



"If you don't appreciate it, you don't deserve it."  
—Terry Josephson

**24-Mar-06**

## **At Least Say, 'Thanks!'**

One of the saddest indictments of our modern, liberal culture occurred yesterday. The following paragraphs from a Reuters article provide the background to the travesty:

U.S.-led forces freed three Christian [peace](#) activists held hostage in Iraq on Thursday in an operation mounted two weeks after the kidnappers tortured and killed their American colleague.

Canadians Jim Loney and Harmeet Sooden and 74-year-old British pacifist Norman Kember from the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) were snatched in west Baghdad in November.

The tortured body of American Tom Fox was found dumped in the capital two weeks ago.

Officials declined to say where in Iraq the operation took place or whether there were any casualties or arrests made. . . .

The operation was the result of months of work by special police teams, diplomats and the Iraqi authorities, [British embassy

spokeswoman Lisa] Glover said. (Alastair Macdonald, "Aid workers freed in Iraq rescue operation," March 23, 2006)

Friday's news informs us that the multinational commandos stormed the Baghdad house where the hostages were being held, rescuing them without firing a shot. The hostages' whereabouts had been learned just a few hours before during an interrogation of a captured accomplice of the kidnappers. The military's swift deployment resulted in a successful and safe rescue.

CPT is an anti-war group founded in 1984 by the Quaker, Mennonite, and Brethren churches offer nonviolent opposition "to war and other forms of lethal inner-group conflict," according to its founding documents.

CPT isn't a large group - it claims only 36 full-time [peacemakers](#) and 152 part-time volunteers. Volunteers pay their own expenses. CPT says it accepts money only from churches, church congregations and individuals, and not from any government. In 2004, CPT income in Canada and the United States totaled \$806,000.

Why do its volunteers expose themselves to danger as they do in Iraq? They say they have to go where they will be most effective and have to face the same dangers that American and British soldiers face. [CPT co-director] Doug Pritchard said even though CPT believes those soldiers are doing wrong by taking part in war, it respects the risks the troops take.

The CPT has also said that if its members were kidnapped, rescuing forces should not use violence to try to free them. In this case, violence wasn't needed, since the kidnappers left their captors [sic] alone. (John Cochran, "Who Are the Christian Peacemakers?" ABC News.com, March 23, 2006)

One would think that such a Christian group would show its gratitude to its members' rescuers, but CPT instead called the rescue a "release" and made a political statement:

Our hearts are filled with [joy](#) today as we heard that Harmeet Singh Sooden, Jim Loney and Norman Kember have been safely *released* in Baghdad. . . .

We believe that the *illegal* occupation of Iraq by Multinational Forces is the root cause of the insecurity which led to this kidnapping and so much pain and suffering in Iraq. *The occupation must end.*

Today, in the face of this joyful news, our [faith](#) compels us to [love](#) our enemies even when they have committed acts which caused great hardship to our friends and sorrow to their families.

In the spirit of the prophetic nonviolence that motivated Jim, Norman, Harmeet and Tom to go to Iraq, we refuse to yield to a spirit of vengeance.

We give thanks for the compassionate [God](#) who granted our friends courage and who sustained their spirits over the past months.

We pray for strength and courage for ourselves so that, together, we can continue the nonviolent struggle for justice and peace.

. . . We have been especially moved by the gracious outpouring of support from Muslim brothers and sisters in the Middle East, Europe, and North America.

That support continues to come to us day after day.

We pray that [Christians](#) throughout [the world](#) will, in the same spirit, call for justice and for respect for the human rights of the thousands of Iraqis who are being detained *illegally* by the U.S. and British forces occupying Iraq. ("Relief and Regret," Pulse24.com, March 23, 2006. Emphasis ours.)

It is good that the members of CPT thanked God, but what about the men who potentially risked life and limb to secure their colleagues' "release"?

What about a little gratitude for the precious time, money, and effort the Coalition Forces expended over the past four-plus months to find where they were being held and to make the rescue attempt? To make matters worse, CPT took the opportunity, with the microphones of the world's press pointed in its direction, to insult and oppose their associates' rescuers and their mission on foreign soil. What about a little graciousness, decorum, and self-restraint?

Clearly, such are in short supply these days. And so says the Bible: "But know this, that in the last days, perilous times shall come: For men will be lovers of themselves, . . . unthankful, . . . unforgiving, . . . without [self-control](#), . . . headstrong, haughty, . . . having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" ([II Timothy 3:1-5](#)). In perilous times like these, just when they are needed most, the necessary virtues have eroded in people to the point that no good deed goes unpunished. What a shame.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Be Thankful!](#)

by John O. Reid

The people of modern Israel have become truly spoiled, surfeiting on the blessings given to Abraham's offspring. The danger of abundant blessings is that we tend to forget the source of these blessings and cease being thankful. When people forget to be thankful, they forget God, causing their once pliable hearts to become hard and stiff like leather. If we properly meditated on the awesomeness of the universe, the plenitude of creation, or the marvelous complexity of our own physical bodies, we would be properly thankful. Even our trials, instruments to correct and to bring growth, should inspire gratitude for their ultimate effects. We show gratitude for our calling through continual prayer, offering each petition with thanksgiving. In this time of scattering, we need to be thankful for one another, showing patience and mercy for one another's shortcomings.

## From the Archives: Featured Article

### Ingratitude

by Mark Schindler

Why do some people gripe, complain, and feel slighted even when others have jumped through hoops to smooth their way? The answer may be ingratitude. A reluctance to thank others - particularly God - for their help reveals a self-centered and inconsiderate attitude. In recounting a personal story, Mark Schindler shows how ingratitude can stifle and eventually derail our relationship with God if we let it.

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