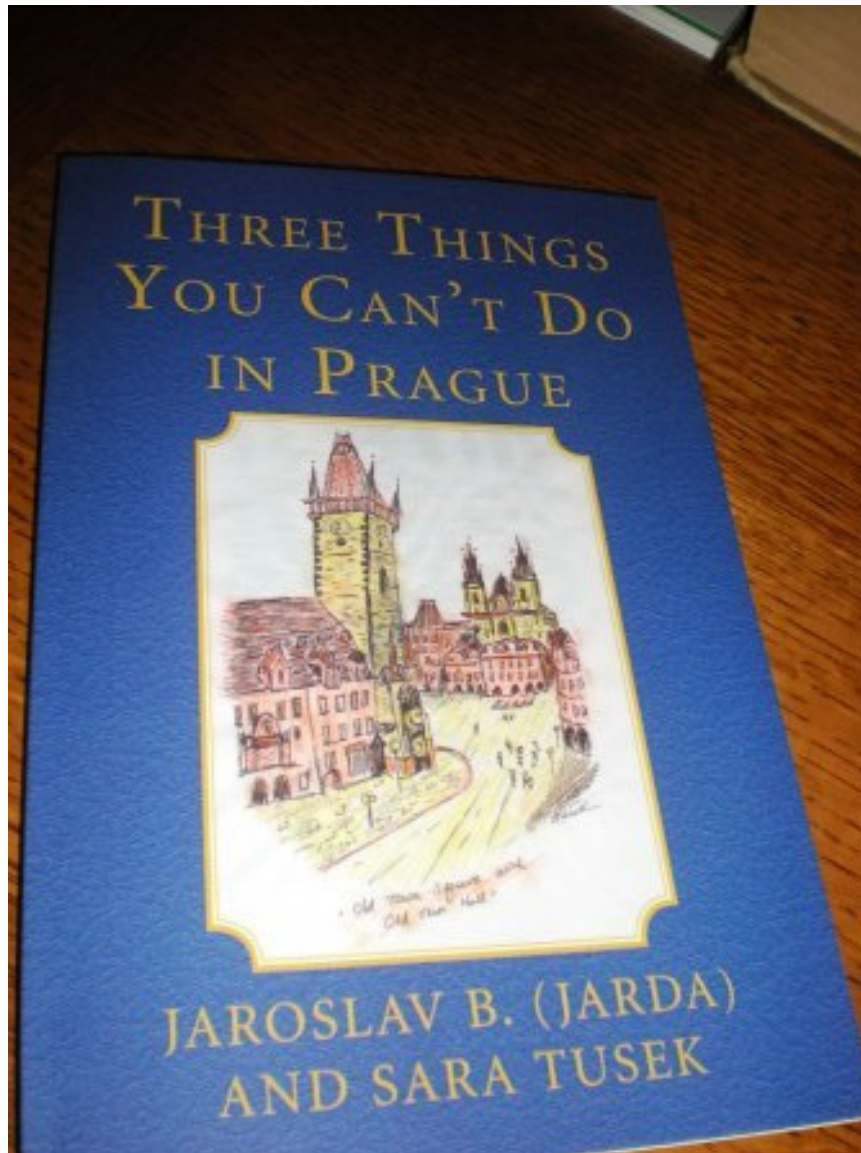


Three Things You Can't Do in Prague



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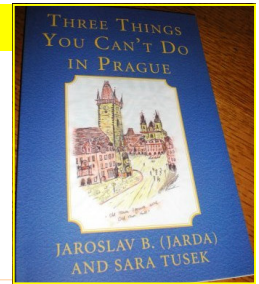
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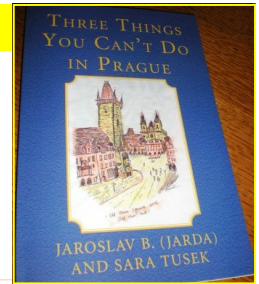
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A word of encouragement to all Christians from Colossians 1:4-6:

“Because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.”

