



The Strength in Laughter by Frank Naea

Laughter: it's sometimes outrageous, but it's the gift of God

There is a strong emphasis in YWAM of us counting the cost as we consider the challenge of world missions. I'd like to point out one element in the pioneers I've met and the people I've seen go into the most difficult places. One of the things I've noticed about them is that they have a wonderful sense of humor.

Now, it's sometimes outrageous in its expression, but it's the gift of God that has enabled them to turn difficult situations into things they can laugh about. It gifts them with the capacity to embrace the difficult things.

Sometimes, even in the re-telling of some of the most difficult times in their lives, they do it with great laughter. They see a funny side to it. They see, although it was really intense then, in hindsight it wasn't so bad. We learned a lot of stuff. God was good. He was still there.

So if you cut off those expressions of humor, then you limit what are the demonstrations of life. If the joy of the Lord is our strength, but we are always counting the cost, then there is an imbalance there.

We're trying to be very serious, and that's a good thing. We're supposed to count the cost. So let's teach these people as they count the cost how to celebrate life so that they are equipped with the joy of the Lord to be able to afford to pay the bills in terms of counting the cost.

If we have cut off expressions of celebration, if we've limited the expression of joy and laughter, then we are going to have people who burn out, who are going to be reluctant to take on the difficult things. Or if they take them on and rise to the challenge, they are going to be ill equipped in their capacity to celebrate God in the midst of what can be very difficult trials.

Some of the Brazilians I've met in YWAM are amazing to me. I see them go into hard places.

But, you know, when I sit down and talk with them, they are the most joyful, life-loving, hospitable, giving, caring, outgoing, fun-loving people. So, to me, that's more the key to their pioneering than their grittiness, their determination, their having embraced the cost of surrendering their life to Jesus.

I think many of us have those same fun-loving qualities, whether we are in first-world or third-world situations. The key to us enduring over a long period of time, it has to be the joy of the Lord, your capacity to celebrate life even in the midst of difficult times.

The following article by Frank Naea, President of Youth With A Mission, is reprinted with permission from the International YWAMer, September 2001 issue.