Crikey!

By Jim Ed Hardaway

I believe that education is all about being excited about something. Seeing passion and enthusiasm helps push an educational message.
—Steve Irwin

Every day there are losses. All around us there are those who leave this life and move to the next—family members, friends of coworkers, and others we hear about on the evening news. One of those losses was the sudden and tragic death of Steve Irwin, the ever-popular "Crocodile Hunter." On Monday, September 4, 2006, the 44-year-old environmentalist was in the ocean at Australia's Great Barrier Reef, videotaping footage for a new TV show called *Ocean's Deadliest*. During the shoot, Irwin swam too close to a stingray and was pierced in the heart by the ray's poisonous spine. Irwin's friend and manager, John Stainton, told reporters that Steve could be seen pulling the deadly barb out of his chest and that then Steve was gone.

A lot of well-known people have inspired me in my journey, but very few celebrities. Hollywood produces very few individuals who have honorable values or a cause for living that's not driven by selfish ambition for mere fame. For me, Steve Irwin was an exception to that norm—he was sincere and fanatical about the wildlife he loved.

He inspired me.

When I first heard the news about the death of Steve Irwin, I was truly saddened. His contagious enthusiasm for what he was born to do—his zeal, his big-arm gestures, and his joyful Australian accent—fueled my love for the character that was Steve Irwin. His catchphrase "Crikey!" often accompanied his high-energy interaction with the world's deadliest creatures. In his own words, "Crikey means gee whiz, wow!"

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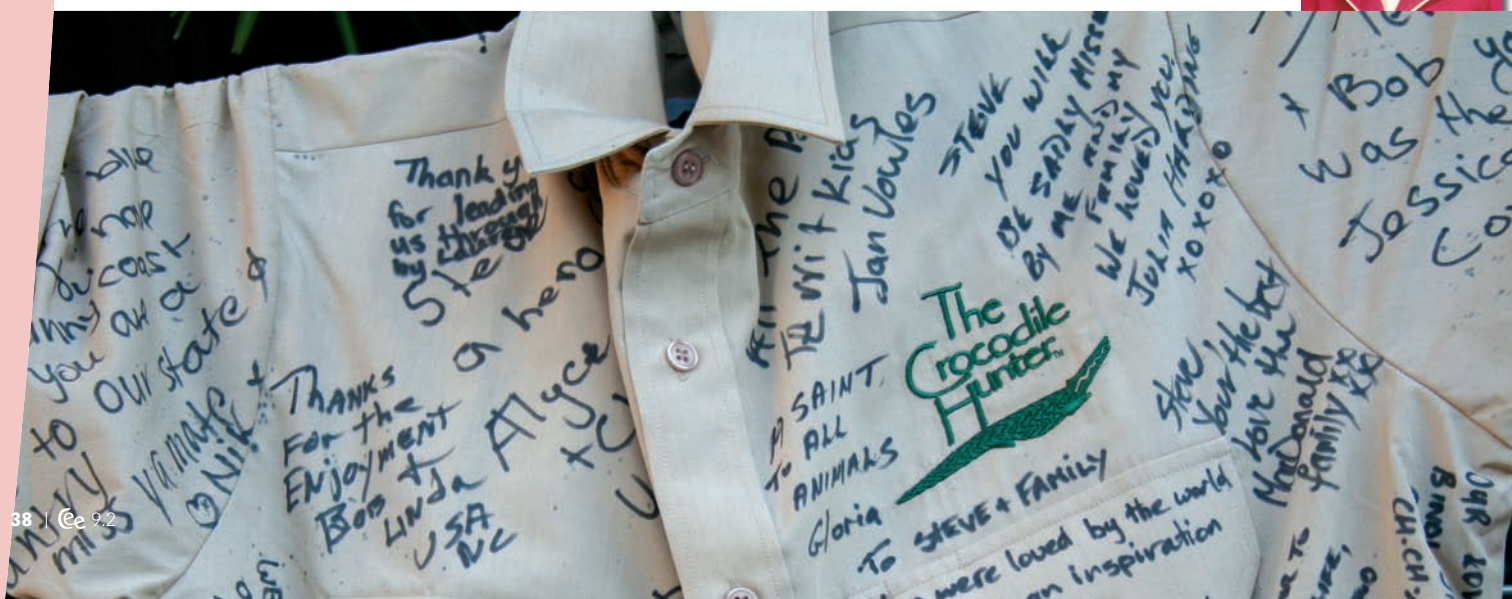
He is the illustration I used in several messages I delivered to young people as I challenged them to be committed to Christ and affectionately passionate about Him. Irwin's example is a "case for thought" of how many souls we could reach for the kingdom if we were as passionate about God as Irwin was about killer crocs.

Steve Irwin was dedicated and committed to his family and to his destiny—a sincere conservationist who acted on what he was gifted to do. He died doing what he loved best. He built an inspiring legacy, and people all over the world will miss him.

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.
—Romans 12:11, NIV

Jim Ed Hardaway had no idea at four and a half (pictured here at that age) how God would use his life to touch others. He advocates for children through his work at Compassion International in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He also serves as the president of Epictrek Ministries (www.epictrek.com).