

Of Frogs and Men

*A conversation between graduating college friends,
one heading into his career, the other into volunteer service*

One: You know they don't pay anything towards your college education.

Two: Yes, I know that.

One: And when you come out, you won't have any more money than you went in with.

Two: Yes, I know that too.

One: And don't count on it carrying any weight on a job application. Nobody's going to care that you spent two years doing something like this.

Two: Not to worry. I'll always have the extremely valuable bachelor's degree you and I both received earlier this very day...

One: (*more frustrated than angry*) But what are you doing with it?! We put in four tough years here at school—well, some were tougher than others...But we did the work, paid our dues, and now it's time to get the reward! And look at you, heading off into volunteer service.

Two: You're right, we did do the work—except in biology, where you kind of let *me* do the work as I recall—and someday it will pay off, but for now, this is what I have to do.

One: Hey, I couldn't handle the dead frogs, o.k.? Point is, you have other choices if you want to see the world. Jobs that involve travel, adventure, meeting unusual people from different cultures. And there's always the military...

Two: Yeah, I'd be looking good in a crew cut—and can you see me getting up at six in the morning for *anything*! Besides, you know that's not my thing.

One: You know, you just haven't been the same since that presentation at chapel last fall. When that woman from Brethren Volunteer Service told about her time overseas, I could see the little wheels turning in that strange mind of yours. I agree she made it all sound pretty rewarding, but I can't see what living with down and out people in another part of the world while getting little or no pay and receiving no real experience that will help in your career—I just can't see the value in that. You've got an economics degree, for goodness sake! Think where that could take you!

Two: Actually, that's part of what's taking me where I'm going. I learned that the system works for those at the top, but for those at the bottom—well, the rest of us are kind of stepping on them on our way up the ladder. And I realized that the best way to help them is to go where they are, understand how they live, listen to their ideas, and work with them to climb up another rung or two. And BVS has lots of sites where I could do that.

One: But look at our friends. Julie's headed for that big accounting firm. Ellie's with the brokerage. Evan already has a spot at the big telecom company. I'll bet you can't tell me one other intelligent, resourceful, energetic, committed young person who's ever done something like what you're going to do.

Two: How about Jesus Christ.

One: That's not fair! Jesus wasn't...you know...real. Well, of course he was real, but he wasn't like...me and you. Well, of course he was like me and you....It's just that he was on a mission...from God.

Two: What if someone had given him this same talking to? What if he'd chosen to set up a custom cabinet shop, buy a big house with a two-donkey garage, do the things that would be the best for his future? Where would we be? Where would this world be? And he's not the only one. What about Ted Chambers and the other young adults who lobbied Annual Conference to begin BVS in the first place, or the people who start hunger relief programs like Dan West, work against war like Ted Studebaker, stand up for others like Yvonne Dilling, or pay to go on a summer workcamp like hundreds of Church of the Brethren youth and young adults. You—even you, Mr./Ms. Gonna-be-a-millionaire-by-30—even *you* spent two weeks last summer at the soup kitchen downtown. Was that a waste?

One: Well, no. But it's your future, not a few weeks in the summer.

Two: You're right. It's a big step. And sometimes I wonder if it's what I should be doing. It's just that nothing else seems to make sense.

One: (*after a pause*) O.k., I need to tell you the truth. I admire what you're doing. Big time. It's takes a lot to turn down lots of money...and a nice house, and a couple of cars, and exotic vacations, and a closet full of cool clothes....

Two: Cut it out!

One: No, I'm serious, I think what you're doing's really cool.

Two: Thanks a lot. That means a lot coming from you. And you'll be really good at what you'll be doing—least I hope so, 'cause one of these days I may need a rich friend to hit on. You know, a little payback for getting you through the bio labs.

One: Hey, I owe you loads for standing between me and Mr. Long Legs. Come on, a post-graduation pizza—on me.

Two: Really!?! It's already paying off to be poor!

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New Community Project

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