

MisSion CriTikal

#20 – *Vandalized! (part 1)*

There's no easy way to say it. The tent mission that took so much effort and prayer to build, is flattened. The stakes that anchored the tent ropes to the ground were all pulled out of the ground. The questions flew – who would do such a thing? Why on earth would anyone destroy efforts that are totally for helping others; others that can't easily help themselves? Will this destructive behavior continue? Is someone going to be injured next?

Most everyone involved with the hilltop mission above the 'poor-folks village' were very edgy, and some were angry, to say the least. Lyla walked up to the damage site with Ol' Tom's hand on her shoulder as she became his eyes for this uphill journey. She placed Tom's wrinkled hand on each place where the tent stake lay, next to the hole it once occupied.

Though Tom's blind eyes couldn't see the disturbed look in the eyes of everyone else, their eyes watched as he calmly examined the damage around the tent. His cool reaction to the vandalism led most to think he didn't care – which was as wrong as could be.

He stood to his feet, brushed the dirt from his knees and then rubbed his hands of dirt. Tom was not a man that wasted time with a bucket of 'what-if's. His announcement was clear and sure, “OK everybody. Tomorrow after noon we'll get the tent back together, and then have an old-fashioned no-frills bonfire. I need every teenager to attend. I'll bring the teakettle. For now, let's all go home and personally thank the Lord no one was injured.”

As each headed for home, the question on most of their minds was - what is going to happen tomorrow with Tom, the teenagers, and a teakettle?

Shortly after noontime the next day, teens began showing up. There was Lyla, Andy, Ian, Ben, Lenny, and Daenum all waiting for their blind guide, Tom to arrive. He did and led everyone in an opening prayer with a bit of an odd tone. Ol' Tom talked to the Lord like he thought the Lord knew this was going to happen and sort-of wanted it to happen for His good purpose.

The stakes and ropes were replaced and the mission tent was

as before. Preparations were made for the small fire with rocks arranged as a fire ring in a place away from the tent, Story Spot, and nearby trees and brush.

A forked stick was stuck in the ground with another strong stick set in the fork with one under a sizable rock away from the fire. The other end of the stick held Tom's bent-up teakettle already containing some water over the fire. Their elderly dark-skinned teacher said, “Watch closely. I'll be asking questions.” The fire soon had the teakettle shooting steam from its spout like it was trying to whistle for attention.

Tom asked the teens why the teakettle was doing what it was doing. He got good answers and attention from the teens. He set the teakettle away from the fire and let the fire die down. He faced the teens and began, “Ya know. Teens are a lot like this teakettle. I know I sure was, when I was your age. Pressure would build up in me until I thought I'd erupt like a volcano and tell the whole world how much I hurt inside.”

“Something ya gotta know about our inside pressure. When it comes out, it can burn – it can hurt others – it can even frighten people.” He paused for a moment and then continued. “Fear inside us is like those flames that create the pressure inside. If the fear continues, day after day, it'll soon erupt like steam or deadly lava and rocks blasting from a volcano.”

“God wants us to first think of these eruptions of outside anger, that started as inside hurt and fear, as cries for help. He wants us to look past the rocky actions and hear the help cries that He hears. We are to become good listeners. With His help we can hear the heart rumblings long before an eruption and share God's love and promises to cool those steamy fears that seem to never leave.

Mentoring others with inside fears must be anchored, staked if you will, to God's infallible written word, in small clear bites. Jesus staked out His promise for our peace with, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27) Share this 'peace promise' with a teen near you.

(continued in next chapter)