New International Version (NIV)

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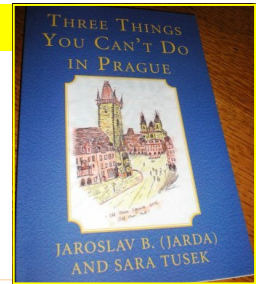
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Publications by Jaroslav B. and Sara Shepherd Tusek

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- International Leadership Institute, *Servant Leaders* (2005—present)
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Contributing Editors and Columnists to *East Tennessee Business Journal/ Chattanooga Business Journal*, 1993— present. Selected articles: “Executive Education in a Changing World”

“Smart Investing in the Czech Republic”
“Manufacturing in a Global Economy”



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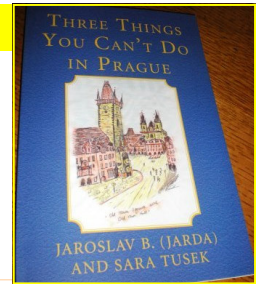
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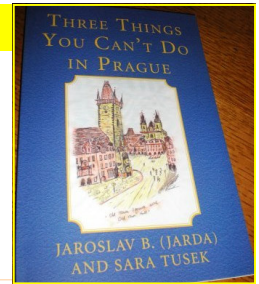
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Three Things You Can't Do in Prague

Introduction

In this brief work of fiction, we are fast-forwarding in time, imagining the things that “might have happened” between 2007—2012, through the efforts of two everyday people who decided to follow Jesus Christ, believing that they “can do all things through Christ who strengthens them” (Philippians 4:13).

These folks were really foolish; so foolish, in fact, that they asked God to stir up the gifts He had placed within them, so these gifts would no longer lay dormant and neglected, as a hope deferred.

These two were saying things such as “it’s time for us to get out of the boat,” and quoting Jesus’ saying, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). They took their vision of being missionaries to Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, which has gained in recent years the reputation as being the country in contemporary Europe that is most godless, most secular and most “derailed” from its Christian cultural and spiritual heritage.

Why did they break these taboos? Were they really so ignorant and naïve? No, they didn’t act out of ignorance, but out of their experience of working with Czechs during the exciting times just after the collapse of communism in November 1989. To them, the idea of restoring the Czech Church to its former power and glory was not only consistent with the ongoing reality of rebuilding the country economically, politically, culturally, and socially after some 40 years of communism, but also corresponded with their conviction that the Czech Republic presented both a great need and a wonderful opportunity for Christian ministry.

They thought that, if they could become God’s instruments and help the contemporary Czech Church to unlearn “what it knows” so it could then learn how to become the Church it must become, perhaps someone would say of them in the future,

“It is good that they came and have been here. They brought the Spirit of Jesus Christ into our midst” (Luke 4:18, Isaiah 61:1-3). This is their story.



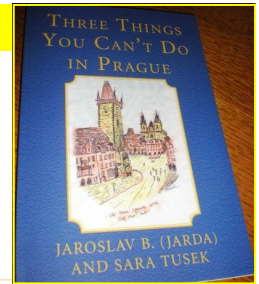
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Three Things You Can't Do in Prague

Chapter I: Arriving in Prague

The year was 2007. It was October, the month when it starts to get rather chilly in the heart of Europe—so chilly that Florida-bred dogs need to wear their Norwegian “losekofte,” or sweater.

The husband-and-wife team of Knut and Gudrun Peterson, had just arrived at Prague’s Ruzyne airport, accompanied by their black mini-dachshund called Comenius (the Latinized name of Jan Amos Komensky, 17th century Moravian teacher, writer and bishop), who had crossed the Atlantic on their laps. The Petersons noticed immediately that it was raining, it was dark, and the people around them were not smiling. Just yesterday they were enjoying their swimming pool and admiring the flowering hibiscus all around the pool, interspersed with glorious bird-of-paradise plants, in sunny Florida.

Now Knut and Gudrun were chatting in Norwegian with a group of Norwegian tourists waiting for their luggage at the same carousel. But the Norwegians were not buying Knut’s strange accent; one of them asked him a bit suspiciously, “What part of

Sweden do you come from?” (This comment reflected an age-old rivalry between the Swedes and the Norwegians.)

Knut said, “We come from Florida--I know that is not Sweden because it’s not cold there.” The Norwegian chap nodded in agreement, saying “Ja, Swedes surely have the worst weather in Europe. That I know quite well. I am from Oslo, and Oslo is the sunniest capital of Europe. But what are you doing here in Prague?”

“My wife Gudrun and I have come here to do everything we were told we can’t do here,” said Knut, jokingly.

The Norwegian man, who introduced himself as Olaf, asked with a worried look on his face, “Well, surely you’re not missionaries. You aren’t coming here on some kind of God-business, are you?”

Knut suspected that Olaf might have more insights about Prague’s spiritual climate than an ordinary tourist. He asked Olaf, “Are you a missionary, too, then?”



