

MONDAY MANNA

13 May 2019

THE WORLD NEEDS MORE COWBOYS

By Robert J. Tamasy

Recently I watched a brief promotional video produced by the University of Wyoming called, "The World Needs More Cowboys." I have never been a cowboy, but as I reviewed the video, its message seemed very much on point.

The video asks, "Restless curiosity – whatever happened to that? When did we stop thinking up new questions and daring to chase down their answers? Should we blindly follow predetermined paths when they never take us anywhere new? ... When there's still so much to explore off the beaten trail? The world needs more wonder, more outside thinkers hungry for a challenge. The world needs more cowboys.... It's the spirit of the underdog, the trailblazer, the kind of spirit that longs for something to prove...."

I am not advocating for the university; I have never even been to Wyoming. But this video suggests something important, and not just for education. As we view our roles – our callings – as business and professional people, I think we would do well to embody this "cowboy spirit." Because the cowboy image seems to fit regardless of culture, ethnicity, gender or tradition.

Looking at the life of Jesus Christ and His followers, as presented in the Bible, we find that while they were fishermen, tradesmen, even tax collectors, they all shared a bit of this "cowboy" approach to life. Jesus was commanding them to go against the flow of culture and prevailing religion, staking claim to new, uncharted territory.

Among the things Jesus did was declare freedom from legalistic behaviour; simplified the guiding principles for everyday living; gave unprecedented dignity and appreciation for women; and showed a revolutionary new way for establishing a growing, practical relationship with God. In today's marketplace, especially those of us who profess faith in Christ and strive to follow Him, we also can cultivate a cowboy mentality of curiosity, boldness, innovation and eagerness for a challenge. Here are some examples:

Beware of the beaten path. The courses of culture and peer pressure often push us in the direction most others are taking, but Jesus urged choosing another way. *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it"* (Matthew 7:14).

Choose a determined allegiance. Today, virtues like loyalty and commitment are often dismissed. But just as cowboys understand who they are and what they do, avoiding anything that might distract, we too must focus on who we are and why God has us here: *"...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord"* (Joshua 24:15).

Dare to be different. Every day we are tempted to *"conform to the pattern of this world"* as Romans 12:2 states it, but as ambassadors for Jesus Christ we are called to be different, to the extent that our lives and approaches to work raise questions in the minds of others: *"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect"* (1 Peter 3:15).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

When you hear the term "cowboy," what comes to mind?

How does the image of cowboys as curious, innovative, always ready for challenges, and eager to blaze new trails relate to the kind of work you do? Do these descriptions fit you in any ways?

What are the difficulties in striving to think and live differently than the prevailing culture? To use a different metaphor – to be more like a salmon swimming upstream? What does it require, in your view, to accomplish this effectively and successfully?

Does it frighten you or make you uneasy to consider being bold and different when the surrounding environment seems to be demanding that you conform to it? If so, how can you overcome this reluctance?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more this subject, consider the following passages:

Matthew 13:22, 28:19-20

Romans 12:1-2

Ephesians 4:17-24

Colossians 3:2