

Carla and the Christmas Bear - #1

"Please Sir", as she held out her soiled empty hand, "Can you spare just a morsel for a cold weak child"?

The over plump man never looking down assumed she was speaking of herself. He stared at her with cold unsympathetic eyes, then grunted, "Off with you", he said. "Do you not know who I am? I own all these buildings, for the next two blocks, and if I had my way, you vagrants would be toted off to oblivion. You hang around here with your hands out expecting my renters to give, give, give...".

Then suddenly he felt this sharp abrupt pain on his old squeaky shinbone, and immediately thought that this frail unkept woman had kicked him, but no, this meek little child's voice erupted from lower down to make herself noticed. "You are a nasty mean spirited old man, and Santa will not be coming to see you this Christmas", she cried with tears rolling from her pale blue eyes.

The man now angry reached for his tiny assailant and slipped and fell with a crash upon the snow and ice. Now he had two new bruises, this would be a meeting that he would not forget for a long, long time.

Finally, he scooted himself over to a street lamp pole and hoisted his heavy body back up straight on his feet. Grumbled and growled from the back of his throat, swearing that this woman and child would pay for what they had done to him. He turned in a flash and headed for his over stretched limo that was waiting by the curbside. The driver opened the door, and after shutting it behind his employer, reached in his pocket and handed the woman ten dollars. "Merry Christmas," he said.

The woman and child both thanked him for his kindness, for they knew that he was only a working man, unlike the man he labored for, but they were grateful for any means that would allow them nourishment, and something warm to drink.

"Mommy, I'm cold, and I'm hungry, Can we get something to eat now"?

"Yes, we'll walk down the street to that all night grocery, and get some fruit and some hot chocolate".

And so off they went. Once inside, the clerk, being told to watch those that lived on the street very closely, for they would 'help themselves' to merchandise, she spoke cautiously, but nicely, as she watched the mother prepare two large cups for their hot treat.

Feeling the woman's eyes on her, the Mother turned and showed the lady her acquired monies, so that she could rest her mind that she wasn't trying to get something for nothing. While she was busy with the chocolate the child's eyes would light up when she noticed a Christmas basket filled with goodies on the shelf above her. "Look, Mommy", she said with excitement in her voice, "There's a Christmas bear, just like the one I had, before Daddy got sick".

It wasn't that she was ignoring her daughter's words, but she knew that any money they had was a must to be used for food, not Christmas bears in a colored cellophane wrap.

She leaned over and very quietly, she tried to explain. "Carla, now you know that Mama can't afford things such as that, maybe Santa will bring it for you".

Even at seven years old, Carla knew in her mind, that Mama was telling her the truth, but she also knew in her heart that she couldn't give up on her dreams, and yes, maybe Santa would bring it to her.

The lady in the store allowed them as paying customers to remain in the warmth of the store and drink their drinks and feast on the large bright shiny red apples. Carla and her Mother talked about Christmas memories that they had shared before Carla's Daddy had passed away, leaving them on their own. It was a happier time, though they still weren't rich, they did have a home and food. They weren't bitter they just knew that this wasn't the life they wanted or needed to be living. After they had finished eating and drinking, they thanked the lady for her generosity, and headed back out into the bite of the ice, snow and darkness.

It was still two weeks before Christmas, and Carla held high hopes of Santa fulfilling her teddybear wish.

The North wind was howling and the snow was getting heavier, as Carla and her Mama crawled into that cardboard box they knew as home. The ends were covered in heavy wool blankets that people from the shelter

handed out last winter to those on the streets. No matter how cold it was her Mother always made sure that Carla was as warm as she could possibly keep her under these conditions.

Mama began her nightly ritual, with the singing of the lullabye and season's story, but this night Carla noticed a cough that kept plaguing her Mother's shivering voice.

Finally, Carla broke in and stopped her, by saying, "Mama, can we just go to sleep now, I'm really quite tired". Mama agreed, and Carla rolled over, trying to imagine a warm fireplace and the sound of the crackling it makes as the logs burn to ashes.

A few hours later, the repeated sound of her Mother's hacking cough awoke her. Carla became quite worried for that was the same sound that she remembered about her Daddy just before 'the funeral'.

Carla loved her Mother, and began trying to wake her, but noticed that she was very warm. Warmer even than she should possibly be.

As the daylight appeared, her Mother woke, but in her eyes was the illness that soon would prove to bring many sleepless nights for this seven year old angel. Carla began to pray, to the Jesus that her Mother had always told her about. The Jesus that performed miracles by healing the terminally ill. So at night while her Mother lay coughing, Carla would lay awake and pray. But the only person in Carla's life that she knew would always love her, was growing worse, not better, in spite of all the prayers that she would send.

Then one morning, only three days before Christmas, Hubert, another homeless man, came by to see how Carla and her Mother was fairing, since they had not come to the park in many days. When Hubert raised the wool blanket from the end of the box and saw the condition that her Mother was in, he sat down on the frozen sidewalk and started to talking to Carla about her Mother being sick.

"How long she been this way, Carla", Hubert asked?

"A long time now", she said with doubt in her voice and tears in her eyes. "She hasn't opened her eyes, this makes three days now".

Hubert knew that this was very serious, she probably had pneumonia, and for the homeless, pneumonia usually meant certain death.

By now Carla had basically forgotten about that Christmas bear or any wishes of any kind except those having to do with her Mother getting well.

"She needs medicine", Hubert said. "And she needs it quick". But he knew that without money, they would see her at the local ER but still very few survived.

Carla told Hubert that she had prayed for her, but Jesus didn't hear her, but Hubert tried to assure this sweet innocent child that Jesus hears everybody, but tends to the needs of his children in many different ways. "You just keep a prayin' child, just keep a prayin'".

Suddenly Carla remembered the man that she had kicked that night, that rich man that she felt was being mean and nasty to her Mother. Maybe that is the reason that Jesus hasn't give Mama a miracle, she thought to herself. I need to find him and tell him I'm sorry. Maybe then

Jesus would let Mama be well again. So Carla bundled up like her Mother had always told her to do, and set out to find that man.

It just so happened that very evening, that long black shiny car pulled up just down the street, and Carla noticed it. It was hard to miss actually, so she took off with the good intentions of speaking her apologies for her recent bad manners.

She approached the car just as the owner stepped out, and she cleared her throat to get his attention. "Please, Sir, will you please forgive me, so that Jesus will grant my Mommy a miracle"?

"Uhh, what did you say", asked the man? "Go on little girl, don't bother me, can't you see I'm a busy man"? But Carla just wouldn't, couldn't give up. She had to make this man accept her apology. "Please Sir, Please", Carla began to beg. "You must hear my apology, so Jesus will help Mama!"

Then he realized just who this child was, this was the little girl that had given him that mean little kick on the sidewalk that night. Yes, how could he forget that, after all, he still carried an off colored bruise on his shin.

"Okay, Okay", he gruffly said. "Just get away from me, you little brat"!

Any other time Carla would have taken offense to one calling her such names, but she took that as his acceptance and off she went, with a now consoled look on her numb frozen face.

When she returned to her cardboard home, she found Hubert waiting on her, but she also noticed the back of an ambulance with the lights on, headed down the street in a hurry. She paused and ran to lift the blanket but Hubert stopped her. Fighting his grip, she began yelling at him, "Where's my Mama! Where's my Mama! What have you done to her"?

"She had to go see the Doctor," Hubert said, while trying to console this child that he knew would have to be placed now in the care of the authorities, whether her Mother survived or not.

The word of this child's fate, spread on the streets, like a wild fire in a dry forest.

The only attention that anybody ever paid to the oversized car when it rolled into the neighborhood, was that they knew that the oversized man would soon appear from it's back seat to gather rent from his apartment dwellers. This time, though, it would be different. Not only did he step out, but also a very sweet looking grandmotherly looking woman.

She stood outside the car, looking up at the tall buildings, as though she was making mental notes on their whereabouts for later years. Pointing ever so often and the cheuffer would slightly bow his head.

You could tell that now her attention was being drawn to a more immediate thought, for the look on her face softened even more. She tapped the lady's shoulder, that was telling of Carla and her Mother's problems, "Excuse me," she said. "Did I hear you say there is a small child that has been left unattended out here on the streets?"

The lady just pointed straight toward where Hubert and Carla were standing.

Carla was busy crying, but Hubert knew what that point was going to lead to. His first reaction was to take Carla and hide her, but he also knew that if he did it would just mean that she would have to stay in the freezing streets another night, and he really didn't want that to be. So he took Carla and moved even closer to the lady that was now keeping her eyes glued on their actions.

It wasn't long after Hubert saw the lady speaking to somebody on the phone that a police car pulled up next to them on the edge of the street.

The first officer that stepped up on the sidewalk, reached for Carla, and she jerked backwards, as to avoid his touch. Hubert bent down on his knees, and started trying to convince Carla that she needed to go with them so that they could take her to see her Mother.

He also knew that probably wasn't going to be where she went but she was already upset and she too needed medical attention.

He heard a woman's voice, and turned to see the lady that was previously standing beside the car. The policemen apparently knew who she was, for they called her by name.

She motioned for them to let her try and get Carla to go with her, and assured them that she was deal with the legal athourities herself.

Hubert gave Carla a hug and then raised up and stepped out of the way as to give Mrs. Winkleman direct access to Carla's attention. He couldn't hear all of what she was saying to her, but very soon the Mrs. stood up, took Carla by the hand, spoke to the policemen, and off they went hand in hand down the sidewalk.

When Mr. Winkleman came from the building, one could see the non-approval on his face, but he didn't argue with his misses. All three stepped into the back of that long black car and it sped off down the street.

Carla's Mother didn't make it through the night, and that news too spread through the streets. Although each of them worried about Carla, they were sure that she now was being taken care of. They knew she was not on the

streets facing another freezing night. Hubert would never forget the story that Carla's Mother shared with him, before he had called the ambulance to retrieve her from her paper doll home.

After Mrs. Winkleman had left with Carla that day, Hubert had shared the story with the officers that had arrived first. Her Mother had told Hubert Carla's only Christmas wish. The Christmas bear wrapped in colored cellophane.

What they didn't know, was that Carla would again visit them, each time Mr. Winkleman would come into the neighborhood to collect his rent. Yes, Carla was now living with Mr. and Mrs. Winkleman. She never came that she wasn't holding tightly to that Christmas Bear that she had wished for.

On her first visit back, she hunted down Hubert to tell him that she knows now that Jesus did hear her prayers, for she prayed that her Mommy and Daddy would again be together, and now...they were.

Carla and the Christmas Bear.

2Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.

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12/10

"CARLA'S CRYSTAL PALACE" - #2

She snuggled down beneath the warm soft blankets, with the fireplace glowing through the darkness. It seems almost impossible to believe that one little girl could have traveled such a far distance in only a year. But she did, and she is here, living much like a fairytale princess in what she refers to as her, crystal palace.

Grams and Gramps Winkleman have become the Grandparents she never knew, nor even dreamed of ever having. They give her everything a storybook princess could ever hope of having. Closets filled with the finest of clothing, toys upon tons of toys. Private schools, and dance lessons, music lessons, travels taking her to the furthest tips of the globe.

Carla remembers the bite of Winter in that makeshift cardboard home she slept in, only a year ago. As a matter of fact, she still has the dark wool blankets that covered it's ends, to hold out the snow and ice. She has always kept them folded on the end of her bed. When she is feeling lonely she holds them in front of the fireplace, and reads from the book that her Mother used to every night, until she would fall asleep.

The next thing she knew, there was a voice as soft as the feather bed she was in, calling her name. "Miss Carla, wake and come see the new snow." It was the voice of Missy, Carla's Nanny. She had opened the long pink drapes, so that the morning light could find the room. Carla stretched her body, and yawned, and stepped out onto the dark marble floors, moving sleepily to her third story window for a look see. The balcony outside her window, was covered in the whitest snow she'd ever saw. Not one footprint or track of any kind had flawed it, and it was a winter wonderland transformed overnight.

Carla's eyes lit up and she sighed from the awesome wintry sight. Brightly colored cardinals caught her attention, in the frozen treetops. They reminded her of Christmas ornaments, swaying in the breeze.

