The Next Steppe

Our Shield of Faith

Throughout all the coming and going and learning and prepping that John and I have been doing in the past several months, God is teaching us about faith. I want to share something on the shield of faith (Eph. 6:16) from day 4, part 2 of “Our Modern Warfare,” a devotional from Relentless Women Warriors:

“Faith is a verb, an action, not a belief. In order to truly have faith, an action must accompany it. Faith is evident by our actions. Faith has to be in motion in order for our shield to be raised up in defense.

A Roman soldier understood the importance their shield played in protecting themselves and the soldiers to their right and left. If one shield went down in an attack, the entire army could be compromised. Every single shield mattered. The same is true for our shield of faith; it’s not only for our protection, but those close to us.

I hope you realize that your shield matters. There is a gaping hole on the battlefield when you are not holding your shield up. God created you with unique gifts and talents. You have an irreplaceable role in the war…

When we’re not living out our faith and attaching actions to our beliefs, we’re not only leaving ourselves vulnerable but also those closest to us… Our faith in action encourages many others to do the same. Living out our faith can be: making church a priority, fostering/adopting, serving in your local church, getting out of debt, staying sexually pure until marriage, breaking addictions, offering forgiveness, etc…”

As in James 2:14-26, “faith without deeds is dead.” We can’t just give mental and verbal assent to God’s existence and the truth of His word; how we live our lives has to back it up. Otherwise, our actions will bely our true convictions, and we will be no less hypocritical than the Pharisees of Jesus’ day (whom he condemned for their actions). I don’t want to be that for sure. I want my life to be an encouragement to others and an enticement for them to cultivate their own deeper relationship with Christ. John and I pray that God will direct and strengthen us as we endeavor to live out a true faith both here now and later in Mongolia.
By the time you read this, we will have returned (Jan. 24) from our conference in SE Asia and a wintery visit to Mongolia. The retreat was a great time of sharing, learning, and being mentored by seasoned long-term missionaries. We learned about what God is doing in other parts of Asia from other retreat attendees. We also had sessions on stress management, avoiding burnout, resiliency, disciple-making, and business as missions, as well as visits to some veterinary projects in the region. John and I felt like wieners in a steakhouse working alongside folks who have served or have been serving overseas for many years - some in very difficult areas. We very much enjoyed our time together, sharing meals, activities, and stories of the highlights and challenges on the field.

John and I will be home long enough to unpack, get a few things done at home and repack for more travel. This month (February), we will be going to Auburn, AL, and Minneapolis, MN to speak to and encourage veterinary students at two CVM Real Life / Real Impact events. In between, we will be participating in a week-long Biblical counseling workshop in IN, and around the ends, we hope to share our ministry vision with friends in the South and Midwest.

Praises:

a great holiday visit with our children and Laurie’s mother and extended family in CA

a good trip to Asia in January

some very encouraging end-of-year giving to “The Next Steppe” – THANK YOU!

Prayer requests:

for good travels to the Biblical counseling training, two CVM events, and friend-raising

for all the CVM Real Life / Real Impact events across the country: for lots of vet students to take part, for safe travels, and for God to speak to the students’ hearts during these times

for us to have hearts of flesh that are attuned to Holy Spirit and to each other that we may ready to step out in service, whatever that looks like

for the Mongolian people to have open hearts to the Good News

Blessings,

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