

Locking Arms with Me and Others Around the World

Written by Bill Perkins

It's the first of the year and I was thinking about water-skiing in Texas in December--without a wet-suit. I used to barefoot water-ski. I thrived on the adrenaline rush of skimming across glass-smooth water at high speeds.

I enjoyed using my heels to create six-foot rooster tails made of water. I savored the challenge of performing tricks like a deep-water start or crossing the wake or skiing on one foot or managing a tumble turn. All of those things I liked about bare-footing, I did not like falling face-first against a plate of placid water while going forty miles an hour. That I did not like.

“Could You Teach Me?”

One day a friend asked me, "Could you teach me to ski barefoot?"

Since he already knew how to slalom I said, "No problem."

"Really?"

"Yeah, provided your willing to repeatedly fall face-first while racing over the water at forty miles per hour."

"I can handle that," he said.

I smiled. This would be interesting. I considered testing his resolve with a couple of sharp slaps across the cheeks. Instead I said, "The key word you may have missed in my condition was repeatedly."

The First Face-Plant

The first face-plant he experienced painted his face a bright red, cleaned out his sinuses, made his eyes bulge, and stole his enthusiasm. As I brought the boat around he sputtered that he would give it one more try.

The second face-plant ripped off his hair, tore off his wet-suit, and moved his nose to the back of his head. Or so it seemed to him.

"Maybe you can give it a try later on," I said in an effort to restore his dignity.

"Yeah, later."

He Never Tried Again

Of course, he never tried again. I knew he wouldn't. But over the years I've taught a lot of guys to barefoot. They're the ones who wouldn't give up because of multiple face-plants.

The Single Difference

The funny thing is that the guys who stuck with it weren't more athletic or courageous or less prone to feel pain than the guys who gave up. The single difference in these men was commitment. They made up their minds, before they stepped onto the water, that they would ski barefoot, and eventually they did. The other guys liked the idea of barefoot skiing but only if learning was quick and easy and painless.

When I've taught a friend to ski barefoot, I always tried to make it clear up front how bad it hurts to eat the lake at high speeds. Since I didn't want them to fail, I encouraged them to count the cost before trying it. But I also urged them to envision the thrill of skimming across the water on their feet. The vision of success often provided the motivation needed to pay the cost to achieve it.

Jesus said it this way in Luke 14:28-32 "Otherwise, after he has laid the foundation, if he can't finish the building, all who see it will ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build a tower, but couldn't finish it!' "Or what king, as he goes to engage another king in war, won't sit down first and consider whether he's able, with ten thousand soldiers to meet the king who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if he can't, while the other king is still far away, he sends a peace delegation to negotiate a peace treaty."

Every January

Every January I recommit myself to God and to the spiritual disciplines that God uses to facilitate my growth. The disciplines aren't an end in themselves but a means to an end--personal godliness. I take this step by first considering what kind of a man I want to be in one year. And then I think about what price I'll need to pay to daily seek God and love my family. I'm now challenging you to join me this year. Commit yourself again to daily:

- 1) Spend time in God's Word
- 2) Pray
- 3) Maintain sexual purity
- 4) Affirm your family.

But before making the commitment again, count the cost. And before counting the cost consider what kind of man you want to be in one year and what it will take to get you there. If you hold to that vision, and consider the cost of commitment--by God's grace, you'll succeed.