Missy announced that her bath was ready. Reluctantly she pulled herself away from the window, and headed into the bathroom. After her warm bath, she dressed and down to the dining room, she went. Grams and Gramps was already there, having coffee and toast. Gramps was reading the newspaper, as always and Grams had her paper and pencil, checking her daily events calendar.

"Good morning, Princess," they both said at almost the same time. Gramps never lowered his paper when he asked if she would like to take a ride with him downtown this morning. Carla always rode with him, so that she could visit with Hubert. Hubert was now the maintenance man in one of the buildings that Gramps owns. He has an apartment, on the first floor, so Carla visits with him while Gramps goes from door to door gathering the monthly rent.

She stepped out onto the ice covered sidewalk, in almost the exact spot where she had been, the day that she had given Gramps that swift kick in the shin, that sent him to the ground with a bang. She blushes every time she thinks about what she had done, but Gramps just chuckles, and refers to her as, 'Bruiser'.

There was a whole lot of faces that she didn't recognize as the regulars going in and out of the building, and they were carrying lumber and work tools and wearing thick heavy belts that were weighted with smaller tools, screwdrivers, pliers, measuring tapes and such and there were many of them, not just one or two. They all spoke or nodded as Gramps stood in front of the steps leading up to the doorway. He stopped one man, and asked him where he could find the foreman, and the man told him he was on the third floor at the far end of the building.

Gramps leaned down and gave me strict instructions not to leave the first floor for he didn't want me to get hurt in any of the construction. He said if you get hurt the Misses will have my head! He patted me on the back and headed upstairs.

Carla took a stroll down the sidewalk where she knew it would take her to where her Mother and her had stayed just last year. As she rounded the corner, she noticed a box just like the one they had, except a bit smaller, but it too had the ends covered with blankets, dark heavy wool blankets, to keep out the snow and ice.

A woman's voice came from behind her calling her by name. "Carla!," the lady yelled..."How have you been?" Carla immediately turned in her direction to see a smile as big as all the city lights. It was Rita. She remembers Rita helping her Mother learn how to 'make it' on the streets. She taught her how to panhandle money from passersby, and which dumpsters had the 'freshest' scraps, and which stores would sometimes give handouts to the homeless. But what she remembered most about Rita was that she had always referred to me, as Mom's Ace in the hole. She said, that when most wouldn't give anything to a homeless adult, they would nearly always give to a woman with a child. I knew that Rita was always around, somewhere close.

Rita bent down on one knee and hugged me really really tight, and told me how she missed Mom. I too missed Mom, but I also knew that she was with Daddy, and they were happy. Or I wanted to believe that, either way, she was no longer freezing on the streets and having to beg for food and handouts to feed me, and that was worth a whole lot.

We talked for a bit and others that I knew began to gather around the fireplace, which was a .55 gallon barrel with burning garbage in it, to warm their hands, and talk. I stood among them, as they drilled me for information about the reconstruction of the building down the way. I couldn't tell them anything for I was as in the dark as they seemed to be. Just as the conversation went silent, I looked up to see Gramp's car pulling to the curbside, and I bid them all goodbye and gave hugs and into the backseat I climbed.

Gramps took my hand and remarked about how cold I was, and gave directions to the driver to stop and get us some hot

chocolate. As we were waiting on our refreshments, Gramps was on the phone ordering supplies and making arrangements for their delivery. "What are you doing with the building, Gramps?" He just smiled and told me it was a surprise, and that real soon I would see. Adults were so secretive at times, and confusing to kids, so I just sipped on my chocolate and pretty much pushed his answer out of my mind.

Just then Carla glanced out the dark tinted window to see a huge plastic sign with big red bold letters announcing that Santa Claus was arriving that day. "Gramps! Gramps!", Carla squealed. "Can I go tell Santa my Christmas wishes?" He thought about it for a second, and then again instructed the driver to pull over, and almost in an instant we were standing in a line behind others wanting to make sure this Christmas would bring them their choices of toys and dreams.

As Carla got closer she could hear some of the children, telling their secrets, and Santa's, Ho, Ho, Ho's, as they slid down the slide into a pile of stuffed animals and overstuffed pillows. Then as they left, the elves would hand them peppermint canes and take their pictures if the parents wanted.

Then it was Carla's turn. She proudly walked up and placed herself on his comfortable knee, and before he could ask, Carla had already started. "Santa," she said quite timidly at first, "I'm not here to ask for new toys, or even clothes, for I've plenty, actually more than I could have ever dreamed of asking for. But I do want to thank you for giving me so much last year, and wanted to know if it was okay with you if I donated what I have to

boys and girls that were like me before Jesus gave me to Grams and Gramps. You see? Mama always taught me it was rude to get rid of gifts that others had given me, and I didn't want you to think I didn't like them 'er nothin'. They are all still like brand new, and I know that I would have loved to have had them before." Santa's cheery voice, cracked as he assured Carla that he would be proud of her, as she was showing the true spirit of what Christmas was really about.

As Carla started to jump down, she hesitated and then kissed Santa on his rosy cheek, gave him a hug and then whispered something in his ear.

"We'll see what we can do, Carla," said Santa, and down the slide she went. When the elf tried to hand her a candy cane she politely refused it, saying that peppermint really wasn't her favorite.

For the next few weeks leading up to a week before Christmas morning, Carla spent most of her time going through her room full of toys, sorting and wrapping them before placing them in their respective pile. Some toys were okay for either boy or girl, but of course her pile for girls seemed to be stacking higher than the boys', but she seemed to think that was okay too.

Grams and Gramps had told her that when she was through, they would see that her donation was delivered to the place where they would be well received. Finally she had reached the bottom, and was tying her last ribbon, when out of the corner of her eye, she noticed her special Christmas Bear, laying on her pillow. She reached and got it, and hugged it tight, assuring her soft stuffed friend that she'd not part with him. Carla knew that Mr. Bear was the last thing she had wished for before her Mother passed away, and she could never ever let him go.

It was Christmas Eve, and the day started out like most any other, but it seemed to have a magic floating in the air. The snow was falling and piling up heavily, and everyone had their colorful array of lights reflecting on Winter's ground cover. Carla knew that evening's time would be filled with many things. Dinner at Auntie's house, and opening gifts. Then all would go downtown and watch the Christmas parade, and the lighting of the tree. Sing Christmas song and then watch as Santa and his reindeer took off to deliver the toys. Or so she thought....

Missy, helped Carla in picking out a special dress, fixed her hair with red and blue ribbons to match, and then escorted her downstairs where the Mr. and Mrs. awaited her.

"Come Carla," said Grams, we have a special night planned just for you. A gift that we believe you will remember forever.

Now Carla being an eight year old, had no idea what a gift such as they were describing could possibly mean, but she was all for learning, and so out the door and down the road they went.

All the time they were in the car, Gramps kept telling Carla that he had talked with Santa, and he knew what she had whispered in his ear that day, and that her wish had been granted.

Carla suddenly became very confused, for what she had whispered was she had told Santa that she just hoped that Mama and Daddy were both warm and happy and of course, together.

The car came to a stop in front of the downtown building, where previously all the construction workers were busily working. This time though, there were no workers, and when she looked up, she saw a new set of steps covered with a bright red carpet, and big beautiful clear windows and doors.

With Gramps on one side and Grams on the other, they took Carla by the hands and led her up the steps. Once inside Carla's eyes begin to fill with tears, for the first thing she noticed was a large painting of her Mother and Father, just like the one that she kept on her bedside table. Beneath it, was a sandstone replica of the cardboard box complete with the wool blankets made of puter. On the side of the stone were these words:

"MAY ALL OF SOCIETY SEE HUMANITY AND GOODNESS
AS THROUGH THE INNOCENT EYE OF A HOMELESS CHILD"

and beneath the inscription was the bronze face of Carla, just as they had found her the day they had rescued her from the streets. As they walked on down the now beautiful hallway lined with many faces that she knew, on the wall beside another entrance way, was yet another plaque that read:

"CARLA'S CRYSTAL PALACE"

"Shelter for the Homeless and Unfortunate"

She stepped inside to find everything in that old run down dingy building wiped completely away. From top to bottom all was new and bright. Huge tall towering Christmas trees with loads of presents and then Carla noticed some that looked very familiar to her. Yes! They were the gifts that she had donated. They too were beneath the tree to be given to the children. She helped serve dinner, beside Grams and Gramps to those that otherwise would be gathered around a barrel just trying to stay warm. But this Christmas they would have a warm shelter, a soft bed, and a hot meal they didn't have to retrieve from a dumpster.

This night Carla would find what the real magic of Christmas really is. The gift of giving, each and every day of the year.

Job 14:15 Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

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12/17

CARLA'S ANGEL TREE - #3

It was a blustery gray winter's day, and Carla wanted to snuggle by the fire, but she knew there were so many that needed her and she just couldn't let them down.

Even now at the age of twenty-five, this time of year brought back so many memories, of her Mother and that cardboard box, and of course that Christmas Bear that she got as a special gift. Still to this day, it stayed on her bed, and when she felt alone, she would cuddle it close, making her feel as though her Mother was lying next to her. Watching over her, and keeping her safe.

The wind caught the door as she opened it to enter the shelter. Snow came blowing in all over the mat that read; "Welcome to Carla's Chrystal Palace" where everyone is Family.

Her heart would break when she would see children hanging at their Mother's side, as they made their way through the food line. She knew how they felt, living on the streets with no place to call home. It's a feeling that Carla would never forget, and she didn't seem to want to either. In her mind to forget would be stepping past those she vowed long ago to help, and unless she was able to reach out and touch those old feelings, she was sure that she would be abandoning the very ones that needed her most. Carla just couldn't let that happen.

There was not a day went by that she didn't enter the kitchen, and serve the food line, and this time of the year, there were so many more to feed. It seemed as though the number of homeless and hungry would double. Some she already knew by name and the others she made a conscience effort to get to know. On this day, she looked up and there in the doorway was a man with a bundled up child in his arms. He had even her face covered with a blanket, that Carla was sure was the only one they owned. He stood her on the floor in front of him and began unwrapping this half-frozen blonde haired child. Her unkept hair was hanging in her face, and when she brushed it back with her hands, from beneath was born the biggest brightest blue eyes, Carla had ever witnessed on a child. Her face was thin, and her bottom lip quivered from the cold, but there was something so warm and so special about those clear and precious blue eyes that Carla just couldn't turn away from. She leaned over and told 'Blue' that she'd be right back, and he knew he was to serve the rolls and drinks as well as the corn and greens.

As she approached her newest guests, the little girl quickly stepped slightly behind her Daddy and clung passionately to his leg just above his knee. Her tiny little hands still bright pink in color.

Carla smiled and said, "Welcome," greeting them as though she'd known them forever. Just as she got close enough she knelt down so that she could try and coax this hidden child from behind her Father. "And who do we have here?" The little girl wouldn't budge though, and not a word did she utter. She didn't want to seem too forward, and she wouldn't question them, but she could tell neither of them had been eating well or resting well either. Carla knew, that even the homeless had a certain amount of self-pride, and they took great exception to someone trying to get too friendly too fast. Carla just couldn't help picking up on the feeling of being very concerned about the welfare of this man and child. She pointed them in the direction of the food line, and told

them where the bathrooms were so they could wash up a bit before eating, then she turned and headed back toward her previous position.

It wasn't long before they both passed in front of her, and she gave them an extra large helping of warm nourishment. He carried the tray with both plates, over to one of the least full tables. Since it was warm inside, before they sat down, he removed the ragged and rather thin jacket, he was wearing and then removed the red flannel coat, that was held together in the front with safety pins, and hung them across the back of their chairs. He leaned over as though he was whispering something in her ear, and Carla noticed the little girl bowed her head.

Within just a few moments, her head raised and she immediately took the plastic fork in hand, and began eating. There were many moving about, and the room was filled with chatter and noise. In the winter time, and especially on snowy days, after they ate most would hang inside as long as they could, as though they were trying to store some of the inside warmth, for better times. That didn't bother Carla, she knew they had nowhere to go except back out onto the icy streets and sidewalks. Some of them would start cleaning the dining area, and straightening the chairs, just like they would have, if it would have been in their own homes.

