



Bounding Back!

by Mark Brunner

No Repayment, Just Responsibility! (1 Corinthians 11:3)

You and I both know that it's easy to dodge our responsibilities. All you need to do is ignore them, overlook them or pass them off on someone else. The problem is, we can never dodge the consequences of dodging our responsibilities. They're like that indelible ink that gets on your hand. Scrub as you might, you can't get it to go away. That's what it's like when we try to dodge the good that people do for us by not passing that good on to others.

Here's a story: A penniless boy stowed away on an immigrant ship bound for America. In the mid-Atlantic the ship hit an iceberg and began to sink, but there was enough time to get everybody into lifeboats. Deep down in the bowels of the ship the boy wondered why the ship had stopped and as he emerged from his hiding place there was no-one around. He came up on deck just as the captain was about to step into the last seat of the last lifeboat. In the highest tradition of the sea, the captain stepped back and put the boy in his place, and as the lifeboat was pushed off, he said to the lad: "Never forget what has been done for you." As the lifeboat pulled away, the lad could see the captain standing on the deck, and that vision never left him. He went on to become a successful businessman, and when people asked him about the secret of his achievement he always told the story of the captain giving his life for him and how he was urged to never forget what had been done for

him. “Whenever I get discouraged and feel negatively about myself,” he said, “I recall the vision of what has been done for me and it gives me new courage to keep on keeping on to be worthy of such a price.” (Ron Clark)

To lay down one’s life for another is the supreme sacrifice, one that’s that’s almost impossible to comprehend. We may have asked ourselves when reading of such heroism, “Could I do that?” Or, “How could I ever repay such a sacrifice?” The answer is that repayment would be impossible. But we would surely have a responsibility to take full advantage of such a sacrifice, as did that stowaway on the sinking ship; he went on to success but never forgot the price that was paid by another. How wrong it would be to forget that sacrifice or to cheapen it by failing to grasp the new opportunity or the new life it provided. Jesus gave his life for us on the cross of Calvary. When we celebrate Holy Communion and read that well-known passage of scripture, “This is my body, which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.” Let’s never forget that sacrifice and may we never cheapen it by failing to walk in the footsteps of Jesus or by falling short of the new life he has given to us. We have the freedom to dodge the responsibility, but never the ability to wash it away.

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34)

Colt And All Lord! (1 Corinthians 11:3)

A number of years ago my son Dan announced that he was interested in going in the Marine Corps. To be honest, it was with quite a shock when Holly and I received the news. We’ve known for years that he was interested in all things military. But, like so many parents of an 18-year old, we’d thought this or that about where he was going, but the service in a time of war wasn’t one of them. I think that the hardest concern we had was what would happen after his serve had ended. Would he settle back home or find a new home? Our worst fear had been that he would find a job somewhere away from home and that we wouldn’t see him except for the weekends. In a

moment we were forced to put one of our dearest gifts on the altar of parenthood and pray that God would keep it for us. In the process, everything else that we clung to—our house, jobs and even each other, took on a different light. If we were willing to submit Dan, could and any or all of these things be submitted as well?

Here's a story: A man was at an altar praying. He prayed on and on but didn't seem to make any progress. Finally, he threw up his hands, and cried, "Colt and all, Lord! Colt and all." The man's pastor passed by and overheard the remark and asked, "What did you mean by saying 'Colt and all Lord'?" "Oh, you know that I'm a race horse man. I have a number of racehorses, but one colt on which I have expended much care. I felt sure that he would outrun anything on the track and I just wanted to see him run one time. I told the Lord I would give up the racehorse business but I just wanted to see this colt run one time and then I would give him up, too. But I knew that I could not get anywhere as long as I held on to this colt and I decided I'd better give him up too, so I said, "Colt and all, Lord." (Adapted--William Moses Tidwell, "Effective Illustrations.")

The Scriptures tell us "the head of every man is Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:3). It's often hard to remember this; but it's God's way of telling us to "let go" of the things that we hold the dearest and put them into His hands. Sometimes it may be a lack of faith, when often it's a "colt" that is hindering and, if we will just let all "colts" go, faith will naturally rise and take hold of the Lord. It is a matter of trust and all that God is asking us to do is to put that trust in Him and all the more firmly with the things we hold the dearest. That even includes our children. In the end, His hands are always better at holding safe than ours.

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God Must Be Like You! (1 Corinthians 11:3)

A father once shared this rather emotional definition of Fatherhood with me. His little girl had asked him “What was God like?” “God is like love and sunshine, and all the good things you know.” He said. She smiled. “Then, Daddy, God must be just like you!” Sometimes we dads have a pretty low opinion of ourselves. If you listen to the media or watch the commercials on TV, dads don’t come off well. We’re often portrayed as bumbling, dense and, well, not very godly. In many ways dads have gotten an inferiority complex, especially in the last several decades. We know that we’re necessary for baby-making purposes and bringing home the bacon; but, beyond that any purpose greater, let alone divine, is debatable.

As dads have we succumbed to the media barrage? Are some even conveniently hiding behind the ridicule?

