

## ABANDONMENT ON EVEREST

In 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary (1919 – 2008) and Tenzing Norgay (1914 – 1986) climbed the 29,029-foot peak of Mount Everest, the Earth's highest mountain.

Their accomplishment captured the attention of the world, causing Mount Everest to attract many highly experienced mountaineers as well as capable climbers willing to hire professional guides.

Thousands followed in their attempt to conquer Everest, thanks to Nepal's lifting its tight restrictions on climbing the legendary mountain. By 2006, for example, more than 2,700 people had reached the summit, many paying more than \$60,000 for the experience. By the end of the 2010 climbing season, there had been 5,104 ascents to the summit by 3,142 individuals.



One result of the commercial influx has been the erosion of the traditional moral code of mountaineering. In the rush to the top, amateurs who have paid a fortune will do anything it takes to get to the summit, including abandoning other climbers.

David Sharp became a casualty in March of 2006. The 34-year-old engineer from Cleveland, Ohio, managed to reach the summit on his own. However, he ran out of oxygen on the way back down.

As he lay dying, 40 climbers passed him by, too eager to achieve their own goals to take a chance on offering their oxygen to someone else. Sharp froze to death.

Ed Viesturs, a high-altitude mountaineer and corporate speaker, is the only American to have climbed all 14 of the world's 8,000-foot-plus mountain peaks (including Mount Everest seven times), and the fifth person to do so without using supplemental oxygen.

He said the response of climbers passing people who are dying is not uncommon. "Unfortunately, there are those who say, 'It's not my problem. I've spent all this money, and I'm going to the summit.'"

This attitude has produced disgust among many climbers, including Hillary. "On my expedition, there was no way you'd have left a man under a rock to die," he said.

(more)

What does such refusal to get involved, to help someone in need, say about the lack of compassion among people? The actions of these climbers is reminiscent of the parable of the Good Samaritan, who came along after a priest and a Levite passed by an injured man lying by the roadside. The Samaritan stopped, tended to the robbery victim's wounds, and took him to an inn for recuperation.

Thankfully, that growing trend on the trails of Mount Everest does not exist among the associates of Life Care Centers of America, who have dedicated their lives to attending to the needs of the people they encounter – on the job and in their personal lives.

And their heavenly reward will be far more than the fame and financial gain of tall-mountain climbers.

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so (Proverbs 3:27 NKJV).*

– Beecher Hunter