After the line had ended, and the meal had been depleted from the full food bins, Carla made it over to the table where her newest guests were seated. She pulled out a chair and sat down, making small talk. The man pulled his attention away from his daughter to acknowledge Carla's presence. Finally he extended his hand. Carla took it just like she would have had it belonged to a senator or congressman.

This man's living status in her eyes made him no less than if he was the owner of millions. "Terry James and this is my daughter Olivia." Carla smiled at Olivia, and asked her how old she was. Finally this sweet child, broke her silence, and uttered her answer. "Six." Olivia said. "It's really good to meet both of you, and I hope you come back every day to see us." Carla said with a concerned look on her face.

Olivia of course didn't pick up on that as Terry did, but Carla saw the same concern on his. Without much prompting at all, Carla was soon to learn that Terry's wife and Olivia's Mother had taken off to find a new life without them. Not long afterwards, Terry and Olivia moved in with his Mother, that had recently passed away, and because his name wasn't on the lease, the landlord had asked Terry to move. Since he had nowhere to go, he took his child and the streets then became their domain. He had been hoping to find a job before Winter set in, but that had just not happened, and now they are caught like so many others. Carla knew this was a rough and all too real place to be in.

After about an hour, Terry ended their conversation by edging Olivia from her chair, and helping her on with her coat. "We must go now, Olivia, and get out of this nice lady's way." Just before they walked out the door and back into cold, Terry once again wrapped Olivia from head to toe in that old blanket. In just seconds they disappeared from Carla's sight.

Several days had went by and they had not returned to the food line. Carla began asking the others questions about them, and telling them if they happened to run into them, to please ask them to come back.

Much to her surprise, the very next day, she looked up, and there they were before her. TJ, smiled as his eyes met with Carla's. "It's good to see you both," Carla said. "I'm glad you felt comfortable enough to come back and visit with us."

Today was the day that Carla would begin decorating for the holidays, and she knew it wouldn't be too long before the place would turn into, a beautiful job well done. All those that ate would stick around to help. It was just something many of them done each year. They looked forward to it.

Since Mr. and Mrs. Winklemann had both now passed on, and she spent most of her time here at the center anyway, Carla decided to set the large family tree up here this year. Oh what a wonderful specimen it was too. It was in the corner and it was fully decorated, but the lights wouldn't be turned on until later that night. It had become somewhat of a tradition, for the lighting of the tree, for a late night get together, for all that had helped and all that wanted to attend, for some special sweet treats and egg nog.

There was always somebody that could play the piano, and they would end up gathering 'round and singing Christmas songs. Carla looked forward to it each year. Olivia's eyes lit up even more, as she watched the

holidays come to life before her. Carla made it clear to TJ, that he and Olivia were more than welcome to attend. And so they would.

That night, TJ and Olivia were some of the first through the doors. And for the first time, Carla would see a smile on this child's face. It brought tears to her eyes, for a smile on the face of a homeless child was something of a treasure. After just a while the entire center had filled with people. Carla had a special announcement, to make this evening, that she hoped would change the lives of many of them.

Around eight o'clock, Carla took her place in front of the tree. With mic in hand, she called Olivia to stand beside her. After a bit of coaxing from TJ and Carla, Olivia made her debut. Shyly she stood there, while Carla announced that before Christmas, the building next to the center would be opened and available for the homeless to take shelter in, from the bitter cold.

She had not so much as whispered a word of her surprise to anyone! The sighs swept across the room as if somebody had just handed each of them a winning lottery ticket. Immediately, Carla bent down and whispered in Olivia's ear, for her to help her plug the lights in on the tree. As soon as the tree illuminated, the room broke into "Silent Night."

Tears again filled Carla's eyes, and she felt the warmth and the magic of the holidays, that because of the Winkleman's taking her in after her Mother had passed away, she had grown to love and appreciate. It really was the season of miracles and magic.

Over the next few weeks Carla and TJ and Olivia, spent more and more time together. Finally, the day came when Carla asked TJ if it would be okay for her to spend some alone time with Olivia. Carla had some errands to run for the center, and since TJ was now helping with the setting up of the new shelter, she figured it would be the perfect opportunity, for her and Olivia to get better acquainted. "How 'bout it, Olivia, do you want to go with Carla?" TJ asked his daughter.

Olivia took Carla by the hand, and off they went. Grabbing their coats on the way out, they were off on their own. By the time they returned several hours later, Olivia was sporting a new coat, new shoes and several new suits of clothes. Her hair had been cut and fixed, and Carla had taken her by the house and bathed her. She and her smile was as radiant as those beautiful blue eyes.

On their return, Olivia almost couldn't wait to get to her Father's side, to show off her new look. As she approached her Daddy, tears began to well in his eyes, for this was the first time in months that he'd seen his daughter so happy.

Tomorrow was Christmas Eve, and the grand opening of the new center. Carla would be engrossed in the final details before the ribbon cutting. It was quite late that night before she would be able to return home. As they prepared to leave the center, TJ was bundling Olivia up, and Carla got this sudden urge to ask them if they would like to join her that evening as a guest at her home.

This was not the normal thing that Carla would do, but something inside her told her that she would be safe in this decision. Olivia, began a child's begging. "Please Daddy! Please! Can we go to Carla's?" TJ had a look of not exactly knowing how to answer his daughter, but he knew that the warmth of a home, was so much better than the icy sidewalks they normally resided upon.

TJ and Carla spent most of the way, talking about the center and how she became the owner. Most knew Carla's story, but TJ was one of the very few, that didn't. He felt the genuine humbleness in Carla's voice as she told in detail how she came to live with the Winkleman's.

They pulled into the garage, and all got out and went in. TJ was a bit taken aback by the size of the estate. He had no idea, and felt a bit shy as though he was imposing, but Carla, wouldn't allow those feelings to hang around long. She started flipping on lights and building a fire in the main fireplace. There was of course central heating and she would use that until the fires could warm the place.

Olivia sitting on the edge of the sofa next to Carla, stood up and whispered in her ear. Carla smiled. "Okay, go get them." TJ had a puzzled look on his face, as Olivia left the room and returned carrying several packages.

They weren't wrapped in Christmas paper, they were just wrapped. Olivia placed them on the floor at her Daddy's feet, and told him they were from her.

TJ gave Carla a disbelieving look for he knew whatever these boxes contained, they would have had to of been purchased by Carla and not his daughter. Before TJ could say anything, Carla told him not to argue just open them. It would be that very moment when Carla would notice, where Olivia had inherited those blue eyes from.

By the time he was through looking inside the gifts, he would have a full suit of clothes, new shoes, and a watch. Soon they were all feeling the tiredness of the day, and Carla showed them to the guest rooms and since she had already had the butler build a fire, they were warm enough for them to bathe and ready themselves for bed.

The next morning, Carla met them at the breakfast table. She was almost speechless, at the difference the bath and clothes had made on TJ. "Well," she said with an approving smile, " Aren't you a handsome fellow?"

As their eyes met, Carla for the first time in her life, actually felt the flutter of butterflies in her stomach, but she had a busy and full day ahead of her, and she didn't have time for anything else at the moment.

They ate breakfast, and off to the center they went, but before they would get there, Carla pulled in next to the curb, in front of the barbershop, and had TJ go inside for the final shine on his new look. When he returned, he not only had a haircut, but he was also clean shaven except his full mustache, he had opted to keep. As he got back into the front seat, again their eyes met, and once again there was those butterflies. One more time, Carla would push them out of her mind.

Lots of people would come and go that day from the center, and the food lines seemed endless. They were serving their Christmas dinner, that evening, and then the children would open gifts while talking to Santa. It had become tradition, for the children to write their hopes and gift wishes on a piece of paper and place them on the tree, throughout the weeks leading up to Christmas Eve. That night they would open them and read them for all to hear. Some of the things those kids asked for would break one's heart, and Carla knew this year wouldn't be any different. Or though she thought.

One by one, the children would walk up to the Angel tree, and take off their papers to read. Carla would help those that had difficulty reading, or was just too young for the task. Finally there would only be one left, and Olivia made her way toward the tree. Reluctantly she reached and took it in hand. She stood there looking up at Carla, almost blushing, but Carla knelt down and asked Olivia if she needed help. Olivia then handed her the small envelope. Like all the others, Carla never hesitated to open it. Inside in a child's handwriting was this:

Dear Santa,

My name is Olivia James. I am six years old. I live with my Daddy, and he takes good care of me. He says I'm a good girl. I would leave you some cookies and milk, but I don't know where to leave them. Santa, I don't want any toys this year, but could you help my Daddy find me a new Mommy? My other one, didn't want me and Daddy no more, and Daddy don't laugh now. I hope I been good enough for this gift.

Love you Santa,

Olivia James

ps Could you bring my new friend Carla a special gift too?

By the time Carla finished reading Olivia's request, there wasn't a dry eye in the building, and all of them were fixed on this special new angel and her now embarrassed Father. He didn't let that stop him from sweeping his daughter off her feet and giving her a huge hug, and telling her how much he adored and loved her.

Carla cleared her throat, and done her best to push back the tears, and announced that the ribbon cutting on the new building would be immediately. The entire group followed behind her as Carla went to make her dedication speech, she had an added thought. that She would let Olivia, cut the ribbon just as she had lit the angel tree.

After the ribbon had been cut, all went inside where they would find rows and rows of beds with not one but two new clean blankets,pillows, with locking lockers for their belongings, and adequate restrooms and showers.

Several tv rooms with game tables. There were separate rooms for the men and women, and some family quarters for those like TJ and Olivia, so that they could be together, in one room.

Twice a month, there would be barbers and beauticians visit the shelter, and all that needed to could get their hair cut and fixed. There would be a healthcare nurse on duty at all times, and an employment counselor to help those that were able to find work.

As the crowd began to make their way through the center, Carla had other things now on her mind. Every year she would take the notes from the angel tree and hit the stores, to try and fill as many of the children's requests as possible, so that on Christmas morning, when they arrived at the center they would find that Santa had delivered their gifts.

This year though, she had quite the dilemma to hurdle. What and how would she fill the request for Olivia. By the time she was through with her list, Carla was exhausted and still she had not found one item that she thought was appropriate for this child that wanted nothing but a new Mommy.

She couldn't let her come into the shelter without gifts beneath the tree. Finally, she found a pair of pajamas and a special soft blanket made from pastel colors, but still she knew that wasn't what Olivia had in mind. That would just have to do, Carla thought, after all she couldn't buy her a Mommy.

Carla delivered all the gifts to center and placed them in their respectful places. Then she headed for home, after peeking in on the other center, to make sure all was going smoothly. Most all had already retired, so Carla decided it was time for her to go to go home and to bed.

As tired as she was, she couldn't close her eyes. Still hearing the request of that angel named Olivia. Carla reached and took her own special Christmas Bear in her arms and hugged it tight. Just as she was falling asleep, she had this great idea. That's it! she thought to herself, I know what to give Olivia! Carla turned over and fell fast asleep.

Carla always arrived at the center on Christmas morning even before the sun came up, so that she could make the last minute preparations for the children's arrival. There would be lots of hot coffee, chocolate, fruit cake, and the regular breakfast foods for those that wanted them.

The center didn't normally serve breakfast but after all, this was a special day. This year was even more special, just because of Olivia and TJ. Soon the center was filled with children and their parents, streaming in from the building next door.

Carla was on her third cup of coffee when in through the door came Olivia holding tight to her Daddy's hand. Carla and TJ exchanged greetings, while she handed him his first cup of coffee. He took it to his lips and sipped it carefully while the steam flowed up and over his head. Carla then turned all her attention toward Olivia. She took her hand in hers and guided her toward the tree. Reaching in the back, she pulled three presents and laid them at Olivia's feet. First she handed her the pajamas, and this bright eyed child snuggled their warm feel. Then came the blanket, and she wrapped it around her shoulders, but then, then there was this next box, that none in the building was prepared for. As Olivia unwrapped it slowly, being very careful not rush through the excitement, finally as she reached in beneath the tissue paper, she pulled out Carla's very own Christmas Bear. Olivia looked at Carla as she hugged up to that bear, for Carla had told Olivia the story behind it, the day that she had taken her home with her to bathe her before they went shopping.

