

OUR MODERN DAY HEROES

Entrepreneurs are said to be the new mythical heroes of today.

This is because the world has shifted focus from technology to business and from manufacturing to investing. So if you ask young people today who they want to be, many would say they want to be the next Steve Jobs or Jack Ma, Henry Sy or John Gokongwei, etc. These people are considered to be of a special breed because of their supposed willingness to take great financial risks.

I have been studying the lives of these men because I am often asked how it is to be an entrepreneur. Initially, I felt uncomfortable to be called one because I was unwilling to take financial risks when we started. The reason is in the beginning, we really had nothing to risk because when I resigned from HP I forfeited my retirement benefits. All I hoped to do then was to provide for my family and survive!

When our operations were still small, I would be accused of not being enterprising enough because I refused to borrow money to fund our growth. Sabi sa akin ng mga business school professors na kilala ko, I will not succeed unless I take on the daring ways of the great entrepreneurs of this days.

But do you know what I discovered about the great men I mentioned above? I learned that most of them did not also take great financial risks when they began. In fact, most of them just wanted to survive and make a living. Henry Sy worked in a grocery store after his father went back to China when their sari-sari store burned down during the war. Yet today, he owns the biggest sari-sari store in the Philippines called SM. Steve Jobs started Apple in his parent's garage. He funded himself by selling his Volkswagen so that Steve Wozniak can finish their electronic project, because nobody wanted to fund their work. People then did not understand his vision. I often wonder why our business schools study the lives of these men when they are already successful, when in fact we can learn greater things when we examine what they did as they struggled when they were small.

I have been studying entrepreneurship from the perspective of the Bible, because the great men of our faith were actually businessmen. But nowhere in the Bible did it say that they took great financial risks. Why? Because during their days, they really had no finances to risk. Most of them were just sojourners, yet they became richer than the people living in the land they chose to settle in. I am talking about Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, etc. What kind of businessmen were they and what can we learn from

them so that we can become great entrepreneurs as well? In the next posts, I will be slowly sharing what I am discovering about this subject.