

Food for Thought: Mission Impossible



Life is surprising and interesting, and many of its interesting bits can be discovered simply by noticing which things move us, which things inspires us, which things we humans are drawn to. One thing we humans are drawn to is stories, and there is a lot to be learned about us by noticing the *types* of stories we are drawn to. One such genre we usually like is that of the spy thrillers like *Mission Impossible* (the old TV series or the more recent film series). Interestingly, there are real lessons to learn about ourselves from these stories.

The first thing to notice is that we tend to like these stories; deep inside us we know that there is a battle between good and evil, and any story that pits good against evil strikes a chord deep within us. The stories can be complicated, but if we can tell that the main characters are good people, we will like them and care about them and their mission. And we want good to win. As much as the world may talk about there being no absolute truth, and despite the fact that life is messy and complicated, there is still such a thing as goodness. Also, no matter how long the odds are, we keep hoping and believing that maybe the characters will win, even when winning looks impossible. We watch the movie or episode to the end because we have faith and hope that good will triumph.

In *Mission Impossible*, the characters have to work inside enemy territory, and both the situation and their work are complex. That is true of Christians too (unless they ignore God's call); we do our living in a fallen world, and that means that in a sense we are working in enemy territory, and the situations in which God uses us are often very complex indeed.

The Mission Impossible characters are also like us in that they have a choice: "this mission, should you choose to accept it, is" We too can choose to accept or not accept assignments God sends our way.

The "good guy" characters in *Mission Impossible* also work as a team, with each agent possessing skills that are essential for the mission, and usually the members of the team have differing skills from one another. Some are technology and computer experts; some are good at impersonating other people; some are extremely capable fighters; some have extensive knowledge of the city or buildings in which a mission is taking place; some are good at tracking people, and the list goes on. The Kingdom of God is like this too; we don't all have the same skills, but all the differing skills are needed for the missions to succeed.

The team members have to give up important things in order to do their work. Since they have to hide their identity, even though they are some of the most skilled people on the planet, they will never be famous for what they do because their identity has to be concealed in order for them to do their work successfully. Many also have to make the decision not to have a family so as not to endanger them. Usually God doesn't ask us never to start a family, but service to him will almost always cost us something, and He definitely is not interested in making us famous.

Furthermore, most of us don't look like fabulous fighter-spies, but neither do real spies. They are often in disguise. Similarly, things sometimes don't go as planned, and plans have to be adjusted to accomplish the mission. That too is very much like real life.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the name of this series is "Mission Impossible," but at the end of each episode or movie, the team has actually succeeded. The mission turned out to be "possible" after all. Despite the fact that the chances of success had been extremely slim, the team succeeds. This is very much like the work in God's kingdom. God sometimes calls us to do things that seem impossible, but we learn (sometimes after a lot of sweat, blood, tears, and time) that it was possible after all--but only because God was in it and at work alongside us and through us (Matthew 19:26 and Philippians 4:13).