Even at six years old, Olivia knew just how special that bear was to Carla. It was the last Christmas gift her Mother had given her, and now she was gifting it to her. Carla told Olivia, that now every time she needed a Mommy hug, all she would have to do is hug the bear. Then she told Olivia, as she looked up at TJ, "Look Angel, and it also makes your Daddy smile."

From then on, everywhere Olivia was seen, she had that special Christmas Bear in her arms, and every time TJ saw Carla, he would get a smile on his face.

Carla? Well...she's still trying to figure out how to deal with those butterflies!

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with ovingkindness have I drawn thee.

=====
12/24

Wow! This tells you the meaning of Christmas!

The old man sat in his gas station on a cold Christmas Eve. He hadn't been anywhere in years since his wife had passed away. It was just another day to him. He didn't hate Christmas, just couldn't find a reason to celebrate. He was sitting there looking at the snow that had been falling for the last hour and wondering what it was all about when the door opened and a homeless man stepped through.

Instead of throwing the man out, Old George as he was known by his customers, told the man to come and sit by the heater and warm up. "Thank you, but I don't mean to intrude," said the stranger. "I see you're busy, I'll just go."

"Not without something hot in your belly." George said.

He turned and opened a wide mouth Thermos and handed it to the stranger. "It ain't much, but it's hot and tasty. Stew ... Made it myself. When you're done, there's coffee and it's fresh."

Just at that moment he heard the "ding" of the driveway bell. "Excuse me, be right back," George said. There in the driveway was an old '53 Chevy. Steam was rolling out of the front.. The driver was panicked. "Mister can you help me!" said the driver, with a deep Spanish accent. "My wife is with child and my car is broken." George opened the hood. It was bad. The block looked cracked from the cold, the car was dead.

"You ain't going in this thing," George said as he turned away.

"But Mister, please help ..." The door of the office closed behind George as he went inside. He went to the office wall and got the keys to his old truck, and went back outside. He walked around the building, opened the garage, started the truck and drove it around to where the couple was waiting. "Here, take my truck," he said. "She ain't the best thing you ever looked at, but she runs real good."

George helped put the woman in the truck and watched as it sped off into the night. He turned and walked back inside the office. "Glad I gave 'em the truck, their tires were shot too. That 'ol truck has brand new ." George thought he was talking to the stranger, but the man had gone. The Thermos was on the desk, empty, with a used coffee cup beside it. "Well, at least he got something in his belly," George thought.

George went back outside to see if the old Chevy would start. It cranked slowly, but it started. He pulled it into the garage where the truck had been. He thought he would tinker with it for something to do. Christmas Eve meant no customers. He discovered the the block hadn't cracked, it was just the bottom hose on the radiator. "Well, shoot, I can fix this," he said to himself. So he put a new one on.

"Those tires ain't gonna get 'em through the winter either." He took the snow treads off of his wife's old Lincoln. They were like new and he wasn't going to drive the car anyway.

As he was working, he heard shots being fired. He ran outside and beside a police car an officer lay on the cold ground. Bleeding from the left shoulder, the officer moaned, "Please help me."

George helped the officer inside as he remembered the training he had received in the Army as a medic. He knew the wound needed attention. "Pressure to stop the bleeding," he thought. The uniform company had been there that morning and had left clean shop towels. He used those and duct tape to bind the wound. "Hey, they say duct tape can fix anythin'," he said, trying to make the policeman feel at ease.

"Something for pain," George thought. All he had was the pills he used for his back. "These ought to work." He put some water in a cup and gave the policeman the pills. "You hang in there, I'm going to get you an ambulance."

The phone was dead. "Maybe I can get one of your buddies on that there talk box out in your car." He went out only to find that a bullet had gone into the dashboard destroying the two way radio.

He went back in to find the policeman sitting up. "Thanks," said the officer. "You could have left me there. The guy that shot me is still in the area."

George sat down beside him, "I would never leave an injured man in the Army and I ain't gonna leave you." George pulled back the bandage to check for bleeding. "Looks worse than what it is. Bullet passed right through 'ya. Good thing it missed the important stuff though. I think with time your gonna be right as rain."

George got up and poured a cup of coffee. "How do you take it?" he asked.

"None for me," said the officer..

"Oh, yer gonna drink this. Best in the city. Too bad I ain't got no donuts." The officer laughed and winced at the same time.

The front door of the office flew open. In burst a young man with a gun. "Give me all your cash! Do it now!" the young man yelled. His hand was shaking and George could tell that he had never done anything like this before.

"That's the guy that shot me!" exclaimed the officer.

"Son, why are you doing this?" asked George, "You need to put the cannon away. Somebody else might get hurt."

The young man was confused. "Shut up old man, or I'll shoot you, too. Now give me the cash!"

The cop was reaching for his gun. "Put that thing away," George said to the cop, "we got one too many in here now."

He turned his attention to the young man. "Son, it's Christmas Eve. If you need money, well then, here. It ain't much but it's all I got. Now put that pea shooter away."

George pulled \$150 out of his pocket and handed it to the young man, reaching for the barrel of the gun at the same time. The young man released his grip on the gun, fell to his knees and began to cry. "I'm not very good at this am I? All I wanted was to buy something for my wife and son," he went on. "I've lost my job, my rent is due, my car got repossessed last week."

George handed the gun to the cop. "Son, we all get in a bit of squeeze now and then. The road gets hard sometimes, but we make it through the best we can."

He got the young man to his feet, and sat him down on a chair across from the cop. "Sometimes we do stupid things." George handed the young man a cup of coffee. "Bein' stupid is one of the things that makes us human. Comin' in here with a gun ain't the answer. Now sit there and get warm and we'll sort this thing out."

The young man had stopped crying. He looked over to the cop. "Sorry I shot you. It just went off. I'm sorry officer."

"Shut up and drink your coffee " the cop said.

George could hear the sounds of sirens outside. A police car and an ambulance skidded to a halt. Two cops came through the door, guns drawn. "Chuck! You ok?" one of the cops asked the wounded officer.

"Not bad for a guy who took a bullet. How did you find me?"

"GPS locator in the car. Best thing since sliced bread. Who did this?" the other cop asked as he approached the young man.

Chuck answered him, "I don't know. The guy ran off into the dark. Just dropped his gun and ran."

George and the young man both looked puzzled at each other.

"That guy work here?" the wounded cop continued.

"Yep," George said, "just hired him this morning. Boy lost his job."

The paramedics came in and loaded Chuck onto the stretcher. The young man leaned over the wounded cop and whispered, "Why?"

Chuck just said, "Merry Christmas boy ... and you too, George, and thanks for everything."

"Well, looks like you got one doozy of a break there. That ought to solve some of your problems."

George went into the back room and came out with a box. He pulled out a ring box. "Here you go, something for the little woman. I don't think Martha would mind. She said it would come in handy some day."

The young man looked inside to see the biggest diamond ring he ever saw. "I can't take this," said the young man. "It means something to you."

"And now it means something to you," replied George. "I got my memories. That's all I need."

George reached into the box again. An airplane, a car and a truck appeared next. They were toys that the oil company had left for him to sell. "Here's something for that little man of yours."

The young man began to cry again as he handed back the \$150 that the old man had handed him earlier.

"And what are you supposed to buy Christmas dinner with? You keep that too," George said. "Now git home to your family."

The young man turned with tears streaming down his face. "I'll be here in the morning for work, if that job offer is still good."

"Nope. I'm closed Christmas day," George said. "See ya the day after."

George turned around to find that the stranger had returned. "Where'd you come from? I thought you left?"

"I have been here. I have always been here," said the stranger. "You say you don't celebrate Christmas. Why?"

"Well, after my wife passed away, I just couldn't see what all the bother was. Puttin' up a tree and all seemed a

waste of a good pine tree. Bakin' cookies like I used to with Martha just wasn't the same by myself and besides I was gettin' a little chubby."

The stranger put his hand on George's shoulder. "But you do celebrate the holiday, George. You gave me food and drink and warmed me when I was cold and hungry. The woman with child will bear a son and he will become a great doctor.

The policeman you helped will go on to save 19 people from being killed by terrorists. The young man who tried to rob you will make you a rich man and not take any for himself. "That is the spirit of the season and you keep it as good as any man."

George was taken aback by all this stranger had said. "And how do you know all this?" asked the old man.

"Trust me, George. I have the inside track on this sort of thing. And when your days are done you will be with Martha again."

The stranger moved toward the door. "If you will excuse me, George, I have to go now. I have to go home where there is a big celebration planned."

George watched as the old leather jacket and the torn pants that the stranger was wearing turned into a white robe. A golden light began to fill the room.

"You see, George ... it's My birthday. Merry Christmas."

George fell to his knees and replied, "Happy Birthday, Lord Jesus"

Matthew 24:42* Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

This story is better than any greeting card.
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND GOD BLESS

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12/31

If the Lord hasn't come for his bride yet, you have a great 2018

The "W" in Christmas - Author Unknown

Each December, I vow to make Christmas a calm and peaceful experience. I had cut back on nonessential obligations -- extensive card writing, endless baking, decorating, and even overspending. Still, I found myself exhausted, unable to enjoy precious family moments and, at times, the true meaning of Christmas.

My son, Nicholas, was in kindergarten that year. It was an exciting season for a five-year-old. For weeks, he'd been men his school's "Winter Pageant."

I didn't have the heart to tell him I had to work the night of the production.

Unwilling to miss Nicholas' shining moment, I spoke with his teacher. She assured me there'd be a dress rehearsal the morning of the presentation. All parents unable to attend that evening were welcome to come then. Fortunately, Nicholas seemed happy with the compromise.

So, the morning of the dress rehearsal, I filed in ten minutes early, found a spot on the cafeteria floor and sat down. Around me, several other parents quietly scampering to a space. As I waited, the students were led into the room. Each class, accompanied by their teacher, sat cross-legged on the floor.

Then, each group, one by one, rose to perform their song.

Because the public school system had long stopped referring to the holiday as "Christmas," I didn't expect anything other than fun, commercial entertainment - songs of reindeer, Santa Claus, snowflakes and good cheer. So, when my son's class sang "Christmas Love," I was slightly taken aback, although with pleasure. by its bold title.

Nicholas was aglow, as were all of his classmates, adorned in fuzzy mittens, red sweaters, and bright snow caps upon their heads. Those in the front row-center stage -- held up large letters, one by one, to spell out the title of the song. As the class would sing "Christmas," a child would hold up the letter C. Then, "H is for Happy," and on and on, until each child holding up his part of the complete message, "Christmas Love."

The performance was going smoothly, when suddenly we noticed her; a small, quiet, girl in the front row holding the letter M -- totally unaware her letter "M" appeared as a "W."

The audience of 1st through 6th graders began to snicker with suppressed laughter at this little one's mistake. However, she was laughing at her, so she stood tall, proudly holding her "W." Although many teachers tried to shush the children, the suppressed laughter continued until the last letter was raised ... and then we all saw it at the same time.

A hush came over the audience and eyes began to widen.

In that instant, we understood the reason we were there, why we celebrated the holiday in the first place, why even in the first place, the purpose for our festivities.

For when the last letter was held high, the message read loud and clear:

"CHRISTWAS LOVE"

And He still is.

We stand Amazed in His presence ... Humbled by His love.

May each of you have a Blessed Christmas and a Hopeful New Year as you reflect on His Amazing Love for us.

Wishing all a '**CHRISTWAS LOVE**' holiday season.

A carrot, an egg, and a cup of coffee. You will never look at a cup of coffee the same way again.

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as one problem was solved, a new one arose.

Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to boil. In the first she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs, and in the last she placed ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil; without saying a word.

In about twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl.

Then she ladled the coffee out and placed it in a bowl. Turning to her daughter, she asked, "Tell me what you see."

"Carrots, eggs, and coffee," she replied.

Her mother brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. The mother then asked the daughter to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg.

Finally, the mother asked the daughter to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled, as she tasted its rich aroma the daughter then asked, "What does it mean, mother?"

Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity: boiling water.

Each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. However, after being

subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting through the boiling water, its insides became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water.

