.

You and I can choose more wisely and make sure that we are risking life for things that really matter. Maybe these two questions can steer us in our decisions.

- Is this cause worth the risk? Yes, the cause of Jesus is worth your risk.
- Is the ultimate reward worth the risk? Yes, the reward to spiritual risk-takers is worth it. The reward will be enjoyed throughout eternity.

Be encouraged,

Lareau Lindquist