

Cross Current



Real help for real life

Volume 34, Number 33

November 29, 2009

Give Up Your Life



Slap... Slap... Slap... The melancholy sound of the metal pins penetrating the polished wood echoed across the manicured lawns of Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego and was heard clear across the world. It was October 2006.

Petty Officer Michael Monsoor was just 25 when he was killed in enemy-held territory near Ar Ramadi, Iraq. According to the military's official account of that day, the young Navy SEAL and two others were crouched on a rooftop watching for enemy activity.

Out of nowhere, a grenade hit Monsoor in the chest and bounced onto the deck. "Grenade!" he yelled and bounded to his feet. Realizing there was no escape for his friends, the soldier threw himself on the grenade which detonated as he fell on it, killing Monsoor instantly.

"Petty Officer Monsoor's actions could not have been more selfless or clearly intentional," said the military's Summary of Action report. "Of the three SEALs on that rooftop corner, he had the only avenue of escape from the blast and, if he had so chosen, he could have easily escaped. Instead, Monsoor chose to protect his comrades by the sacrifice of his own life."

For his "courageous and selfless actions", the soldier was awarded the Medal of Honor. He'd already received the Silver Star for helping another SEAL pull a wounded buddy to safety amid heavy gunfire, but the greatest honour of all was to come at his funeral on that crisp October day.

As Monsoor's casket was taken to the gravesite, two rows of fellow



Text Messages!

"All scripture is inspired by God and useful to teach us what's true and to make us realize what's wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we're wrong and teaches us to do what's right." 2 Tim. 3:16

followers of Christ meet at
16 Morrell St., Btfd, ON, N3T 4J2
Sharing Jesus and the Journey

JOIN US!

Sunday
Worship 11:00

Wednesday
Bible Study 7:00
Phone 758-5673
(75 U-LORD)

One by one, the soldiers slapped the top of the passing coffin, embedding in the wood their gold Tridents, a pin awarded for successful completion of SEAL Qualification Training, a symbol of excellence, pride and brotherhood in the military elite.

As President George W. Bush said later during the Medal of Honor ceremony, "The procession went on nearly half an hour and, when it was all over, the simple wooden coffin had become a gold-plated memorial to a hero who will never be forgotten."

That powerful, poignant tribute to one man's sacrifice and the salvation it brought his friends needs to be played out in our lives, too. Each of us owes a huge debt of gratitude to Jesus Christ who paid the ultimate price to save us from our sins and the punishment we'd otherwise deserve. By taking those sins upon himself, Jesus makes us guiltless in the sight of God, if we'll accept that gift of forgiveness and "live for what's right" (1 Peter 2:24).

John puts it this way. "We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters." Few of us are willing to go that far, but John says there's something we can all do. "If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion, how can God's love be in that person? Dear children, let's not merely say we love each other; let's show the truth by our actions... so we'll be confident when we stand before God." (1 John 3:16-19)

There's more than one way to give up your life. You can die physically to save others, or you can surrender your pride, priorities and possessiveness to embrace the sacrificial life of servanthood modelled by Christ. When we truly come to grips with how much we owe him for saving us from our sins, ourselves and our sentence, we'll live out our gratitude in a meaningful way.

In our case, the symbol of our qualification in the spiritual elite is our love; love that must be genuine and obvious from our actions. Love is a powerful word but don't just say it, display it. Every day must be a commemoration of the sacrifice made by Jesus for each of us. Every time we extend his love to others, we symbolically honour him, as if embedding our love, not in the closed lid of a casket but the coarse wood of a cross. Slap... Slap... Slap...