"Which are you?" she asked her daughter. "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?"

Think of this: Which am I? Am I the carrot that seems strong, but with pain and adversity do I wilt and become soft and lose my strength?

Am I the egg that starts with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Did I have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a breakup, a financial hardship or some other trial, have I become hardened and stiff? Does my shell look the same, but on the inside am I bitter and tough with a stiff spirit and hardened heart?

Or am I like the coffee bean? The bean actually changes the hot water, the very circumstance that brings the pain. When the water gets hot, it releases the fragrance and flavor. If you are like the bean, when things are at their worst, you get better and change the situation around you. When the hour is the darkest and trials are their greatest, do you elevate yourself to another level? How do you handle adversity? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean?

May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human and enough hope to make you happy.

The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the best of everything that comes along their way. The brightest future will always be based on a forgotten past; you can't go forward in life until you let go of your past failures and heartaches.

When you were born, you were crying and everyone around you was smiling.

Live your life so at the end, you're the one who is smiling and everyone around you is crying.

You might want to send this message to those people who mean something to you (I JUST DID); to those who have touched your life in one way or another; to those who make you smile when you really need it; to those who make you see the brighter side of things when you are really down; to those whose friendship you appreciate; to those who are so meaningful in your life. If you don't (re)send it, you will just miss out on the opportunity to brighten someone's day with this message!

May we all be COFFEE!!!!!! !!

Romans 12:2* And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

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Nov 12

I Love My Attorney

After living what I felt was a 'decent' life, my time on earth came to the end.

The first thing I remember is sitting on a bench in the waiting room of what I thought to be a court house.

The doors opened and I was instructed to come in and have a seat by the defense table.

As I looked around I saw the 'prosecutor'.

He was a villainous looking gent who snarled as he stared at me. He definitely was the most evil person I have ever seen.

I sat down and looked to my left and there sat My Attorney, a kind and gentle looking man whose appearance seemed so familiar to me, I felt I knew Him.

The corner door opened and there appeared the Judge in full flowing robes.

He commanded an awesome presence as He moved across the room. I couldn't take my eyes off of Him.

As He took His seat behind the bench, He said, 'Let us begin.'

The prosecutor rose and said, 'My name is Satan and I am here to show you why this man belongs in hell.'

He proceeded to tell of lies that I told, things that I stole, and In the past when I cheated others.

Satan told of other horrible perversions that were once in my life, and the more he spoke, the further down in my seat I sank.

I was so embarrassed that I couldn't look at anyone, even my own Attorney, as the Devil told of sins that even I had completely forgotten about.

As upset as I was at Satan for telling all these things about me, I was equally upset at My Attorney who sat there silently not offering any form of defense at all.

I know I had been guilty of those things, but I had done some good in my life - couldn't that at least equal out part of the harm I'd done?

Satan finished with a fury and said, 'This man belongs in hell, he is guilty of all that I have charged and there is not a person who can prove otherwise.'

When it was His turn, My Attorney first asked if He might approach the bench. The Judge allowed this over the strong objection of Satan, and beckoned Him to come forward.

As He got up and started walking, I was able to see Him in His full splendor and majesty.

I realized why He seemed so familiar; this was Jesus representing me, my Lord and my Savior. He stopped at the bench and softly said to the Judge, 'HI, DAD,' and then He turned to address the court.

'Satan was correct in saying that this man had sinned, I won't deny any of these allegations. And, yes, the wage of sin is death, and this man deserves to be punished.'

Jesus took a deep breath and turned to His Father with outstretched arms and proclaimed, 'However, I died on the cross so that this person might have eternal life and he has accepted Me as his Savior, so he is Mine.'

My Lord continued with, 'His name is written in the Book of Life, and no one can snatch him from Me. Satan still does not understand yet. This man is not to be given justice, but rather mercy.'

As Jesus sat down, He quietly paused, looked at His Father and said, 'There is nothing else that needs to be done. I've done it all..'

The Judge lifted His mighty hand and slammed the gavel down. The following words bellowed from His lips.....

'This man is free. The penalty for him has already been paid in full. Case dismissed.'

I asked Jesus as He gave me my instructions where to go next, 'Have you ever lost a case?'

Christ lovingly smiled and said, 'Everyone that has come to Me and asked Me to represent them has received the same verdict as you, ~Paid In Full.'

'Stop telling God how big your storm is. Instead, tell the storm how big your God

1John 2:1* My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

Hebrews 13:5* Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

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nov 19

Really, Really Teaching...

As she stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children an untruth. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. However, that was impossible because there, in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard.

Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he did not play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy, and that he constantly needed a bath. In addition, Teddy could be unpleasant.

It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers.

At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until last. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise.

Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work

neatly and has good manners... he is a joy to be around.."

His second grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well-liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle."

His third grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken."

Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and he sometimes sleeps in class."

By now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's. His present was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing and a bottle that was one-quarter full of perfume, but she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mom used to." After the children left, she cried for at least an hour.

On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Instead, she began to teach children. Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets."

A year later, she found a note under her door from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class and she was still the best teacher he ever had in life.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favorite teacher he had ever had in his whole life.

Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer. The letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story does not end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he had met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit at the wedding in the place that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom.

Of course, Mrs. Thompson did. And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. Moreover, she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together.

They hugged each other and Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you, Mrs. Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference."

Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you."

(For you who may not know, Teddy Stoddard is the doctor at Iowa Methodist Hospital in Des Moines that has the Stoddard Cancer Wing.)

Warm someone's heart today. Pass this along. I love this story so very much, I cry every time I read it. Just try to make a difference in someone's life today? tomorrow? Just "do it!"

Random acts of kindness, I think they call it? Believe in angels and then return the favor.
Colossians 3:12* Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies,
kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

nov 26

The Pickle Jar

The pickle jar as far back as I can remember sat on the floor beside the dresser in my parents' bedroom.

When he got ready for bed, Dad would empty his pockets and toss his coins into the jar.

As a small boy, I was always fascinated at the sounds the coins made as they were dropped into the jar.

They landed with a merry jingle when the jar was almost empty. Then the tones gradually muted to a dull thud as the jar was filled.

I used to squat on the floor in front of the jar to admire the copper and silver circles that glistened like a pirate's treasure when the sun poured through the bedroom window. When the jar was filled, Dad would sit at the kitchen table and roll the coins before taking them to the bank....

Taking the coins to the bank was always a big production. Stacked neatly in a small cardboard box, the coins were placed between Dad and me on the seat of his old truck.

Each and every time, as we drove to the bank, Dad would look at me hopefully. "Those coins are going to keep you out of the textile mill, son. You're going to do better than me. This old mill town's not going to hold you back."

Also, each and every time, as he slid the box of rolled coins across the counter at the bank toward the cashier, he would grin proudly.. "These are for my son's college fund. He'll never work at the mill all his life like me."

We would always celebrate each deposit by stopping for an ice cream cone. I always got chocolate. Dad

always got vanilla. When the clerk at the ice cream parlour handed Dad his change, he would show me the

few coins nestled in his palm. "When we get home, we'll start filling the jar again." He always let me drop

the first coins into the empty jar... As they rattled around with a brief, happy jingle, we grinned at each other.

"You'll get to college on pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters," he said. "But you'll get there; I'll see to that."

No matter how rough things got at home, Dad continued to doggedly drop his coins into the jar.

Even the summer when Dad got laid off from the mill, and Mama had to serve dried beans several times a week, not a single dime was taken from the jar..

To the contrary, as Dad looked across the table at me, pouring catsup over my beans to make them more

palatable, he became more determined than ever to make a way out for me. "When you finish college, Son," he told me, his eyes glistening, "you'll never have to eat beans again - unless you want to."

The years passed, and I finished college and took a job in another town. Once, while visiting my parents,

I used the phone in their bedroom, and noticed that the pickle jar was gone. It had served its purpose and had been removed.

A lump rose in my throat as I stared at the spot beside the dresser where the jar had always stood. My dad

was a man of few words: he never lectured me on the values of determination, perseverance, and faith. The

pickle jar had taught me all these virtues far more eloquently than the most flowery of words

could have done. When I married, I told my wife Susan about the significant part the lowly pickle jar had played in my life as a boy. In my mind, it defined, more than anything else, how much my dad had loved me. The first Christmas after our daughter Jessica was born, we spent the holiday with my parents. After dinner, Mom and Dad sat next to each other on the sofa, taking turns cuddling their first grandchild Jessica began to whimper softly, and Susan took her from Dad's arms. "She probably needs to be changed," she said, carrying the baby into my parents' bedroom to diaper her. When Susan came back into the living room, there was a strange mist in her eyes. She handed Jessica back to Dad before taking my hand and leading me into the room. "Look," she said softly, her eyes directing me to a spot on the floor beside the dresser. To my amazement, there, as if it had never been removed, stood the old pickle jar, the bottom already covered with coins. I walked over to the pickle jar, dug down into my pocket, and pulled out a fistful of coins. With a gamut of emotions choking me, I dropped the coins into the jar. I looked up and saw that Dad, carrying Jessica, had slipped quietly into the room. Our eyes locked, and I knew he was feeling the same emotions I felt. Neither one of us could speak.

This truly touched my heart. Sometimes we are so busy adding up our troubles that we forget to count our blessings. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life, for better or for worse.

God puts us all in each other's lives to impact one another in some way. Look for GOOD in others.

- Happy moments, praise God.
- Difficult moments, seek God..
- Quiet moments, worship God.
- Painful moments, trust God.
- Every moment, thank God.

2Corinthians 12:14* Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

A few years ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash.

At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All, that is, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry.

The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back.....every one of them

One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better." Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story. Why?

Because deep down we know the one thing: that matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.

"A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle"

Isaiah 45:6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.

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oct 8

WHO I AM MAKES A DIFFERENCE

A teacher in New York decided to honor each of her seniors in high school by telling them the difference they each made. She called each

student to the front of the class, one at a time. First she told each of them how they had made a difference to her and the class. Then she presented each of them with a blue ribbon imprinted with gold letters, which read, "Who I Am Makes a Difference."

Afterwards the teacher decided to do a class project to see what kind of impact recognition would have on a community. She gave each of the students three more ribbons and instructed them to go out and spread this acknowledgment ceremony. Then they were to follow up on the results, see who honored whom and report back to the class in about a week. One of the boys in the class went to a junior executive in a nearby company and honored him for helping him with his career planning. He gave him a blue ribbon and put it on his shirt. Then he gave him two extra ribbons and said, "We're doing a class project on recognition, and we'd like you to go out find somebody to honor, give them a blue ribbon, then give them the extra blue ribbon so they can acknowledge a third person to keep this acknowledgment ceremony going. Then please report back to me and tell me what happened."

Later that day the junior executive went in to see his boss, who had been noted, by the way, as being kind of a grouchy fellow. He sat his boss down and he told him that he deeply admired him for being a creative genius.

The boss seemed very surprised. The junior executive asked him if he would accept the gift of the blue ribbon and would he give him permission to put it on him. His surprised boss said, "Well, sure." The junior executive took the blue ribbon and placed it right on his boss's jacket above his heart.

As he gave him the last extra ribbon, he said, "Would you do me a favor? Would you take this extra ribbon and pass it on by honoring somebody else? The young boy who first gave me the ribbons is doing a project in school and we want to keep this recognition ceremony going and find out how it affects people."

That night the boss came home to his 14-year-old son and sat him down. He said, "The most incredible thing happened to me today. I was in my office and one of the junior executives came in and told me he admired me and gave me a blue ribbon for being a creative genius. Imagine. He thinks I'm a creative genius. Then he put this blue ribbon that says "Who I Am Makes a Difference," on my jacket above my heart. He gave me an extra ribbon and asked me to find somebody else to honor. As I was driving home tonight, I started thinking about whom I would honor with this ribbon and I thought about you.

I want to honor you. My days are really hectic and when I come home I don't pay a lot of attention to you. Sometimes I scream at you for not getting good enough grades in school and for your bedroom being a mess, but somehow tonight, I just wanted to sit here and, well, just let you know that you do make a difference to me. Besides your mother, you are the most important person in my life. You're a great kid and I love you!"

