

Hooks, Rocks, and the Way Things Are Done

I sat down just before worship and draped my arm across the pew behind Jacque's back. Sister Bobbie Daniels gently grabbed my forearm. I turned to greet her always pleasant, smiling face. Sister Daniels is a petite little lady and well into retirement years. She is so delicate that on occasions when I hug her, I do so with care. This morning she had a question. "When you are climbing up those mountains . . . and you throw that hook up there--how do you know it is going to hold?"

I could only smile and say, "Sister Daniels that only happens on TV." And there you have it. I will admit that I talk of climbing and rope gear often in my lessons. I don't know what I think people ought to think when they think about climbing. I mean I know how it works. But here was this dear sweet sister, who every time I've said "climbing," has had this image of me standing at the base of some monolithic slab and slinging a grappling hook into space. Actual climbing is nothing like that at all. I will take some gear to the church building and help to ease her mind about my safety and my sanity.

Misperception is probably present in lots of areas other than climbing. In fact if people would ask more often lots of things could be cleared up. Maybe people hear us talk about how Christians deal with death, loss, sickness, marital difficulty, stress or a host of other life issues. They hear us use terms like "faith," "hope," "providence." Maybe they even hear "prayer" and "blessings." When they hear these terms what do they picture? Maybe they say, "I don't see how you throw that prayer up into the air and trust your faith to hold you." Maybe they think that the way we do things is dangerous or even crazy. Maybe they need to understand that Christians have difficulties, fears, challenges, stresses and trouble. Faith doesn't mean we don't hurt. Faith doesn't mean we aren't scared or scarred. Prayer won't keep us from being scarred. Faith means that we continue to live even when we are hurt, scared, scarred or depressed. Prayer isn't an incantation that makes things go away. It is a conversation with God to help us handle the things that come our way. People may think it is easy for us Christians because we never have any trouble. That's as silly as climbing with a grappling hook. In the story of the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7) Jesus didn't have two builders with two different sets of circumstances. He had two builders with the exact same circumstances. The difference in the builders was what they chose to build on. The three key words in real estate are "location location, location," but where the house sat was not as important as what the house sat upon. The wise man's house was not in a storm free location. It was in "tornado alley" just like the foolish man's house. Looking at the weather pattern won't tell you where the wise man lives or where the foolish man lives. The difference between wisdom and foolish is only seen after the storm. Not storm free; but standing in the aftermath. It's not that Christians have different things to handle . . . We just handle things differently. I Thess. 4:14-15; James 1:2-5; Romans 5:1-4.

—Lonnie Jones