

Being Indiana Jones May 18, 2008

I wonder, is there anyone in the house that is a fan of the Indiana Jones movies? If you are, you have to be psyched that a new Indiana Jones movie is coming out this week. *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. Just to get warmed up, several weeks ago we bought the trilogy—the first three movies—and have been watching them...a lot. For those of you who have heard me talk about movie preferences, it will be no surprise to you that my son Harry has been glued to these movies—recall...this is the kid who loves movies like Patton and Gettysburg. Like his father, Harry enjoys good action adventure movies like Indiana Jones. Of course these movies are full of action and adventure. In fact, we were so geeky that we actually watched the bonus DVD..."The Making of Indiana Jones." In that footage the creators of movie were talking about the character of Indiana Jones. They purposely created this character to be kind of like a Saturday morning cartoon hero...a guy that finds himself in the most unbelievable circumstances, miraculously gets out, and then goes on to his next adventure and repeats it over again and again.

So, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg purposely created this character, Indiana Jones, to be an adventurer. His day job is as a goofy and awkward professor of archaeology; however, his passion in life is to track down ancient artifacts around the world...and in the process, he pushes himself and others around him to the absolute limit. If you are going to be around Indiana Jones, plan on being outside your comfort zone.

Now here is the thing about Indiana Jones...about all his grand adventures, about him being outside his own comfort zone, and always putting those around him outside theirs...what's the point? Maybe better said, what is the motivation for Jones? Was it for riches...fame...glory? I don't think we ever get a really clear answer from the movies as to why he so often lived on the boundaries of his comfort zone. Sometimes it seems to be for the right reasons, sometimes not so much. Remember in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* when his great archaeological rival Belloq hauls him in? Belloq was the unscrupulous French archaeologist that always seemed to best Indiana Jones in the quest for artifacts. Anyway, Belloq challenges Jones...says you aren't so much different than me...

I got to thinking about this whole idea of Being Indiana Jones...what does it mean for each of us to be a little like Indiana Jones? I suppose in many ways it is to acknowledge that at some level...like Belloq points

out...we really are human, and susceptible to human frailties. Sometimes our motivations aren't always pure...sometimes we do things for an expected payoff...because we expect something in return. Perhaps we are willing to move outside our comfort zone in order to realize some tangible gain. Of course that's not always a bad thing. For instance, a good friend of mine has recently taken a new job way outside her comfort zone. It is a lateral move within her company. Whereas she used to be in the field working with doctors and training, she's now moved into an internal middle-management position that she says is just not in her thing. But in order to get the position she wants and the increase and salary that goes with it, she has to do *this* job outside her comfort zone.

That though, is not this goofy idea of the every day Indiana Jones I've been thinking about—not really my idea of *Being Indiana Jones*. Recently another friend of mine shared a story with me that really resonated with me in this context of moving outside ones comfort zone with no real expectation of getting something in return. For me it does point to what I believe it might mean to be an every day Indiana Jones. My friend Mary Katherine Schnitz was telling me about this situation that happened to her recently. Many of you may know Mary Katherine, she is our director of care ministries at St. Luke's. Let me tell you a little bit about MK. We affectionately refer to her as Saint Mary Katherine. She is on the phone 24-7 helping people, in the hospitals, taking people to doctor's appointments...and the word no very rarely finds its way into her vocabulary. I personally have never heard her say it...I think it was back in 1986 when she said it last. Now, the downside of all that is...well, let's say she runs herself ragged. Many of you have jobs like that where you give and give and give of yourself, until there isn't much left over. Anyway, Mary Katherine was telling me about this funeral she had helped put together with a pastor from Chicago. She had worked extensively with the family and coordinated the service and worked with the pastor to make it all happen. In the process, she developed a nice camaraderie with this pastor from Chicago. Well, a couple of weeks ago this pastor called her and asked if she'd be willing to help her lead a women's retreat in January. Now, I want you to imagine her response...there were really two conversations going on now—the one on the phone, and the one with Mary Katherine stepping outside herself having a private conversation with...*herself*. "What, are you nuts...a women's retreat...in Chicago...in January. First of all, I'm not a women's retreat kind of person, but second of all, it's January...in Chicago!

Now, back to the conversation on the phone..."Sure, I'd love to help you out." Now, how many of you have ever done that? Said yes, when you wanted to say no? Anyway...the excitement on the other end of the phone was palpable. "Oh, this is wonderful," the Chicago pastor said, "We'll pay for your flight." "Flight? Oh that's not necessary," Mary Katherine said, "it's just a three

hour drive to Chicago, I don't mind." "Chicago, oh no honey, our cruise leaves from Miami. The women's retreat is on a Windjammer cruise for a week in the Caribbean."

Aha...now we're talking...Caribbean adventure. Are you beginning to get the connection now...Indiana Jones, er uh, Indiana Mary Katherine...Mary Katherine Schnitz and the Cruise of Doom. Okay...not so much. So, wait a second...let me put the brakes on this story for just a second so we can absorb this...this first half of the story is a message within a message...it has its own zip code. You can see what happened, right? Saint Mary Katherine was saying yes to a women's retreat *in Chicago...in January*, and when she said yes, she got the Caribbean Cruise. I think I get it...the moral of the story...say yes to things you don't want to do and you get a reward...right?