The startled boy started to sob and sob, and he couldn't stop crying. His whole body shook. He looked up at his father and said through his tears, "Dad, earlier tonight I sat in my room and wrote a letter to you and Mom explaining why I had killed myself and asking you to forgive me. I was going to commit suicide tonight after you were asleep. I just didn't think that you cared at all. The letter is upstairs. I don't think I need it after all." His father walked upstairs and found a heartfelt letter full of anguish and

pain. The envelope was addressed, Mom and Dad."

The boss went back to work a changed man. He was no longer a grouch but made sure to let all his employees know that they made a difference.

The junior executive helped several other young people with career planning and never forgot to let them know that they made a difference in his life...one being the boss's son. And the young boy and his classmates learned a valuable lesson.

Who you are DOES make difference. WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Romans 8:17* And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Oct 15

The Humble Servant

One day a humble servant of the Lord lost a very dear friend to the scourge cancer. The humble servant felt great

sorrow and prayed that he would someday see his friend again. After much time in prayer, the humble servant

was confronted by a demon. The demon said to him, "Why do you waste your time in prayer?

There is no proof that God exists."

The humble servant answered him, "I have faith and that is why I pray."

The demon then said to him with disdain, "Faith is no more than superstition. On what do you base this 'faith?'"

The humble servant answered, "I base this faith on trust."

"Trust in whom?" the demon retorted. "In whom do you have such trust that you would ignore the laws of

probability and the laws of science?"

"I trust in Christ," the humble servant replied.

"In Christ!" the demon exclaimed. "In Christ! Name one thing Christ has done to earn your trust.

Tell me please,

what has He ever done to earn your prayers? I dare you to name one miracle He has ever performed that has been

proven by science to be true. Name it! Name it!" he taunted with glee.

The humble servant stood with patience, and then answered with three simple words: "The Church exists."

"What?" the demon declared in confusion. "What!" he said again with vexation. "What do you mean 'the Church

exists?' Please tell me how this relates to trust. Please tell me how this justifies your wasted time in prayer?"

The humble servant calmly explained his answer. "Jesus Christ made a promise--the simple promise 'Upon this

rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.' And now after 2000 years the

Church still endures. It endures despite a history of heresies and persecutions. It endures despite the tyranny of

despots. It endures despite the laws of probability and the laws of science. What greater miracle is there than

this—that the son of a simple carpenter, who lived a life of poverty, and dwelled with the lowly, who never

ventured more than a hundred miles from the town of his birth, and who died a criminal's death on a cross, would

establish a great and holy Church, and that the teachings of this Church would be spread throughout the world by

twelve simple men--men who hid in fear after the crucifixion? Yet in a mere three days after this lowly criminal's death, these twelve sprang forth and proclaimed His word and gave up their lives so that His promise would ring true. And over the centuries thousands of others gave their lives also, so that the Church would go on. The most powerful kings and most menacing armies stood against her, but the Church did not falter. For 2000 years this Church has withstood the test of time, overcoming the greatest of odds again and again. It surmounted the insurmountable. It beat the unbeatable foe. It prevailed through the harshest of storms. I say to you, this Church has shattered the very laws that you exalt. It defied that laws of probability, and it humbled the laws of science." The humble servant continued on, "The existence of this Church is not a myth. The existence of this Church is not a legend. That this Church exists is an undeniable fact. That Christ's promise was kept is an undeniable fact. And if He kept this promise, then how can there be any doubt that He will keep His greatest promise—the promise that was central to His ministry, the promise that said 'If you believe in me, and eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, you shall live forever.' So when you ask 'why do I have faith,' I tell you, it is because I have trust, and nothing that your fair science can offer can break that trust. This is why I pray, so that someday I will enjoy that most sacred covenant of all"--the humble servant paused briefly and then added with solemnity and conviction--"together with my friend!" He then looked the demon right in the eye. "What good can your science and probability offer that is greater than this?" With those words, the demon turned away, never to bother the humble servant again.

2Timothy 3:8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

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oct 22

Struggle

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could, and it could go no further. So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and

shriveled wings. It never was able to fly.

What the man, in his kindness and haste, did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes, God will have us struggle in life. That's because he has a plan for us. **He knows what's best and He knows what he is doing. Just trust him.**
Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

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Oct 29

I Am a Christian

When I say ... "I am a Christian"

I'm not shouting, "I'm saved"

I'm whispering, "I get lost!"

"That is why I chose this way"

When I say ... "I am a Christian"

I don't speak of this with pride

I'm confessing that I stumble,
and need someone to be my guide

When I say ... "I am a Christian"

I'm not trying to be strong,
I'm professing that I'm weak,
and pray for strength to carry on

When I say ... "I am a Christian"

I'm not bragging of success,
I'm admitting that I've failed,
and cannot ever pay the debt

When I say ... "I am a Christian"

I'm not claiming to be perfect,
my flaws are way too visible
but God believes I'm worth it

When I say ... "I am a Christian"

I still feel the sting of pain

I have my share of heartaches
which is why I seek His Name

When I say ... "I am a Christian"

I do not wish to judge

I have no authority,

I only know I'm loved!

Romans 6:16* Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

I live in northwest Florida and we were hit with a hurricane.

Before the storm, I prayed that our family and our home would be safe. As the storm finally passed and we were able to go out to see the damage to our house, we were very lucky that we just had minor damage. We still had a roof over our head and with some repairs it would be as good as new. I thanked God that He answered my prayers.

As the day grew on and over the next day also, I found myself fussing about being hot, bored and ready to get the power, phone, cable, and mail service, etc. back on and back to normal. I knew that the area was hit pretty hard but with no TV or newspaper I did not know just how bad.

I ventured out on Saturday and just about cried.

People had lost everything and here I was fussing about being hot. I stopped right then and asked God to forgive me for being selfish.

You know, we have gotten so wrapped up in ourselves that we do not take the time to put ourselves in other people's shoes.

I pray that God will bless all the people affected by Ivan and that He will show me what I can do to make someone's day

Hebrews 13:5* Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Sept 10

I was getting ready for my daughter Patsy's wedding which was taking place in a church about forty miles away, and felt loaded with responsibilities as I watched my budget dwindle..... So many details, so many bills, and so little time.

My son Jack said he would walk his younger sister down the aisle, taking the place of his dad who had died a few years before. He teased Patsy, saying he'd wanted to give her away since she was about three years old!

To save money, I gathered blossoms from several friends who had large magnolia trees. Their luscious, creamy-white blooms and slick green leaves would make beautiful arrangements against the rich dark wood inside the church.

The big day arrived - the busiest day of my life - and while her bridesmaids helped Patsy to dress, her fiance Tim walked with me to the sanctuary to do a final check. When we opened the door and felt a rush of hot air, I almost fainted; and then I saw them - all the beautiful white flowers were black. Funeral black. An electrical storm during the night had knocked out the air conditioning system, and on that hot summer day, the flowers had wilted and died. I panicked, knowing I didn't have time to drive back to our hometown, gather more flowers, and return in time for the wedding and I certainly didn't have extra money to buy a new set from the florist in town.

Tim turned to me. 'Edna, can you get more flowers?'

I'll throw away these dead ones and put fresh flowers in these arrangements.'

I mumbled, 'Sure,' as he be-bopped down the hall to put on his cuff links.

Alone in the large sanctuary, I looked up at the dark wooden beams in the arched ceiling. 'Lord,' I prayed, 'please help me. I don't know anyone in this town. Help me find someone willing to give me flowers - in a hurry!'

I scurried out praying for the blessing of white magnolias.

As I left the church, I saw magnolia trees in the distance. I approached a house.... no dog in sight.... knocked on the door and an older man answered. So far so good. No shotgun. When I stated my plea the man beamed and said..... 'I'd be happy to!'

He climbed a stepladder and cut large boughs and handed them down to me. Minutes later, as I lifted the last armload into my car trunk, I said, 'Sir, you've made the mother of a bride happy today.'

No, Ma'am,' he said. 'You don't understand what's happening here.'

'What?' I asked.

'You see, my wife of sixty-seven years died on Monday. On Tuesday I received friends at the funeral home, and on Wednesday..... He paused. I saw tears welling up in his eyes. 'On

Wednesday I buried her.' He looked away. 'On Thursday most of my out-of-town relatives went back home, and on Friday - yesterday - my children left.'

I nodded.

'This morning,' he continued, 'I was sitting in my den crying out loud. I miss her so much. For the last sixteen years, as her health got worse, she needed me. But now nobody needs me. This morning I cried, 'Who needs an eighty-six-year-old wore-out man? Nobody!' I began to cry louder. 'Nobody needs me!'

About that time, you knocked, and said, 'Sir, I need you.'

I stood with my mouth open. He asked, 'Are you an angel?' I assured him I was no angel.

He smiled. 'Do you know what I was thinking when I handed you those magnolias?'

'No.'

'I decided I'm needed. My flowers are needed. Why, I might have a flower ministry! I could give them to everyone! Some caskets at the funeral home have no flowers. People need flowers at times like that and I have lots of them.. They're all over the backyard! I can give them to hospitals, churches - all sorts of places. You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to serve the Lord until the day He calls me home!'

I drove back to the church, filled with wonder. On Patsy's wedding day, if anyone had asked me to encourage someone who was hurting, I would have said, 'Forget it! It's my only daughter's wedding, for goodness' sake! There is no way I can minister to anyone today.'

But God found a way. Through dead flowers. 'Life is not the way it's supposed to be. It's the way it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference.'

If you have missed knowing me, you have missed nothing.

If you have missed some of my emails, you may have missed a laugh.

But, if you have missed knowing God you have missed everything in the world!! He can be your everything. May God's blessings be upon you.

THIS IS SO TRUE.... BEING NEEDED IS SO UPLIFTING TO EACH OF US.

This story is too beautiful not to share.

Acts 17:24-25. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

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Sep 17

I was on my usual run. The mercury hovered above 90 degrees.

It was hot.

Sweat poured into my face stinging my eyes as my feet pounded the pavement in a steady rhythm. I saw a man standing in a doorway and then heard a shout,

“That will either kill you or make you strong!”

Both halves of the statement were true.

Such heat combined with the exertion could surely kill you.

It's always an elevated risk exercising in extreme temperatures.

I waved and kept moving. Heat kills a few but inactivity kills a thousand times more. His statement applied to more than just running in the heat. It applies to all tough situations.

When tough things come, it will either strengthen you or break you down. It will make you better or bitter. It will make you an over comer or overwhelm you.

Tough things can kill.

They kill the spirit, hopes, dreams, visions and even desire.

Excessive pressure can make you explode

or make you learn new ways to constructively vent.
Spirit is very much like the physical; you can't build muscle without weight or put another way,
"Smooth seas never make good sailors."
Heat, pressure, weight on your shoulders, and the constant demands of life can make you strong. They build your faith.
After six miles, I finished my run, exhausted but feeling better. I went inside, showered, and took a nap.
I ran hard for the six and then rested.
There are keys to improving your odds that the pressure makes you stronger.
Run hard for the six then rest, is one of those
Exodus 20:9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

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Sep 24

Good morning said a woman as she walked up to the man sitting on ground.
The man slowly looked up.
This was a woman clearly accustomed to the finer things of life. Her coat was new. She looked like she had never missed a meal in her life.
His first thought was that she wanted to make fun of him, like so many others had done before..
"Leave me alone," he growled....
To his amazement, the woman continued standing. She was smiling -- her even white teeth displayed in dazzling rows. "Are you hungry?" she asked.
"No," he answered sarcastically. "I've just come from dining with the president. Now go away."
The woman's smile became even broader. Suddenly the man felt a gentle hand under his arm.
"What are you doing, lady?" the man asked angrily. "I said to leave me alone.
Just then a policeman came up. "Is there any problem, ma'am?" he asked.
"No problem here, officer," the woman answered. "I'm just trying to get this man to his feet. Will you help me?"
The officer scratched his head. "That's old Jack. He's been a fixture around here for a couple of years. What do you want with him?"
"See that cafeteria over there?" she asked. "I'm going to get him something to eat and get him out of the cold for awhile."
"Are you crazy, lady?" the homeless man resisted. "I don't want to go in there!" Then he felt strong hands grab his other arm and lift him up. "Let me go, officer. I didn't do anything."
"This is a good deal for you, Jack" the officer answered. "Don't blow it."
Finally, and with some difficulty, the woman and the police officer got Jack into the cafeteria and sat him at a table in a remote corner. It was the middle of the morning, so most of the breakfast crowd had already left and the lunch bunch had not yet arrived.
The manager strode across the cafeteria and stood by his table. "What's going on here, officer?" he asked. "What is all this, is this man in trouble?"
"This lady brought this man in here to be fed," the policeman answered.
"Not in here!" the manager replied angrily. "Having a person like that here is bad for business.."
Old Jack smiled a toothless grin. "See, lady. I told you so. Now if you'll let me go. I didn't want to come here in the first place."
The woman turned to the cafeteria manager and smiled. "Sir, are you familiar with Eddy and Associates, the banking firm down the street?"
"Of course I am," the manager answered impatiently. "They hold their weekly meetings in one of my banquet rooms."
"And do you make a goodly amount of money providing food at these weekly meetings?"
"What business is that of yours?"
I, sir, am Penelope Eddy, president and CEO of the company."

