

Firefighters

By the time the chief arrived at the scene, the lower part of the building was engulfed in flames. Against the background of roaring and popping he could hear the screams of those who were trapped and dying. Looking around, he could not see many of his firefighters working on the fire. When one did come near, he asked, "Where is all of our manpower?" There were many answers from those in his volunteer crew: working on other projects, too sick to help, or just couldn't get away. Some were teaching fire safety classes while others were analyzing in great detail the firefighting manual. Many of those who actually were present were checking the exact position of the hoses as they lay on the ground, trying to patch tiny leaks in the hoses, and polishing the fire trucks. These were generally in the way of those few who were actually applying water to the flames. The worst part of it all was that several were using the hoses to spray places that were not burning and were not even close to the fire.

The chief was appalled at what was going on. He spoke to individuals about their contribution, but received answers like, "It is very important to do things exactly according to the manual and how it says they should be done," and "The areas we are concentrating on are very important, even though they aren't actually on fire right now." Some were apparently testing the quality of the water. "It would be a shame," the chief thought sarcastically, "to spray contaminated water on a fire." Another group he found sitting on the curb doing nothing. He asked them if they were exhausted, but they replied, "We've decided that there's no use saving them. It's their own fault that they ignored the fundamentals of fire safety. They deserve to burn."

The only good news that the chief had was that there were a few that, even without the proper equipment, were entering the building and actually saving people. Even though they lacked adequate training, they were dodging the flames and saving people nonetheless. With all of their failings, they had the heart to get the job done.

As the roof of the building finally caved in, the chief sorrowfully shook his head. Would it be any better the next time? Probably not. What a shame. And so many people in the upper floors had not even known that they were in danger. What had happened to so many of his men? Had they missed the point entirely, that their purpose was to save lives?

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

...snatch others from the fire and save them...

Jude 1:23