Listen to this morning's Bible passage from James: *Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.*

Isn't that what it's saying? Actually not...I don't think. It says the reward is *life and more life*. While the cruise is a nice side benefit...maybe even life giving, I don't think it is reward for some good deed. And, knowing Mary Katherine as I do, she didn't say yes with any expectation. She just said yes because it was the right thing to do.

Okay, now it is time to leave this zip code and go to the second half of the story...where we really find *life and more life*—where we find our every day Indiana Jones. Now here is the thing with Indiana Jones...I think often we get caught up thinking about new challenges and opportunities in life on the grand scale of Indiana Jones. That is to say, we often feel as if we don't do big, grand things to the extent of Indiana Jones' adventures, we are failures, or boring, or in a rut. Okay, maybe every now and then sky-diving or something grand like that is in order...but I really believe our lives are fulfilled and we are richly blessed and rewarded when we take on the challenges of every day life head on...listen to the first part of the Bible passage again... *Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate.*

The truth of the matter is, if we can just meet the new challenges that present themselves to us every day we really are mighty fortunate...but in meeting THOSE challenges, that is where I believe the real reward of *life and more life* is realized. So, in her next breath Mary Katherine said how excited she was about the Caribbean cruise, but then she stopped dead in her tracks with a look of sheer terror on her face. Oh my gosh though Stan, my worst fear...in front of people in a bathing suit. Oh my gosh though Stan...I'm not a woman's retreat person. Oh my gosh Stan, I'm not a very good swimmer. Oh my gosh Stan, I've never been

on a boat of any kind when I didn't get seasick. But, oh my gosh Stan...I've never been so excited to do something in my whole life. This is so far outside my comfort zone, I can't even tell you...but I am so excited. And she really was beaming too, just absolutely beaming. Of course our heroic Indiana Jones would scoff at swimming and being seasick, but our everyday Indiana Schnitz is finding out what it means to connect meeting seemingly small challenges with experiencing *life and more life*.

Now shhhh, don't anyone tell Mary Katherine I said this, but I bet she'll have a little angst about her swimsuit. I bet she'll be a little concerned about the swimming part, and I bet she'll get a little seasick on her women's retreat. But, I'm confident beyond a shadow of a doubt she will have the time of her life. Because you see, I believe it is in those small, everyday adventures we undertake that life's rich pageant is most fully realized. A few weeks ago I was invited to go to the Indiana AIDS Foundation Spotlight Event. It is their major fundraiser for the year. A very nice woman in the congregation over at St. Luke's invited me to go. She said she knew of my work with the St. Luke's AIDS Task Force and of my work with the Neema Orphanage and thought I might enjoy this event. Well, the event is at Cloew's Hall at Butler. It is a very well organized event with different kinds of entertainment—orchestra, ballet...theater. Well the day of the show I still didn't have the ticket, so I had to call the woman and ask her about it. She said her husband had dropped it off at St. Luke's. Okay...so I go to St. Luke's pick up the tickets...\$100 VIP tickets! I called her right back...\$100 VIP tickets? Now, I know exactly what you are thinking. You are thinking this is just like Mary Katherine saying yes to Chicago in January...oh no honey...not at all, just wait.

She went on to explain what that meant...\$100 VIP. What that meant was I was sentenced to go schmooze in the VIP tent for 2 full hours before the show ever started. Now, you here at BB, you didn't get my introvert story from a few Sundays ago, but suffice to say, large crowds of strangers where I have to make small talk gives me the heebie geebies. NOW, here is where it is like saying yes to Chicago in January just kind of backwards. When I agreed to go, I thought I was saying yes to a dark concert hall for 2 hours...I go in, I go out, nobody gets hurt. But...noooo. I came home in a panic not wanting to go—I ask Jenny, Will you right me a note, call in sick, death in the family...anything. *No Stanley, you are a big boy now, you have to go.* Do I have to wear a jacket...*you have to wear a jacket.* A jacket...nuts! January...Chicago, here I come.

So, I show up at the VIP tent, sunglasses on, hands shoved in my pockets, nervously scanning the crowd for my host. But before I had been there 30 seconds, I hear...Stan...Stan Abell? As I wheeled around, it was an old friend I hadn't seen in over 15 years. Bill, oh my gosh, what are you doing here. I'm the host of this

year's event! And, not only is he the host, he is one of the most well connected people in Indianapolis when it comes to fundraising for non-profit work. Before I knew it, he was introducing me to a who's who list of people involved in AIDS work here in Indianapolis and around the world. I made more connections in 45 minutes than I've been able to make in 5 years. Da da da, da da da, da da da da, da da da da da...(humming Indiana Jones theme song).

So here is my own every day Indiana Jones moment, but again, I don't think it's some kind of reward for doing the right thing per se. I think it's back to the Bible passage again. *Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.*

Sure, the big moments in life...the "real" Indiana Jones moments are exciting. Bunge jumping, sky diving...snakes, chilled monkey brains...all that stuff, that's all good. However, I am convinced we experience full life, *life and more life*, when the comfort zones we challenge are the daily stuff, just overcoming the every day fears and challenges that prevent us from that having *life and more life*.

CLOSING:

If you are anything like me...sometimes I get taking things to the limit with taking things to the extreme...I feel sometimes like if I am not push, push, push...leaping tall buildings, or for Indiana Jones, making the big find while risking life and limb. It is my prayer this morning that each of us can find a way to be an every day Indiana Jones...celebrate the rich life we build by simply meeting every day challenges. Have a great Sunday, go in peace.