"Oh."

The woman smiled again. "I thought that might make a difference." She glanced at the cop who was busy stifling a giggle. "Would you like to join us in a cup of coffee and a meal, officer?"

"No thanks, ma'am," the officer replied. "I'm on duty."

"Then, perhaps, a cup of coffee to go?"

"Yes, ma'am. That would be very nice."

The cafeteria manager turned on his heel, "I'll get your coffee for you right away, officer."

The officer watched him walk away. "You certainly put him in his place," he said.

"That was not my intent. Believe it or not, I have a reason for all this."

She sat down at the table across from her amazed dinner guest. She stared at him intently. "Jack, do you remember me?"

Old Jack searched her face with his old, rheumy eyes. "I think so -- I mean you do look familiar."

"I'm a little older perhaps," she said. "Maybe I've even filled out more than in my younger days when you worked here, and I came through that very door, cold and hungry."

"Ma'am?" the officer said questioningly. He couldn't believe that such a magnificently turned out woman could ever have been hungry.

"I was just out of college," the woman began. "I had come to the city looking for a job, but I couldn't find anything. Finally I was down to my last few cents and had been kicked out of my apartment. I walked the streets for days. It was February and I was cold and nearly starving. I saw this place and walked in on the off chance that I could get something to eat."

Jack lit up with a smile. "Now I remember," he said. "I was behind the serving counter. You came up and asked me if you could work for something to eat. I said that it was against company policy."

"I know," the woman continued. "Then you made me the biggest roast beef sandwich that I had ever seen, gave me a cup of coffee, and told me to go over to a corner table and enjoy it. I was afraid that you would get into trouble. Then, when I looked over and saw you put the price of my food in the cash register, I knew then that everything would be all right."

"So you started your own business?" Old Jack said.

"I got a job that very afternoon. I worked my way up. Eventually I started my own business that, with the help of God, prospered." She opened her purse and pulled out a business card. "When you are finished here, I want you to pay a visit to a Mr. Lyons. He's the personnel director of my company. I'll go talk to him now and I'm certain he'll find something for you to do around the office." She smiled. "I think he might even find the funds to give you a little advance so that you can buy some clothes and get a place to live until you get on your feet. If you ever need anything, my door is always opened to you."

There were tears in the old man's eyes. "How can I ever thank you?" he said.

"Don't thank me," the woman answered. "To God goes the glory. Thank God. He led me to you."

Outside the cafeteria, the officer and the woman paused at the entrance before going their separate ways.

"Thank you for all your help, officer," she said.

"On the contrary, Ms. Eddy," he answered. "Thank you. I saw a miracle today, something that I will never forget. And, and thank you for the coffee."

Revelation 3:8* I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

As a police officer moonlighting as security for a popular nightspot, I stood at the front entrance.

As it happens on weekends, the crowd inside grew larger than the square footage could accommodate.

Seeing the longer forming line to enter, the owner told the doorman, "Just let in the people we know, not the idiots."

Tommy, the burly doorman turned to the owner with a helpless expression and said,

"But Angello, those are the people we know!"

Revelation 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Aug 13

This issue covers so well one of the biggest ills of our country. The human body NEEDS time to stop, hold still, and recover from all the activity that it's been up to!

It's the greed factor that drives us; not only us Americans as consumers, but as a government as well. It's time to sit down and shut up (as my Mother used to so eloquently put it) and take a priority re-evaluation!

Killing ourselves for that "almighty dollar" just ain't cutting it anymore, 'cause all we're doing is letting it slip back out of our grubby little fingers into some psycho-analysts' hands.

Sounds pretty stupid, if ya ask me. It's a lose-lose situation.

Money would be much better spent if we'd make less of it and use it instead. And take the family out on a no-phones, TV, no-video game, no-laptop camping/fishing trip instead.

from a MountainWings

1Timothy 6:10* For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Aug 20

Elbert Hubbard's business "Creed": (1856-1915)

I believe in myself.

I believe in the goods I sell.

I believe in the firm for whom I work.

I believe in my colleagues and helpers.

I believe in American business methods.

I believe in producers, creators, manufacturers, distributors, and in all industrial workers of the world who have a job, and hold it down.

I believe that Truth is an asset.

I believe in good cheer and in good health, and I recognize the fact that the first requisite in success is not to achieve the dollar, but to confer a benefit, and that the reward will come automatically, and usually as a matter of course.

I believe in sunshine, fresh air, spinach, applesauce, laughter, buttermilk, babies, bombazine and chiffon, always remembering that the greatest word in the English language is "Sufficiency."

I believe that when I make a sale I make a friend.

And I believe that when I part with a man I must do it in such a way that when he sees me again he will be glad - and so will I.

I believe in the hands that work, in the brains that think, and in the hearts that love.

A good natural mans creed, but there is no mention of faith in Jesus

Luke 12:20* But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast

provided?

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aug 27

.I am one of the survivors of the recent hurricane.

As the storm approached, I prayed that God would steer it in another direction because I live in a mobile home as do my parents. But God did not honor that request and set it on a path straight to us.

My father is dying of cancer and could not possibly go to a shelter so we opted to ride out the storm all together in my mobile home.

As the winds blew, I sat and prayed and wondered if God knew what He was doing? He kept firmly in my mind that if He brings me to it, He will surly bring me thru it.

The most we suffered was a blown out screen on a porch enclosure. As thousands were without power, we never lost ours which was a TRUE blessing as my father would not have survived the heat.

My mother who was in need of a new roof on her home (but unable to afford it) was blessed (yes blessed) to have come through her roof. Now insurance will provide the new roof.

The moral of this story?

When you think God does not hear let me assure you that He does. ...maybe just not the way you want.

by Beth Dewey

Jerimiah 33:3 Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

I'm only 15 and don't know much but I hope this story can help someone like it did for me.

I went vacationing in Florida. I was staying in a rented house in Clermont for about a week, and I was there during Hurricane Charley. Luckily, no one I knew was killed or injured, but I am sorry for those who were.

I remember the next morning, going outside and seeing everything the hurricane had destroyed. There were trees that had been torn out from the ground; some even were turned upside down.

Some cars, houses, and trailers had been dented and smashed. Even billboards and signs were laying in the middle of the road. But there was one thing that I thought was weird.

Almost everyone in Florida has a pool, with a screen-like thing around it, to keep out bugs I'm guessing. These screens look pretty flimsy and like they would fall down in an instant, yet none of them were messed up at all.

I thought it was weird how this level four hurricane could destroy huge things like trees, cars, and houses, yet these little screens around the pool could stay up.

I later asked my dad how could they stand the hurricane while the big things couldn't, and he said it was because they basically let the air through them, since there are many holes.

What my dad told me also relates in the real world too.

If people won't budge at all (like the cars and trees), then they'll get blown away and destroyed. But if people would act more like the pool-screens, they could survive the "hurricane"

of life.

Instead of always having it your way, and be steeped in your traditions, let the word of God like the wind, sift through you.

That way you'll stay standing in Gods guidance and blessings.

Philippians 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

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July 9

Learning to Fly

My neighbor has a number of mature spruce trees in his back yard and every year a family of magpies nests in one of them. We are blessed that our back yard often becomes the place for magpie flight school. The young birds work their way to the end of a branch, and sit there squawking for a while. Mother magpie is never far away, encouraging the young ones to try again. A nest of magpies can make a lot of noise when it is time to learn to fly.

After working up enough nerve and making a suitable amount of noise the young birds jump, spread their wings and drop to the ground. Squawking some more, they eventually jump up from branch to branch to climb back up the tree, and repeat the process. The young one goes back to the end of the branch, makes enough noise to work up its nerve and tries it again. Sometime during the process, they actually get airborne and soar a bit. The first time they soar, it frightens them and they land quickly, unsure of what just happened. Eventually though, they get the idea and fly and soar at will.

As Christians we are often like those young magpies, we stay near the nest and make a lot of noise. Sometimes we take a brief leap, then make a lot of noise over the attempt and head for home. Other times we actually get to fly a bit, and it surprises and frightens us. We knew it was possible, but we didn't really think it could happen to us and we stop in disbelief. Now and then though, we get the idea and actually begin to do what we are called to do and fly.

To soar, empowered by Holy Spirit. We begin to become the people of God that we are called to be. Other people see us soaring and the sight turns their mind towards God. Each of us is called to work in different ministries. Each of us is at a different point in our faith walk.

Perhaps you haven't yet broken out of the egg or left the nest. Perhaps you are standing on the edge of the branch squawking in excitement and fear preparing to jump. Maybe you have just soared and it surprised you. Perhaps you are like the mother magpie, knowing you can soar and that it is your duty to encourage others.

Where ever you are in your walk, know that we are called to soar and are empowered to soar, all for the glory of

God.

"But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." - Isaiah 40:31

Do not grow tired of the attempt -- know that the Father has prepared a ministry for you to excel at; to soar and bring Him glory. May you find that ministry and soar in His presence, as He intended, according to his plan. God bless.

Romans 2:20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

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july 16

A girl went to her friends house and she ended up staying longer than planned, and had to walk home alone. She wasn't afraid because it was a small community and she lived only a few blocks away. As she walked along under the bike trail Diane asked God to keep her safe from harm and danger. When she reached the alley, which was a shortcut to her house, she decided to take it. However, halfway down the alley she noticed a man standing at the end as though he were waiting for her.

She became uneasy and began to pray, asking for God's protection. Instantly a comforting feeling of quietness and security wrapped round her, she felt as though someone was walking with her. When she reached the end of the alley, she walked right past the man and arrived home safely.

The following day, she read in the newspaper that a young girl had been raped in the same alley just twenty minutes after she had been there. Feeling overwhelmed by this tragedy and the fact that it could have been her, she began to weep. Thanking the Lord for her safety and to help this young woman, she decided to go to the police station. She felt she could recognize the man, so she told them her story.

The police asked her if she would be willing to look at a lineup to see if she could identify him. She agreed and immediately pointed out the man she had seen in the alley the night before. When the man was told he had been identified, he immediately broke down and confessed. The officer thanked Diane for her bravery and asked if there was anything they could do for her.

She asked if they would ask the man one question. Diane was curious as to why he had not attacked her. When the policeman asked him, he answered, "Because she wasn't alone. She had two tall men walking on either side of her".

Amazingly, whether you believe or not, you're not alone, a lot of people will not stand up for God.

Luke 4:10* For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

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july 23

**They lie on the table side by side;
the Holy Bible and the TV Guide,
One is well worn and cherished with pride,
not the Bible, but the TV Guide,
One is used daily to help folks decide,
no, not the Bible but the TV Guide,
As pages are turned, what shall they see,
oh what does it matter, just turn on the TV,
Then confusion reigns, oh, they can not agree,
on what they should watch on the old TV,
So they open the book, in which they confide,
no, not the Bible but the TV Guide,
The Word of God is seldom read,
maybe a verse or two before they fall into bed,
Exhausted and sleepy, as tired as can be,
not from reading the Bible, but from watching TV,
So then back to the table side by side,
lie the Holy Bible and the TV Guide,
No time for prayer, no time for the Word,
the plan of Salvation is seldom heard,
But forgiveness and sin, so full and free,
is found in the Bible, not on the TV.**

Deuteronomy 30:19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

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July 30.

