

Sink or Swim

I remember how difficult it was to learn how to swim. I took lessons at the city pool, but never got more out of it than terminal shivers and plenty to drink. My son Zach has also had some trouble learning to swim. I have tried to help him a few times, but I just don't know how to do it. I am reminded that some parents have taught their children to swim by just throwing them in the water. It is up to them to either sink or swim on their own. What a cruel and unloving way to deal with this situation! I am sure that none of us would admit to using this technique.

It doesn't seem to be very different on the spiritual plane. We let people drift off and assume that they will find their way back. All the while we are "preaching to the choir." Imagine the following scenario:

It was one of those typical scorching hot days at the beach. The crashing of the surf and the screeching of the gulls kept the sun-bathers just a little bit sleepy as they lay under the sun. The well-muscled lifeguard was talking to several other healthy-looking swimmers by his rescue stand.

About fifty feet down the beach a young child had ventured too far out into the ocean and had gotten into trouble. His distress was not noticed by the busy lifeguard. Others, however, saw the danger and reacted quickly. One man ran to the lifeguard and gave the alarm. But the lifeguard just couldn't break away at that instant from his discussion of the correct form of the butterfly stroke. After all, what was more important than the truth?

Meanwhile, another man, who was not certified for lifesaving in any way, jumped in and swam out to the victim. Though not the best of swimmers himself, and certainly not an expert in the butterfly, he helped the boy safely back to the shore, where he was reunited with his distraught parents.

The lifeguard, who was never really aware of the terrible tragedy that had been averted, finally finished his lecture and turned to look at the sea. It pleased him greatly that he was able to keep the beach so safe.

We surely know better than this. Let us make sure that this doesn't happen around us. We must be teaching others how to swim in the living water.