

Isn't That a Rather Simple Reason for Such a Heroic Act?

Yes, You Should Try It at Home!

I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2^b)

While repeatedly banging the door, a voice from outside shouted, "Open the door! We're the secret police of the Third Reich. Are you hiding any Jews?" "No," said Corrie Ten Boom. Not believing her, the Nazi police thoroughly searched the house but found no one, though several Jews were actually hiding in the house. Ten Boom, a Dutch Christian, had built a secret room to hide her Jewish neighbors. She was part of only a handful of Gentiles who, during the WW II, "refused to hide behind the mask of the innocent by-stander donned by so many of the fellow citizens in Germany, Poland, France and elsewhere" (*Christianity Today*). For heroic acts like these, many suffered, like Ten Boom who was imprisoned while others, like her father and sister, were killed.

So what made these people to become such exceptional human beings who risked so much to rescue the helpless Jews? In terms of investment, it was a terrible decision since the potential return was absolute zero, that is, in the material sense, while the risk was losing everything, including one's life. Were they naturally more compassionate? Sometime ago, such curiosity led researchers at a university to conduct an 8-year study of these rescuers and found that they may have saved as many as 500,000 lives. So who were these people? They found that these were both "rich and poor, educated and barely literate, believers and even few atheists" (or, a womanizer like Oskar Schindler). But one interesting discovery—a common thread that tied them together—wasn't something you would have guessed. They were ordinary folks who had a history of doing good deeds before the War. Because they got into the habit of doing good, it was a natural response for them. Most of them never planned to be rescuers. They simply found themselves responding to the need first and the danger second. So doing good deeds was a habit for them; habits, whether good or bad, are hard to change!

Some of us are not content with the way we live our Christian lives: not much prayer, hardly ever reading the Bible, and almost never witnessing, but always finding ample time for Facebook, fantasy football or watching the latest movie. But we vaguely hope that someday it's all going to change for the better. But studies indicate that it is unlikely to happen! For instance, let's say that you are a young parent. If you are not praying regularly for your children now when their lives are rather simple and under your control, then, don't expect to pray all of sudden (not the two-minute drill variety) when the lives of your teenagers become complex and not necessarily under your control.

I learned this lesson when I was living at my pastor's house while attending a Christian college in California in 1983. Before I became a believer, I was a very messy person, which frustrated my father. But one day it dawned on me that nothing really had changed. My desk was messy, my dirty plates were left in the sink, and the bed was still unmade! So who ended up fixing these things? The pastor's wife. At the time I was reading a book on servanthood, thus naturally I asked myself, "When do you plan on becoming a servant?" My first answer, "When I become a pastor," was quickly followed by, "If you aren't serving now, you aren't going to serve later." Then I realized that I needed to come out of my comfort zone. So I left the pastor's house early next morning (Monday) in my 1972 Vega station wagon with all my belongings. Parking the

car near the college, I went to school in the mornings, looked for a job and a place to live in the afternoons, and slept in the car in the evenings. And I prayed desperately in between! By Friday, I had a place to stay and found a job as school janitor, working from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. I vacuumed the carpets, emptied the trash cans, and cleaned the toilets!

Undoubtedly, that was one of the most valuable experiences I have ever had in my Christian life, for I learned this lesson: Once “not-living-for-God-now” becomes a habit, then you probably won’t live for Him in the future. 2 Corinthians 6:2^a says, “I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.” So the present time is the best time to form a new spiritual habit by a way of deliberately repeating the desired change. For how long? Well, some scientists say that a typical person needs at least 3 weeks to form a good habit. Or, as long as it takes to make the desired change an integral part of our lives. So try it—whether it be praying, reading the Bible, tithing, witnessing, volunteering or more loving.

Further Reflection

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15:33 & 1 Peter 4:7 and reflect on this question: What are some things you need to submit to?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and reflect on the importance of willing ourselves to action—what does it involve? (Eph. 5:17-18).

Bible Reading

1. Wednesday: Proverbs 17 & Judges 17
2. Thursday: Proverbs 18 & Judges 18