Here’s a thought from Joseph Mazella: “I was driving down the road recently with my windows rolled down. I wanted to feel the wind on my face and smell the sweet scent of the flowers in the air. It was my ears, however, that were blessed with sweetness as I slowed down for a school zone. The laughter of dozens of children filled the air as they ran and played on the playground. I heard several of them yelling with delight as they swung on the swing set. I remembered being their age. Us boys would always give the girls a push and then jump in the empty swings next to them and try to catch up. With our legs pumping we would soon be soaring through the air. We laughed at the thrill of freedom, at the joy of flight, and at the feeling that at any moment we could zoom into the heavens. I remembered later being a young father and pushing my own children on the swings. I remembered as well one time my five-year old daughter saying, “You swing too, Daddy!” I was embarrassed at first but it wasn’t long until I was flying high once more. After that I always swung with my kids no matter who was there to see me. (Joseph Mazella.)

I think that sometimes we forget dads are meant to fly and we need the children to remind us. God didn’t put us here to sit and suffer with our feet in a mud puddle and our eyes on the ground. He wants our spirits to soar into Heaven, nearer to Him, while still here on Earth. God’s Word tells us that dads stand directly under Christ with his love flowing directly through us.

Bumbling, dense and without any real purpose? No, godly dads are, by God's creation, reflections of His Son, Jesus Christ. In that sense my friend's little girl was right, if you want to know God, get to know a good dad. Thank God for dads who always try to do their best. May you love well and fly high because that's where God wants you to be.

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Location–Location! (1 Corinthians 12:13)

"Location, location." I recently had a discussion with an old Realtor friend of mine about the appraisal of our property here at Beech Springs. We talked about the various things that an appraiser would be looking at, including how finished my remodeling work was, the number of bathrooms, even things as simple as whether or not I had painted the support beam posts in the basement. And then he added that old familiar disclaimer known to all who buy and sell realty: "Location, location!" What really mattered was location. How close was I to the nearest freeway and a myriad of other "location" issues. "Ultimately," he said, "if we wished to sell the property the mere value of the home in materials would not be the deciding factor. The geography of the home and the setting, rural, urban, wooded, etc. would affect the asking price and the willingness of the buyer to meet that price."

How about our value as believers? If we are a part of a small church are we any more or less valuable than someone who is a member of a large church with a whole lot more resources?

Here's a thought: The Apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the church in Corinth that "the Body" resided there, in Corinth. He calls it "one body" and not part of the body. Christ is not divided up among the various parts of the body. Rather, He exists in total with each of the various locations of the Body. Each church, regardless of size or resources, possessed Christ's full leadership and the fullness of His blessings through the Holy Spirit. The

value of the location, unlike my property at Beech Springs, doesn't reside in how it is located geographically or somehow connected with the other churches. No, the value is in the "oneness" that exists in every location of the body, no matter the location. Location? We find the Body of Christ, in total, in every place where two or three gather to worship and glorify the Savior. In that respect it is often harmful to the unity of the Body to focus on the size of the church or, for that matter, the broader aspects of the institutional church, whether that be headquarters or district groups. It may also engender "holier" thinking. For example if a seminary or a church headquarters were to disappear, would the body be less holy? No, the body is whole, holy in and of itself wherever it is located. It does not depend upon "other" locations to be whole. Christ would then be divided. Location? It may be important when you're trying to sell your home. But location to God is not important. How His Word is located in your heart has far more value than where you choose to worship on a Sunday morning.

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More of Fred and Less of George! (1Corinthians 12:14)

When I was in High School we had a pretty decent football team. Like so many teams, the success of the team seemed to be centered on the quarterback, George, the star of the team. George was 6' 2" tall, weighed over 170 and had a great arm. He had all the makings of being a pretty good quarterback at age 17. The thing about it was that George also believed the hype. When the local paper ran a story about how the team had done-in this or that opponent and then mentioned his name, George sort of let it go to his head. He made it known in practice and during the game that his arm and play calling ability were what made the team great. Now, if you're a 200-pound lineman, charged with protecting George from the opponent's 200-pound linemen, that didn't sit too well. It wasn't long before one of the opposing linemen got a free pass to rush the quarterback, courtesy of Fred the

right guard, and George landed on his glorious rump. After that George was always careful to mention how important the talents of each member of the team were to making the team a success.

You and I and millions of other Christians make up the church, the Body of Christ, here on earth. What kind of relationship does God want us to have with other believers; dependent or independent? Here's a thought:

Just as George had talents but he was not the team, so too you and I. Some are quarterbacks and others linemen. Alone they are at best ineffective. But, joined together as a team, we are dynamite. My High School football team won games when it played as one body of 11 young men on defense and 11 young men on offense. They often lost games when they didn't. God didn't design all believers to be George's. Instead, He designed us to play well with a George, and George with us. Position isn't important; it's the chemistry that binds the players together that was. That chemistry was a mixture of loyalty, sacrifice, and dedication. Similarly, the chemistry that binds believers isn't talent; it's love. The love of Christ takes the spiritual gifts God gives each of us and produces fruit. In that respect, the church on earth IS an organism: one part dependent on the other to give it function and life. All too often the body becomes a bunch of Georges and a whole lot of Fred's just going through the motions. Nothing really gets done and no one wins. You and I, everyone, has a role to play in God's plan for his church. No one's role is the same or more or less important. We need Georges and we need Fred's. The value of their roles isn't in what they do but how they do it together. God's way is teamwork. While individual effort is important, Christian teamwork is essential. Teamwork trumps individual effort every time.

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