

A Prayer in the Snow

In his autobiography, *Donahue*, Phil Donahue shares an experience from Holden, W.V. He and a CBS television crew had gone to this Appalachian community to cover rescue attempts of 38 coal miners.

They had planned to be there one night but stayed three, eating doughnuts and drinking Red Cross coffee in bitterly cold weather.

At last, the rescue teams emerged, covered with soot and grime, weary beyond words. Relatives of the miners were waiting in the snow.

As people gathered around a smudge pot, a preacher said, "Dear God, let us pray." He prayed. Then all joined hands and sang, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Donahue said it gave him goose bumps.

"It was beautiful!" he said. He knew it would make a great film for CBS, but the camera was frozen. By the time it was warmed up, the service was over.

At 2:30 in the morning, Donahue approached the pastor with a request.

"Reverend, I am from CBS News. Would you please go back through your prayer again? We have 206 television stations across the country who will hear you pray for these miners."

The humble minister looked at him and said, "Son, I just couldn't do it. I have already prayed to my God, and any further praying at this time would be wrong. No sir, I just can't do it."

Donahue was shocked that anyone would turn down a chance to be on CBS News. At last, he made his way to a pay telephone to report to New York that the preacher "won't pray."

Donahue claims that the preacher's stand was the greatest demonstration of moral courage he has ever encountered. The man would not "show biz" for Jesus. He would not sell his soul – not even to CBS.

Donahue said he often thinks of that preacher and that night. "I don't know where he is now, but if he isn't going to heaven, no one is."

People may not always agree on a person's commitment to ethical convictions and integrity, but in the end, they come to respect the courage to stand firm.

– Beecher Hunter