

What It Really Takes to Follow

From a recent Hagar the Horrible comic: Hagar is inciting on his troops. "This is the moment we've been waiting for men! The moment we do battle with the enemy! Is everyone here?" They shout: "YES!" Hagar continues: "Okay men -- repeat after me. 'I am a Viking Warrior!'" **"I AM A VIKING WARRIOR!"** they shout. "And I will fight to the death for what I believe!"

(silence in the next frame) (silence again in a second frame) In the third frame Hagar asks: "Okay, why aren't you repeating after me?!"

One meek Viking speaks for them all: "Hagar, the men would like to change that to 'and I will fight hard until it's time for dinner.'"

Similarly, could you image a poster of Jesus pointing his finger at you (like "Uncle Sam") with "I want you" printed in large letters. Then, in much smaller print:

You will be arrested and persecuted.

You will be handed over to religious and secular authorities.

You will witness to these authorities about Jesus.

You will be betrayed by family members.

Some of you will be put to death.

You will be hated by all because of me. (by Brian Stoffregen from *Exegetical Notes*)

Garth Wehrfritz-Hanson remembers a story:

I had a wonderful...friend until she died several years ago at the age of ninety-seven. The newspaper headlines changed a lot over the course of her lifetime.

When she was born, in 1894, there were no airplanes, no televisions, no automobiles to speak of. Russia was ruled by a czar and China by an emperor. The only way to get to Europe was by boat.

As she got older her short-term memory got worse, but her long-term memory got better, and one day as I sat by her bed she told me about a summer's day from her childhood, when she and some of her girlfriends hitched up their long skirts and climbed a mountain. They went too far and

stayed too long, she said, and before they knew it the beautiful sunset they were watching had turned into a foggy dusk so that they could not see their hands in front of their faces.

No one had a flashlight—flashlights had not been invented yet—and no one knew for sure which way was down, but they agreed they would all hold hands and that **they would not, under any circumstance, let go of one another.**

So that is how they did it—one girl at the front, picking her way down the mountain one step at a time—and all the rest of them strung out behind her, holding onto each other's wrists so that they made a living human chain.

Every now and then someone would want to argue about which way to go and the others would listen, **but what none of them did was let go.**

"Sometimes," my friend said, "all I knew or could see of the world was the hand ahead of me and the one behind. Sometimes my arms ached so badly I thought I would cry out loud, but that is how we made it at last.

We found our way home by holding on to one another."
(Comments to Garth at wehrhanca@yahoo.ca.)

With a Good Ship

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale once told of encountering a hurricane while on a cruise in the Atlantic. After the captain managed to sail around the danger, he and Dr. Peale were visiting with one another. The captain said he had always lived by a simple philosophy namely that if the sea is smooth, it will get rough; and if it is rough, it will get smooth.

He added something worth remembering: "But with a good ship," the Captain said, "you can always ride it out."

Our ship is our faith in Christ. With a good ship, you can always ride it out.

Life is unpredictable. God is with us. Not a hair on our head will perish.
(by King Duncan, adapting Steve Lambert, www.Sermons.com)