

Complex Martyr Complex



A thought-provoking article from Acts 29 by John Bryson entitled “Learning to be Miserable.” Here’s an excerpt:

“Don’t be a whiner, quitter, or baby and quit pouting or being surprised about “how hard” it is to do what you are doing. Of course it is. You are limited as a fallen human in a fallen world. Learn to cultivate and create...all the while, being miserable. If you can thrive and stay on mission, especially through the worst of circumstances, you are preparing to be a game changer, a true leader, who can adapt, adjust, and endure.”

Now I get what is being said. Life wasn’t meant to be easy, my friend. And much of ministry is slog work for Jesus. And this is Acts 29 macho rhetoric, which has it’s value.

But, seriously – be “miserable”? I know what’s it like to be miserable in ministry, to be depressed, in a hole, clinging to vestiges of faith to get through each day. And while that may be a necessary season of the shadows of death to die to self and learn some humility and dependency upon God – I don’t think it’s healthy to *aspire* to it.

The danger is that you end up sanctifying such a fear of being a slacker that you generate a culture of striving, desperation, and a glorification of leaders-as-martyrs. I’ve been in those rooms where pastors compare “hours-worked-per-week” with unholy (and somewhat Freudian) bravado.

Bryson does offset it with his last sentence: “Jesus is still

our perfect rescuer and our relentless pursuit of Him is still our greatest joy.” But it seems antagonistic to the rest of his article. I couldn’t help correlate it to the curse of Jeremiah 17:5-6. Misery is a curse, not a blessing, or a necessity here:

*Cursed is the one who trusts in man,
who depends on flesh for his strength
and whose heart turns away from the LORD.
He will be like a bush in the wastelands;
he will not see prosperity when it comes.
He will dwell in the parched places of the desert,
in a salt land where no one lives.*

To honour God, ministry has to be work-from-rest, the fruit of worship, a hope, a trust, a joy – with no worries, and green freshness.

*But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,
whose confidence is in him.
He will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.*

Misery happens, for sure, and the faithful push through it. But we must learn to have faith, not learn to be miserable.

Photo credit: <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/1289746>



Struggles in Christian Leadership

Eye-opening and thought-provoking article at Acts 29 on “Why every leader needs a shepherd”. An excerpt here, but read it in full for some challenging statistics.

Pastors deal with an array of emotions as a result of ministering to a group of people. The stress of preparing sermons, developing leaders, handling boards, raising funds for the budget, caring for the sick and elderly, encouraging the wayward, challenging people to get on mission, bringing unity, reconciling conflicts, conducting worship, handling facility issues, counseling, weddings, funerals, social functions, praying with others and the responsibility of having an exemplary marriage and family.



Forever Young

I know very little of this situation but I was moved close to tears when I read of the suicide of Acts 29 network church planter Thomas Young of *The Sanctuary Fellowship* in Texas.

Wisely, some factual information has been released publicly:

The Sanctuary has posted updates at their website:

- *A marital dispute arose between Thomas and his wife.*
- *Thomas made a bad choice in how he sought to settle it, and during the dispute, took his own life.*
- *He was life-flighted to the hospital, but did not*

survive.

- *His wife and three children are with friends, family and church leadership, loving and supporting each other.*
- *the funeral will be Thursday, December 3.*

Please pray for your pastors. There is a right expectation of high standards of our leaders but our pastors are sheep before they are shepherds and sometimes our hearts break. We are to be men, yet children of God. We are to be strong, yet demonstrate our Christ-dependence that flows from our weakness. We are to be morally upright, but without pretense of perfection. We are to lead the charge, yet always run to our Father's arms.

