

You've Gotta Be Crazy!

For Thanksgiving Retreat, Malta - Friday, 24th November, 2000

The reason we are leaving.

We are not “leaving”. We are honouring a commitment made from the beginning. To allow our children to have their formative teenage years in their own culture.

We did it before with our older children, we are doing it again with Richard. Since we have a choice in the matter, we decided not to have 3rd culture kids. Not a criticism of others. Not a model for anyone else to follow. Just something we think is right. For us. And for Richie.

So we are not “leaving”—we are just “going home” for a little time.

And that commitment has some consequences. Like leaving World Vision apparently.

We don't know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future. God knows what work I am to do in the future, and that's good enough for us. God is closing a door, but when he closes a door, he opens a window.

Historic year of 1976

Dean Hirsch, Watt Santatiwat, and Philip Hunt joined World Vision
Bryant Myers had been here a year already
80 people on staff in Australia
Knew them all by name

By 1989

When I became chief executive
Over 200

New staff morning teas

“What made you come to World Vision?”

The answers provided Research over 10 years

Crazy reasons

Just saw an ad

Felt right

Thought it might be interesting

Wanted to do something different

Little logic

No career paths

No planning

Furthermore,

as I watched these people progress over the next few years, I saw that the less people planned their move into World Vision, the better they performed.

Coming to World Vision was a bit like that for me too. I didn't plan it.

I was working on the radio. A DJ.

Looking for a job, but not looking for World Vision or anything like it opened newspaper and there was my CV in an advertisement

I didn't plan it, it just seemed like I was *called*

What causes us to come to World Vision?

The call of Christ

And how do we respond?

Not with logic, thought, minds

But with faith.

It looks crazy to the world

And that's what faith is... it's crazy.

Look at Mark 2:14— the call of Matthew

As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

(NRSV)

No logic here.

Jesus calls

Matthew ups and leaves.

Peter was the same

One minute mending nets

The next following Jesus

Did they know Jesus already? By reputation? Just waiting for him to ask? Was this a trigger event?

If so, Bible silent

No planning, no career paths, not even any apparent thought.

Jesus calls
We respond
But *what* responds?
Not our minds
Not our logic
Not our reason
But that part of our spirit or soul that is faith.
We take a step of faith.

Indeed, when people come to Jesus like they have thought about, he turns them away.

Luke 9:57-62

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

This first guy doesn't wait to be called. He just bowls up to Jesus and says he'll follow Jesus anywhere.

Jesus dismisses him with a fact about sleeping arrangements.

There is never another word about this guy after that. He is gone.

To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Jesus does call this second guy, but this one thinks about it and says "Let me first bury Dad."

Jesus says, "Let 'im bury himself." I'm thinking: *Nice. Very polite, mate.*

Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (NRSV)

Then there is this third guy who doesn't wait to be called and says "I will follow you after I say good-bye to everyone."

Jesus says, "You don't get a chance to look back, mate."

All of these people had thought about it. They had reasoned out what the job required. They had a plan for how they could make the job transition. None of them got the job.

If you are to be a disciple of Jesus, it's not something you can *think* about.

First, you don't choose, HE does.

Second, the only thing that makes it work is when you respond, not with your mind, but with your faith.

Third, we are talking about following someone whose Love is so great, that it surpasses knowledge. For God, love is much more significant than knowledge. Who you are, is much more important than what you know.

So forget thinking about it.

It takes *faith*.

Mystical, irrational, outrageous, illogical, crazy faith.

Now I am not arguing against using our brains

Jesus died to take away our sins. Nowhere in Scripture does it say he died to take away our brains.

I believe in plans, organisation, thinking things through.

But looking back,

all the really significant things that happened in my life and in World Vision did not happen because of planning or thinking.

They happened because we heard the call of Christ,

And our faith responded.

All around me today I see World Vision fighting against this.

Someone wants to see a plan for World Vision ministry in France, or Iraq.

That's not how we have done it before—we make a faith step.

Indeed, when I took up this most recent assignment as Vice President in the Middle East & Eastern Europe region, we were smug enough to have a plan for Albania. The rest of World Vision ignored it. They were probably right.

