

## **March 08 SUMMARY – THREE CUPS OF TEA** by Mortenson

Thank you everyone who came to the Tattered Cover last night. Thirty people were in attendance, including six gentlemen, as Willie Pusede lead us in the discussion of Greg Mortensons' *Three Cups of Tea*.

Willie started out with a recent update on the status of the progress made by the Central Asia Institute. I did not catch all of them but they have built 58 schools, 520 FT or PT Teachers, 24,000 current students 14,300 are girls, 824 porter training school graduates, teacher training programs, 14 vocational centers for women, 24 water projects, over 3000 cataract surgeries completed and multiple sanitation/latrine projects. All from the vision to give back and build 1 school for girls in a village in Pakistan.

Several themes developed over the evening including doing business in a different culture, the role of women in Pakistan and Afghanistan, family upbringing and sense of mission, integrity and honor, great visionaries and their family life, and is there greatness in all of us?

Many felt that his passion for helping others began when he was raised in Africa, watched his parents build the hospital and his devotion and admiration for his disabled sister. In addition, most likely his choice of career, nursing, and involvement with the community of extreme climbers also engendered his giving attitude as teamwork and sacrifice. His "rescue" and the probable saving of his life by the guide and village that adopted him after his failed attempt of K2, expanded his previous generosity. Being comfortable in non-Western cultures and his willingness to learn, if not embrace their faith, was another example of his deep respect for others.

Some felt he was naive in his initial business approach (500 letters for 1 check, 200 chairs for 4 attendees) but not out of character for him as he has a hard time relinquishing control of the projects to others. His goal to build the first school quickly was squashed on almost every level from location, timing, having to build the bridge first, supplies, logistics, local business customs (bribes) and threats of bodily harm to himself and destruction of previous work. Because of his respect for the culture, his willingness to work within their system, and his eventual letting go of his own agenda and time line, his later projects went much faster. Also, his wisdom to bring in the supplies but let the local people build the schools to their specifications, gave the community a stronger sense of ownership and pride in the project.

Mortenson was incredibly successful at forging relationships and moved from honored guest to important member of the community in every place he went.

Due to his integrity and keeping his word, his supporters became so loyal to him

that at times, the group felt they would have done anything for him. His integrity and respect for the other culture, helped him out of uncomfortable situations with the Taliban kidnapping and the fatwas. His willingness to let go, proceed one step at a time, and allow his local supporters to work on his behalf with the local courts, paid off with the removal of the fatwa's and the progress of his mission.

As his desire to do even more increased exponentially, so did the need for funding. It was heart warming to see that his honor and integrity stayed intact. We could feel his confusion when Rumsfeld treated him so abruptly in contrast to the hospitality offered in Pakistan. His integrity and ability to walk away from the sizable check from the US Military that would have funded 100's of projects and escalated his work was amazing. He knew that if the source of the money was ever revealed, his credibility on the ground in Pakistan would have been gone forever.

The role of women was brought up and some were amazed that he had success in building schools for girls in what appears to be a masculine dominated society. Two gentlemen spoke up from personal experiences in that area and said that the Muslim culture in most areas is very progressive and does encourage and support the education of women. Due to the instability of the governments since the 1960 and the control by fanatical splitter groups, the outward appearance can be deceiving. Many of these remote regions are profoundly poor and they are without resources for education for anyone. Research has shown that when men are educated, they may tend to leave the remote areas, whereas the women offered the same opportunities, tend to return and support the local community.

Some of the group felt that while we can't judge him because we don't know all the details, his personal relationships seem to always take a back seat to his mission in Pakistan. Many mentioned the patience and endurance of his wife who sees little of him whether he is in the US or in Pakistan. It was brought up that often people who have lofty goals tend to have a family that is always in the background. It was also mentioned that he courted his wife in 6 days, another mission?, and that she seemed to be aware from the beginning what she was getting into.

Some one in the group asked, has reading this book inspired us to do anything? Would we like him as a friend, coworker, and traveling partner? Several people shared what they are doing to assist others around the world, not always successfully, but always with a big heart and the best intentions. I believe we all felt he would be an interesting lecturer or person to sit next to at dinner, but a potentially frustrating friend or coworker. His ability and willingness to sacrifice his own personal comfort would most likely not make him the most desirable traveling companion. Having read this book, some felt guilty about vacations or travel in what might be considered luxurious conditions.

The question was asked, do we know anyone who would do what it really takes to make this type of impact. It was pointed out that when he began his mission, he was single and without responsibilities. Not many in our group are in that same situation. I brought up that finding something to do, whether big or small, is always of value. The main thing is to find the cause, agency, or child/family that inspires you to do something and follow through. One way to make sure that your support gets to where it is needed most is to work through a local NGO (Non-governmental organization, equal to our non-profits in the US). They may have the infrastructure in place to accept bank-wires and they tend to know how best to work with customs and local bureaucracies.

Additional resources that were brought up during the meeting.

Book - A Civil Action by Harr, how another ghostwriter handled a topic

Movies - Charlie Wilson's War and Beyond the Call

Sponsoring Children around the world - Empowerment International or Friends of Compassion or Global Children's Organization (summer camp)

***THANK YOU SO MUCH WILLIE FOR SUGGESTING THIS BOOK AND THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO ATTENDED AND ADDED TO THE CONVERSATION.***

Jane Stanfield  
Where Is She Heading  
303-988-1356  
[wiladyjanes@gmail.com](mailto:wiladyjanes@gmail.com)  
[www.janestanfieldwish.com](http://www.janestanfieldwish.com)