

Hello Roller Coaster; Good-Bye Merry-Go-Round

November 14, 2006

Posted by admin

When I was very young, the only ride I would venture onto was the merry-go-round. I could choose the moving horse or the stationary one. As I grew older, I graduated to the faster, scarier rides. Eventually I came to that memorable day. Taking my life into my hands (make that my stomach in my mouth), and allowing myself to be strapped into a roller coaster.

Not the first row of course. I wasn't that brave. Stark terror. My body being jerked in every direction imaginable. On the verge of tears but sucking it up. Trying to smile to impress others; especially the girls. Thinking I had made a big mistake. Feeling totally out of control. Knowing I would be sick for the rest of my life. Glad when it was over. Ready to do it again. My kids now ride roller coasters at Magic Mountain that I am led to believe easily exceed the speed limit for the Southern California freeway system. Progress!

I recently read an article by Darlene Enns-Dyck in the April 2001 issue of *Net Results*, a magazine that I thoroughly enjoy and highly recommend, (you can contact *Net Results* at (806/ 762-8094) in which she made some comparisons between being on a roller coaster as opposed to being on a merry-go-round. I have utilized some of her thoughts for this installment.

First, a question to kick things off: Which words would you use to describe your current ministry ride? Would you choose roller coaster words like: Exciting, fear-inspiring, wild, crazy, breathtaking, messy, exhilarating, challenging, radical, unpredictable, uncertain, abnormal, chaotic, all experienced in living color? Or would you (in all honesty) choose merry-go-round words like: Predictable, yawn-inspiring, redundant, tame, normal, safe, repetitious, and experienced in black and white. Here are some personal observations:

1. I need to be mentally, emotionally and spiritually ready for the craziest, zaniest, wildest roller coaster ride of my life. This is crucial if I am to be effective and keep my sanity in this fast-paced, ever-changing, mostly unpredictable culture in which I live. There will be breathtaking drops, unsafe speeds and sharp turns. I'll never know exactly when the next corner may show up.

I will be living with my stomach in my mouth much of the time and I personally don't like having my stomach in my mouth—that's not where it was designed to be. I hate uncertainty with a passion. I prefer to know where things are headed, when they are going to get there, what it will look like.

I am realizing that ambiguity, confusion and chaos make up the asphalt on the road most people are traveling into the 21st Century! I used to hear the expression that it was okay to have butterflies in your stomach as long as you got them to fly in formation. Forget that formation stuff. It's pure chaos out there for most people most of the time.

2. If I choose the safety and tranquillity of the merry-go-round, I am dead in the water. Granted, the ride is slower, safer and more familiar. It has pleasant scenery, low risk, comfort and predictability. But, the ride ensures that I will be "left behind" in the dust of irrelevance, and be very frustrated to boot. Bill Easum, commenting on what is necessary for the leader of the future says that "If you like things nice and neat, you're in for a night of fright or a whale of a migraine."

3. When I am strapped into the roller coaster I relinquish control. I can't change my mind, get off, or slow it down. By choice, I am at the mercy of the tracks and the engineer who designed the ride. Giving up control is very scary and seems risky. But not relinquishing power, control and ministry is perhaps the main barrier that keeps most leaders and ministries from reaching their God-given potential.

It feels so much nicer and simpler to opt for the merry-go-round. I know what I can expect. There are no dangers, but no thrills either. Not trusting God's power, God's sovereignty, God's wisdom. It is very tempting to trust my gifts, experience, and insight. However, I need to give it all up to the God who is "The blessed controller of all things." (1 Timothy 6:15, Phillips). Even the roller coaster ride!

- Hello roller coaster goodbye merry-go-round.
- Hello risk, goodbye safety.
- Hello thrills, goodbye boring.
- Hello trust, goodbye control

Want to join me for the ride of your life? There's room for one more!