

A Study in Failure, Part 5

I had felt a definite call from God to start a specialized publishing ministry to draw people to Christ. But after ten years of mounting red ink, we had to throw in the towel. (See “A Study in Failure, Part 1”; “A Study in Failure, Part 2”; “A Study in Failure, Part 3”; “A Study in Failure, Part 4”.)

Had I failed? Had I not truly heard God’s call? Or had I simply not carried it out well? The result had been limited sales, a ministry with a short life, and a huge financial loss.

But there’s more to the story than I’ve told you. Consider these additional factors:

1. While LNWbooks was operating, we had stumbled across a market we had never intended: the U.S. military. We had learned that military chaplains absolutely loved our books because they were perfect for soldiers: small enough to easily slip into their pockets, yet substantial enough to offer thought-provoking substance. While John Ashcroft was a senator from Missouri (before he became Attorney General under George W. Bush), we had written to him asking for the addresses of U.S. military bases. We were residents of Missouri at the time, so he was our senator. His office diligently worked with the Pentagon to get us such a list. The result was that during our few years of operation, we had shipped thousands of books to military bases all around the globe. We got emails from chaplains telling us how popular the books were and how much they meant to the soldiers.
2. At the very end of our company’s life, we had offered our remaining books to selected ministries for shipping costs alone. We got one big response: Prison Fellowship, the charity founded by Chuck Coleson. They took over 15,000 of our books to put into the hands of inmates and their families.
3. When all other outlets had been exhausted, we learned about a charity called Love Packages. They take donations of religious books and ship them all around the world to people hungry for such literature. We were donating over 100,000 books, so they sent a truck from Butler, Illinois, to Kansas City, Missouri, to pick up the books. A bit later we got an email from the head of the organization, which read:

Just a note to let you know that we have been shipping your books out every week. Tanzania, India, Philippines, Ghana, and South Africa have gotten some so far.

God had called us to provide Christian literature to people who wouldn’t walk into a Christian bookstore and buy and read a book. Due to no brilliance of our own, He gotten them to many ministries, but especially into the hands of soldiers, prisoners, and hungry readers in numerous economically-disadvantaged countries. In fact, God had fulfilled His purpose through us in a greater way through our company’s death than He had

through its life. Not until we had completely turned loose of all income from the books did He fully accomplish all that He had intended.

Isn't God good...and utterly amazing?

The story is not quite over. The final installment is coming next time.

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