

Missionary makes headlines with rescue

Finally, some of the world's most incredible missionaries — the Free Burma Rangers — are garnering top headlines around the globe.

In recent weeks the Rangers and their leader, David Eubank, have been profiled on CBS, CNN, Fox, CBN, Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, the Austin American-Statesman, Stars & Stripes, Public Radio International and on and on.

The coverage stemmed from a video that showed Eubank, a 56-year-old former Green Beret, darting through ISIS gunfire to rescue a little girl in Mosul.

The Enterprise-Journal ran Eubank's account of the incident on the Sunday, June 9, religion page, along with the adjacent photo.

Other media outlets caught on as well. Before long Eubank was appearing all over the place. Fox News just profiled him Thursday.

The Enterprise-Journal started covering the Free Burma Rangers back in 2010 when I discovered Eubank's grandparents were from Amite County — in fact, my father knew his grandfather.

Later I went to Thailand along with Dogwood Cross bluegrass-gospel group and spent nearly two weeks trav-



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eling the Thai-Burma border with Eubank, his wife Karen, their children Sahale, Sue and Peter, and members of the Free Burma Rangers.

The Enterprise-Journal periodically runs Eubank's reports on the religion pages

because they're just so inspiring and incredible.

I was curious about all the recent big-time publicity, however. How would the mainstream secular media handle the fact that Eubank is a Christian who prays openly and refers often to God and Jesus?

Here's what I found:

- CNN and The Associated Press described Eubank as a "medic," with no mention of Christianity.

- CBS called him an "aid worker" but did include footage of him quoting a Scripture verse.

- PRI called him a "Christian relief worker" and included an extensive interview in which he talked about his work.

- ABC of Australia called



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This photo that ran in the June 9 Enterprise-Journal shows Eubank rescuing girl in Iraq.

him an "American volunteer medic" but did quote him as calling on Jesus during the rescue.

- Fox News referred to him as a "former U.S. Special Forces soldier" and "aid worker" but in an interview Thursday included full discussion of his religious faith.

- The Los Angeles Times and Austin American-Statesman did extensive profiles on Eubank with his background as the son of

missionaries, as a Green Beret, then on to seminary and a career on missions.

I don't fault media outlets that downplayed Eubank's religion or role as a missionary. It's hard to know what to call him.

He's a missionary in the sense that he's an ordained minister eager to spread the good news of Jesus Christ, but he's a man of action more than a preacher. So all the descriptions listed

above are accurate.

The coverage revealed another interesting aspect as well. The PRI interviewer took Eubank to task for taking his wife and children into war zones. And comments under Internet news reports showed that, while most people praised him for his self-sacrifice and heroism, some criticized him as well. No amount of good deeds can justify exposing one's own children to the hazards of war, they said.

That may be. But the Eubanks decided early on to raise their kids on the mission field, which for them meant the war-ridden jungles of Burma and later Africa and Iraq.

Karen Eubank wrote an eloquent explanation of that decision, which will run on this Sunday's Religion Page. She does a better job expressing her decision than I ever could.

There's a major positive result from all the media coverage: more awareness of the Free Burma Rangers, and hence more potential funding for their work helping war victims.

Meanwhile, if you want to see what the hubbub is about or watch the video of Eubank rescuing the little girl, just Google "David Eubank."

Iraqi Prime Minister declares end to IS caliphate

MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — Iraq's Prime Minister declared an end to the IS caliphate Thursday after Iraqi forces captured the compound of a landmark mosque in Mosul that was blown up last week by the Islamic State group.

"We are seeing the end of the fake Daesh state. The liberation of Mosul proves that," Haider al-Abadi said using the Arabic acronym for IS in a statement posted to Twitter. "We will not relent, our brave forces will bring victory," he added.

But even as the Iraqi leader issued his statement, heavy clashes continued to unfold in Mosul — filling field hospitals and forcing hundreds to flee.

The destroyed al-Nuri mosque retaken by Iraqi special forces Thursday following a dawn push is a hugely symbolic win. The site is where IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi made his only public appearance in July 2014, declaring a self-styled Islamic "caliphate," encompassing territories then-held by IS in Syria and Iraq.

IS blew up the mosque complex last week.