

So, who are the real heroes...?

Tonight, I cannot sleep as I reflect on the past 3+ years of deputation. Deputation... I'm still not sure I know what it is or what it is supposed to be. Anyway, we have been in countless meetings and traveled through 23 states. In many missions conferences we attended, we (along with other missionaries) have often been paraded across church platforms as the "heroes of world evangelism". We have been given positions of great honor and treated as royalty – because we are "missionaries".

But... As I quietly lay in my bed tonight, I seriously pondered the total reality of all these things, and now I wonder who the real "heroes" are. So, taking pencil in hand, I would like to share the meditations of my heart.

It is true that we have left all and "followed Thee". We sold our farm, equipment, tools, and toys; and reduced our earthly possessions to a few cubic feet of stuffed storage boxes which we have tried to protect from the moths, rust and thieves. We've said good bye to family and friends and joyfully jump into the darkness of the unknown of a third world country. Many have made statements to us like, "Wow, what a willingness!" or "What a sacrifice you are making!" and of course, "You are our heroes!" Inside my heart I quietly ask myself... "really...?"

Honesty requires that I look at another dimension of this "missions" reality that is frequently forgotten or ignored by missionaries. Looking past the thorns of the "Laodician Age", scandals, failures, wickedness, worldliness, immodesty, insincerity, hypocrisy and all the other ills that plague the Church today, I would like to recognize and attempt to strengthen some "things that remain".

As I said before, we have travelled many miles through 23 states seeking supporters for our ministry - all with fuel that someone else paid for.

We have bought and eaten thousands of dollars worth of groceries that have sufficiently fed all nine of us for over 3 years - all with someone else's money.

We have been given food baskets, fruit baskets, snack baskets, flower baskets and laundry baskets - all paid for with someone else's hard earned money.

We have been given pencils, pens, paper, books, binders, folders, tablets, cards, envelopes, tape, and markers - may not seem like much, ... but WE didn't have to pay for them.

We have been given or offered gift cards, credit cards, debit cards, gas cards, restaurant cards, birthday cards and anniversary cards - all that someone else paid for.

We have been taken to the shooting range, bowling lanes, the skating rink, the fishing lake, museums and even on charter boats - all because someone wanted our children to have a good time before we go overseas.

Our route between meetings has led us through places like Gettysburg, where, for a few hours, we stopped and felt the pain of one of our nation's deepest struggles; and King's Mountain, where our own liberty stood to its feet.

We wear shirts, socks, shoes, belts, skirts, blouses, glasses and everything else that another “someone” paid for with their “missions” giving.

Medicines, doctor visits, dental care - the list of blessings goes on and on.

Most of the afore mentioned blessings are temporal. But there is another dimension - and it is Spiritual. Here are a few examples. A children's Sunday school class adopted our family and prays for us consistently. A “thinking of you brother..” email with a special scripture verse. A phone call that goes something like.... “ Bro. Duane, are you alright? God woke me up at 3:00 a.m, and you were on my heart. Is there something I need to pray about for you??” Yes, we have done much with other people's money, but I wonder what we have done, that could **not** have been done, without someone else's **prayers**....

My mind must face several contrasts.

We signed our names in your Bibles the one time we were at your church. You sign your names on your “missions giving” checks every week - for us.

We travel down the highway singing and listening to the roar of a diesel engine. You go to work everyday and have to listen to horrible music and bad language.

We bought something we needed for the ministry. You sold your 4 wheeler so we could.

We presented our ministry at your church in 20 minutes. Some of you will support us for 20 years.

To say that our family is deeply thankful seems so insufficient and trite. Maybe we are not the real heroes here.

So, who are the real heroes? Maybe it's us, the missionaries. Maybe it's you, the supporters. Could it be both of us? - or more likely... none of us.

Heroes appear all through the Bible, and two of my O.T. favorites are David and Nehemiah. Neither planned or tried to be a hero. They just, each one, did what God said to do and gave all the glory to Him. Epaphroditus, of Philippians 2, was a man seriously dedicated to “missions”. He worked himself almost to death so Paul could preach the Gospel. When Paul sent him home, his health was broken and so was his heart - broken because he could not do more. I thank my Father in Heaven that He has given us some co-laborers equal to Epaphroditus. What blessings they are to us and our ministry! I pray for them. I pray for their bodies to be strong. I pray for their hearts to remain pure and focused on the real cause of missions.

But, whether it is **us** or **you**, being dedicated to foreign missions doesn't make any of us heroes. It just makes us co-laborers. We are each a small part of the logistic system that our Father has assembled to distribute the Gospel of His Son to lost souls in Indonesia (and through out all the world). The only real Hero here is Jesus Christ. It is He who sits on the “Hero's” throne - it is we who bow and worship before Him!

The meditations of my heart are summarized and concluded in the following words.

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you," Philippians 1:3

"How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." II Corinthians 8:2-5

"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." Matthew 10:24

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Luke 17:10

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."
John 17:4

"And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." I Corinthians 15:28

"Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Revelation 4:11

Bro. Duane Cleghorn and family
To the tribal people of Indonesia
Joshua 1:8,9

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