

Trying Counts

Have you ever tried and tried and still failed? I have. Many times.

One year, the family decided to go to Canada over the Christmas holidays in order to learn to ski. When we arrived at the ski resort (ski school, actually), we were put into different classes based on our various abilities. The rest of the family fared well given their respectable athletic abilities, but my meager attempts at coordination were non-existent, so I ended up in the “lowest” group.

Apparently, lots of us fell into that category, so the instructors decided to create two smaller groups from the lowest one. Again, I was placed in the lower of the two, and, again, that group had too many people. It was divided again...and again...and again...until, there were only two of us left in the “lowest-of-the-low”. The fact is, we were so hopeless that the head of the ski school was assigned the task of teaching us how to ski.

We were taken to the “bunny slope” for our first lesson, and seemed like no slope at all...until we got to the top. Then, it looked VERY steep, indeed, and a long way down!

The instructor began with the other person. I was told to stay where I was, while he patiently and carefully took the other student down the incline. When they got to the very bottom of the slope, however, the student fell and broke her wrist. I was quickly retrieved by the instructor and we took the injured party to await an ambulance.

“I’ll stay with her!” I volunteered, secretly hoping to ride with her to the hospital and, thus, avoid the possibility of having my first real lesson; but, it wasn’t to be. She went to the hospital, while the instructor and I went back up that seemingly endless slope. Somehow, I made it down in one piece, but it took all the rest of the day.

When the family was re-united at our motel that evening, everyone was happily telling me about their classes and what a wonderful day they’d had. They were so excited to go out again the next day, that I didn’t have the heart to tell them that the very thought of it made me sick to my stomach. I would have gladly stayed inside the ski lodge and read a book...but...that would have made everyone feel badly, so I said nothing. And the next day it all began again.

We were there for only a week, but every day, I struggle and failed. Every day, the rest of the family got better and better. Every day, I had an upset stomach and dreaded the experience, while every day they had a marvelously fun time. Finally, the last day of our vacation arrived. (And none too soon, as far as I was concerned!)

Off the family went to enjoy their last day, while I rejoined my instructor for one last lesson. I must admit that I was so relieved to think that this ordeal would soon be over that I failed to notice that we had ridden up on a different ski lift...and toward a different slope. Not to the beginners’ slope...but to an intermediate slope (that bordered on an advance and dangerous one). I listened

to his reassuring words, but they did me little good; I barely managed to get off the ski lift, and certainly not in an upright position!

The instructor went slightly ahead of me, only 10 or 20 feet down a slightly steeper slope and yelled "Come on down!" And there I stood, frozen to the spot.

"You have to come down sometime," he shouted. "You can do it!"

When my body simply refused to respond, he added "You have 3 choices: either you can stay up there all night...or you can give it a try...or you can take off your skis and walk down."

I decided to give it one last try...

And I failed miserably...rolling head over heels in the attempt.

The instructor just looked at me without saying a word. Disappointment was written all over his face, and I was overcome with this incredible feeling of failure. My head and heart gave up. What good is "trying" if you never seem to get it right? What use is "going on"? But all the tears inside me never came, because...a miracle occurred.

God picked me up and held me in his arms. I was enfolded in His love and peace, like a precious baby protected from all harm. And I knew that everything would be all right as calmness wiped away all fear and failure, all loss of hope.

The instructor must have seen the change in me because he asked, "What's happening?"

I replied, "Don't worry. It's just God." And then I added calmly, "Would you like to see how well God can ski?" He nodded dubiously.

So God and I jumped off the side of a nearby cliff (the dangerous slope). We slid sideways down its face, leveled off over powered snow, gathered speed, then took on moguls and ice until we reached the bottom of the run...and all the time, the instructor tried his best to keep up with *our* pace! It was great!

A myriad of crystals flew as skis bit into ice. The instructor stopped beside us on the bottom of the slope. A second passed, then two, before he said, "I have to believe that somehow you had it in you all along...but...God MUST have had a hand in it for you to ski like that!" I smiled, "Would you like to see God ski, again?" And he smiled and nodded once again.

So, up we went for another run, but this time on the lift, because he'd never believed in God until that day, I told him all about our Father Who's in heaven...and he listened. The second run was done as skillfully as the first (Oh yes! God can ski!), and I was filled with joy and incredible exultation!

I've never skied like that again, but, still, it was enough. For on that day, the reading for all Christian Churches had this to say: "He will put his angels in charge and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone." [Psalm 91: 11, 12]

Therefore, for all of you who've tried and tried and tried again...and (like me) failed, please know, without a doubt, that "trying counts"! And help will come. And when it does, that help comes from the Mountain of the Lord.