In the end, we did not begin ministry in Albania because we had a plan. And we certainly did not follow any plan in getting started there. We just took a giant leap of faith.

Of course, plenty of well-trained and smart people still think that was a bad idea. That because we failed to recognise a good plan when we had one, we failed. That because we did not follow a plan in getting started in Albania, we did a wrong thing. That because we just boldly went into

Albania with no staff, no preparation and in a completely knee-jerk response to a human crisis, that we made a mistake.

For sure, we were crazy. But maybe crazy is correct.

Sometimes I wonder if we've got so clever, so big, so good at what we do

that we think we don't need to listen for the call of Jesus.

Or maybe we have so much to lose these days, like the rich young ruler.

So much to lose we have to be so careful. We have to intellectualise.

Analyse. Use our risk logic on every decision. Heaven forbid, that we bet the farm...

There's a lot of talk about strategic planning

and I don't mind it.

There's a place for planning.

Plans are like a map

Plans show you how to get where you want to go *after you've decided* where you want to go.

You want me to take you to Medina this afternoon?

OK. Let me get the map to see where it is.

Planning is no good if you don't know where you want to go. And if you don't know where you're going, any map will do.

Plans are like a recipe

How to make it, *after* you've decided what to eat.

If Judy asks me to bake bread – I pull out the bread-making machine.

And the recipe.

Plans—strategic or otherwise - are no good unless you *already* know where you are going.

And in our business you need to be crazy to know

Because the world's logic gives us no guide.

The work World Vision does doesn't make sense to the people of the world

It's crazy

We believe people can live together in harmony after centuries of ethnic hatred

Crazy

Live in peace after cousins have murdered cousins

Crazy

Justice after generations of oppression and exploitation

Crazy

In right relationship with God after centuries of evil

Crazy

The possibility of living in harmony after violence, scapegoating and mythmaking have ruled the entire history of human beings?

Very crazy

I'm thinking of inventing a new kind of strategic thinking

for Christian organisations who believe in a world without poverty

strategic craziness

You gotta be crazy to go to China to preach, and then come back as a fundraiser for Dutch Reformed missionaries. Bob Pierce was that kind of crazy.

You gotta be crazy to go to Korea as some kind of preaching war correspondent, then come back to America with this lunatic idea that people might give five dollars a month to sponsor one of the kids you had seen in those far-away foreign orphanages. Bob Pierce was that kind of crazy.

You gotta be crazy to take a little church based fundraising program called the 30 hour famine from Canada, and believe you could turn it into a national event. The first guy I worked for in World Vision, David Longe, was that kind of crazy.

You gotta be crazy to think we could be an organization that worked for a world that no longer tolerates poverty. But we are that kind of crazy.

Old saying: You don't have to be crazy to work here, but it helps.

It's wrong: You DO have to be crazy to work here.

Crazy, according to the world's values anyway.

But God's craziness is wiser than the world's wisdom.

Are we crazy? What kind of crazy things have you done this past year?

What kind of craziness is this?

The craziness of faith.

Living in obedience to the call of Jesus.

It cannot be explained in the world's terms.

That sense of peace and assurance that comes when God calls and our souls respond with a certain "Yes!"

I cannot tell you how I know that God has called me to do this or that.

I realise that my inability to explain this in logical terms is frustrating for those who value logic so highly.

I sympathise. I find it frustrating myself.

But it is a mystery.

A kind of crazy mystery.

The mystery of faith and obedience.

You see, in the end, it doesn't matter what we know.

It matters in whom we believe.

Friends, after 24 years in World Vision

I am glad to admit that I'm still crazy after all these years

Crazy enough to march off the map.

Crazy enough to think that love might be more important than knowledge, and perhaps that love management might be more useful than knowledge management.

Crazy enough to believe that who you are is more important than what you do.

Crazy enough to reckon that it is more important to be loving, than it is to be important.

Crazy enough to base my next career decision on a decision about my child's education.

Crazy enough to continue the journey of seeking that great love that surpasses all knowledge.

A-men