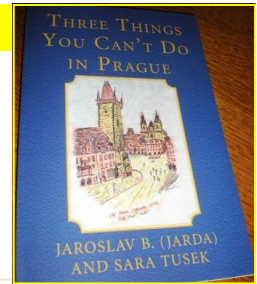
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Three Things You Can't Do in Prague

Chapter I: Arriving in Prague

“Well, I first came to Prague on a short-term mission trip several years ago and have learned my lesson. You don’t come to this city as a Norwegian Lutheran pastor; you want to remain incognito as a tourist, and that’s what I’m doing now,” answered Olaf.

Knut suddenly spotted Gudrun’s suitcase on the moving conveyer belt and remarked, “Here it comes. Olaf, would you like to have lunch with us in the next few days? We know Prague quite well; we’ve been coming here for years, and are familiar with the best restaurants. We’d like to learn more about your experience here, too.”

Olaf replied: “That sounds very tempting. It would be interesting to see Prague from an insider’s perspective this time. Here’s my hotel phone number. Please call me when you settle down. I’d like to compare notes with Gudrun and you about your experiences in Prague, and your insights into meeting the spiritual needs of its people.”

After parting ways with Olaf, the Petersons proceeded outside the airport lobby and took, as was their custom, a Cedaz mini-bus to their flat in Zizkov, the traditional Hussite neighborhood, an area close to the Old Town of Prague.

Once they had brought their luggage upstairs and started a pot of fresh tea, Knut and Gudrun thanked God for the comfortable, enjoyable and safe trip from Florida. Then they called several of their friends in Prague, to let them know they had arrived and to make plans for getting together soon.

Gudrun then said, “Knut, I am so glad we are finally here as missionaries! I feel that if we do what we are called to do, God will do what He has promised to do.” She grabbed her carry-on bag and pulled out a worn, marked-up copy of *Three Things You Can't Do in Prague*. This battered paperback, from the first run of the Pacific Northwest edition of the book, was precious to Knut and Gudrun.

“After all, Knut, we are not the first people ever to undertake Christian ministry in this country!”



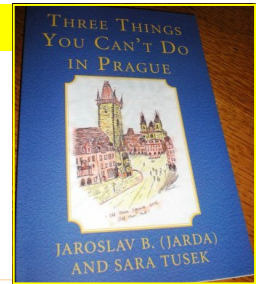
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Chapter I: Arriving in Prague

Gudrun began reading aloud some pertinent lines in Chapter One of *Three Things You Can't Do in Prague*:

“Look at Cyril and Methodius! They evangelized the Slavs in the 9th century and led many to Christ,” said Gudrun.

“You are right, sweetie,” answered Knut. “I think God brought us here in this century because this is clearly one of His emerging mission fields in our postmodern era. He will guide us and show us the right ways to engage the Czechs, whether or not they still have a memory of being evangelized and becoming Christians.”

“And you know,” he continued, “we’d better learn this new language of the Christian ‘emerging church,’ which will enable us to become more at home here. After all, we will be operating in the still-emerging marketing economy, after communism’s fall,” Knut said.

“So forget trying to learn Czech, Gudrun, and let’s learn ‘postmodern-ese,’ the language of the emerging church,” Knut said, only half in jest. “We must be willing to recognize and acknowledge the postmodern values which these unchurched Czechs hold, values such as seeking after mystery and wonder. Forget preaching about modernist values like objectivity, analysis, and control; the postmodern world has moved to another worldview, where certainty is not expected and ambiguity is embraced.”

“Because we are aware of the serious decline of Christianity in Europe in general, and of the gradual impact of secularization, individualism, the Renaissance, Humanism, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, the individual rights movement, the self-esteem movement, Socialism, Communism, Modernism, Postmodernism and many other non-Christian or anti-Christian approaches to life, we must also pay some attention to modern Czech thought.



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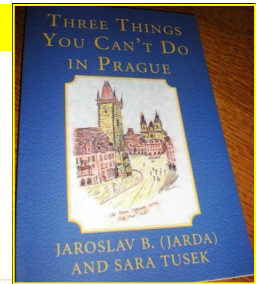
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Chapter I: Arriving in Prague

Knut continued, as he shared his reasoning with Gudrun, “Three of the basic dimensions of the human dilemma in the second millennium are these:

- alienation from others
- a lack of direction in life
- an uncertainty about the future.”

“And we’ll need to be open to questions,” added Gudrun, “because we need to find out how the Church might serve the world in this 21st century and beyond, and how we can bring healing to those who ask for it.”

As Gudrun continued reading aloud from the Peterson’s book, their little friend reminded them it was time to take him for a walk. The emerging values of post-modernism were not the most urgent priority to the dog’s mind, but the comments he was making required Knut’s immediate attention.

Gudrun smiled as Knut and Comenius took to the streets of Prague.

(below: Knut and Gudrun, with Comenius, visit Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus in Florida)



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