From Katherine Hepburn

Once when I was a teenager, my father and I were standing in line to buy tickets for the circus. Finally, there was only one other family between us and the ticket counter. This family made a big impression on me.

There were eight children, all probably under the age of 12. The way they were dressed, you could tell they didn't have a lot of money, but their clothes were neat and clean.

The children were well-behaved, all of them standing in line, two-by-two behind their parents, holding hands. They were excitedly jabbering about the clowns, animals, and all the acts they would be seeing that night. By their excitement, you could sense they had never been to the circus before. It would be a highlight of their lives.

The father and mother were at the head of the pack standing proud as could be. The mother was holding her husband's hand, looking up at him as if to say, "You're my knight in shining armor." He was smiling and enjoying seeing his family happy.

The ticket lady asked the man how many tickets he wanted? He proudly responded, "I'd like to buy eight children's tickets and two adult tickets, so I can take my family to the circus." The ticket lady stated the price.

The man's wife let go of his hand, her head dropped, the man's lip began to quiver. Then he leaned a little closer and asked, "How much did you say?" The ticket lady again stated the price. The man didn't have enough money. How was he supposed to turn and tell his eight kids that he didn't have enough money to take them to the circus?

Seeing what was going on, my dad reached into his pocket, pulled out a \$20 bill, and then dropped it on the ground. (We were not wealthy in any sense of the word!) My father bent down, picked up the \$20 bill, tapped the man on the shoulder and said, "Excuse me, sir, this fell out of your pocket."

The man understood what was going on. He wasn't begging for a handout but certainly

appreciated the help in a desperate, heartbreaking and embarrassing situation.

He looked straight into my dad's eyes, took my dad's hand in both of his, squeezed tightly onto the \$20 bill, and with his lip quivering and a tear streaming down his cheek, he replied; "Thank you, thank you, sir. This really means a lot to me and my family."

My father and I went back to our car and drove home. The \$20 that my dad gave away is what we were going to buy our own tickets with.

Although we didn't get to see the circus that night, we both felt a joy inside us that was far greater than seeing the circus could ever provide.

That day I learnt the value to Give.

The Giver is bigger than the Receiver.

If you want to be large, larger than the life, learn to Give.

Only if you Give can you Receive more. The Givers heart becomes the Ocean, in tune with the Almighty - The Source

Love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get - only with what you are expecting to give - which is everything.

1John 3:17*. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

Jun 4

Our Treasures & God's Treasures

The cheerful little girl with bouncy golden curls was almost five. Waiting with her mother at the checkout stand, she saw them, a circle of glistening white pearls in a pink foil box. "Oh please, Mommy. Can I have them? Please, Mommy, please?" Quickly the mother checked the back of the little foil box and then looked back into the pleading blue eyes of her little girl's upturned face. "A dollar ninety-five. That's almost \$2.00. If you really want them, I'll think of some extra chores for you and in no time you can save enough money to buy them for yourself. Your birthday's only a week away and you might get another crisp dollar bill from Grandma."

As soon as Jenny got home, she emptied her penny bank and counted out 17 pennies. After dinner, she did more than her share of chores and she went to the neighbor and asked Mrs. McJames if she could pick dandelions for ten cents. On her birthday, Grandma did give her another new dollar bill and at last she had enough money to buy the necklace. Jenny loved her pearls. They made her feel dressed up and grown up. She wore them everywhere, Sunday school, kindergarten, even to bed. The only time she took them off was when she went swimming or had a bubble bath. Mother said if they got wet, they might turn her neck green.

Jenny had a very loving daddy and every night when she was ready for bed, he would stop whatever he was doing and come upstairs to read her a story. One night as he finished the story, he asked Jenny, "Do you love me?" "Oh yes, daddy. You know that I love you." "Then give me your pearls." "Oh, daddy, not my pearls. But you can have Princess, the white horse from my collection, the one with the pink tail. Remember daddy? The one you gave me. She's my very favorite." "That's okay, Honey, daddy loves you. Good night." And he brushed her cheek with a kiss.

About a week later, after the story time, Jenny's daddy asked again, "Do you love me?" "Daddy, you know I love you." "Then give me your pearls." "Oh Daddy, not my pearls. But you can have my baby doll. The brand new one I got for my birthday. She is beautiful and you can have the yellow blanket that matches her sleeper." "That's okay. Sleep well. God bless you, little one. Daddy loves you." And as always, he brushed her cheek with a gentle kiss.

A few nights later when her daddy came in, Jenny was sitting on her bed with her legs crossed Indianstyle.

As he came close, he noticed her chin was trembling and one silent tear rolled down her cheek.

"What is it, Jenny? What's the matter?" Jenny didn't say anything but lifted her little hand up to her daddy. And when she opened it, there was her little pearl necklace. With a little quiver, she finally said, "Here, daddy, this is for you." With tears gathering in his own eyes, Jenny's daddy reached out with one hand to take the dime-store necklace, and with the other hand he reached into his pocket and pulled out a blue velvet case with a strand of genuine pearls and gave them to Jenny. He had them all the time. He was just waiting for her to give up the dime-store stuff so he could give her the genuine treasure.

This story is so much like our Heavenly Father. He wants us to give up the cheap (sin) things of this world that hinder us from serving him, so that he can bless us with his great blessings. But so many miss the blessings of God because they are not willing to give up the things in their lives that hinder them from God's blessings. Most of the time the things that rob us of God's treasure are things that really do not amount to a lot. So many are afraid of what they may have to give up.

Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

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jun 11

Being Kind Makes All the Difference

A trucker relates that he was traveling through rural North Carolina on I-95 when a brown sedan merged onto the highway. It weaved back and forth between lanes, causing the driver of the truck to shift into a lower gear. At first he thought the driver was drunk, but when he came closer, the trucker saw an old man shaking uncontrollably behind the wheel. He noticed a Citizen's Band aerial whipping to and fro as the car jerked between lanes, so he called on the radio: "You in the brown Chevy, if you can hear me, pull over. Pull off the road!"

Amazingly, he did! The trucker pulled up behind the car and climbed from his cab. The elderly man staggered from his auto and fell into the trucker's arms. He poured out a story of months of fear and pain that accompanied the illness of his only daughter.

Now he was returning from the hospital where it was decided that she would cease any further treatment. In the hospital he remained "strong" and stoic for his daughter, but out on the road he fell apart.

The two men talked for the good part of an hour. The father eventually decided to share his pain with his daughter and said he felt good enough to drive home. The men embraced and the trucker followed him for 50 miles. As they drove along, the two talked together on the radio.

The older man finally acknowledged that his exit was ahead and thanked his new friend again for the help. The trucker asked if he could make it home all right and, suddenly, a third voice broke in on the conversation: "Breaker 19, don't worry, good buddy. Go your way. I'll see him home!"

Glancing in his rear view mirror, he saw a livestock truck move into the exit lane behind the brown sedan.

There are good people the world over. Some may be strangers to you, some as close as your own family. It helps to know that the world is full of people who will gladly give that caring touch, a needed warm embrace or a patient and listening ear. They are like angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly. Look around, for they are everywhere. And quite likely, you will even spot one in the mirror!

Hebrews 13:2 - "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained Angels without even knowing it."

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jun 18

Faith Moment

Costly Grace

In his book Turning Points, Robert Beringer shares an amazing story of grace told by novelist A.J. Cronin from his own experience.

At the close of the Second World War, a family by the name of Adams decided to open their home to a little refugee boy with the outlandish name of Paul Piotrostanalzi. The Adams had two daughters and a son named Sammy. Sammy and Paul became inseparable friends, but little Paul was a difficult child, and he often disobeyed Mr. and Mrs. Adams.

One day, little Paul went swimming in some contaminated water. He became very ill with a high fever, and the doctor suggested he sleep in an attic bedroom. But little Sammy missed his friend Paul so much that one night he crept up the attic stairs and into bed with Paul. Paul's hot breath fell on Sammy's neck all night. In the morning, Sammy, who had never been a strong child, became deathly ill. Paul recovered his health, but Sammy died within three days. It was a terrible tragedy.

A year later, Dr. Cronin decided to pay a call on the Adams family. As he pulled into their driveway, he

was amazed and then angry as he saw Paul, the refugee boy, working in the garden with Mr. Adams. He got out of his car and angrily approached Mr. Adams. "What's this Paul Pio ...whatever his name is, doing here after what he did to your family?" Mr. Adams looked at the doctor and then said quietly, "Dr. Cronin, you won't have any more trouble with Paul's name. You see, he's Paul Adams now. We've adopted him."

What a wonderful story of costly grace! Amazingly, the same thing happened to us. Our illness cost God's Son his life. Instead of resenting us, God has adopted us to be His own. That is an even more wonderful story of costly grace.

Jude 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

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A Well Planned Life?

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Two women met for the first time since graduating from high school.

One asked the other, "You were always so organized in school. Did you manage to live a well planned life?"

"Yes," said her friend,

"My first marriage was to a millionaire;
my second marriage was to an actor;
my third marriage was to a preacher;
and now I'm married to an undertaker."

Her friend asked,

"What do those marriages have to do with a well planned life?"

"One for the money,
two for the show,
three to get ready,
and four to

Psalms 126:2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.

Jasper and the Unbaked Yeast Rolls

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We have a fox terrier by the name of Jasper. He came to us in the summer three years ago from the fox terrier rescue program.

For those of you, who are unfamiliar with this type of adoption, imagine taking in a 10 year old child whom you know nothing about and committing to doing your best to be a good parent.

Like a child, the dog came with his own idiosyncrasies. He will only sleep on the bed, on top of the covers, nuzzled as close to my face as he can get without actually performing a French kiss on me. Lest you think this is a bad case of 'no discipline,' I should tell you that Perry and I tried every means to break him of this habit including locking him in a separate bedroom for several nights. The new door cost over \$200. But I digress.

Five weeks ago we began remodeling our house. Although the cost of the project is downright obnoxious, it was overdue AND it got me out of cooking Thanksgiving for family, extended family, and a lot of friends that I like more family most of the time. I was assigned the task of preparing 124 of my famous yeast dinner rolls for the two Thanksgiving feasts we did attend.

I am still cursing the electrician for getting the new oven

hooked up so quickly. It was the only appliance in the whole darn house that worked, thus the assignment. I made the decision to cook the rolls on Wed evening to reheat Thurs am. Since the kitchen was freshly painted, you can imagine the odor. Not wanting the rolls to smell like Sherwin Williams latex paint #586, I put the rolls on baking sheets and set them in the living room to rise for 5 hours. After 3 hours, Perry and I decided to go out to eat, returning in about an hour. An hour later the rolls were ready to go in the oven.

It was 8:30 PM. When I went to the living room to retrieve the pans, much to my shock one whole pan of 12 rolls was empty. I called out to Jasper and my worst nightmare became a reality. He literally wobbled over to me. He looked like a combination of the Pillsbury dough boy and the Michelin Tire man wrapped up in fur. He groaned when he walked. I swear even his cheeks were bloated.

I ran to the phone and called our vet. After a few seconds of uproarious laughter, he told me the dog would probably be OK, however, I needed to give him Pepto Bismol every 2 hours for the rest of the night. God only knows why I thought a dog would like Pepto Bismol any more than my kids did when they were sick. Suffice it to say that by the time we went to bed the dog was black, white and pink. He was so bloated we had to lift him onto the bed for the night. Naively thinking the dog would be all better by morning was very stupid on my part.

We arose at 7:30 and as we always do first thing; put the dog out to relieve himself. Well, the darn dog was as drunk as a sailor on his first leave. He was running into walls, falling flat on his butt and most of the time when he was walking his front half was going one direction and the other half was either dragging the grass or headed 90 degrees in another direction. He couldn't lift his leg to pee, so he would just walk and pee at the same time. When he ran down the small incline in our back yard he couldn't stop himself and nearly ended up running into the fence. His pupils were dilated and he was as dizzy as a loon. I endured another few seconds of laughter from the vet (second call within 12 hours) before he explained that the yeast had fermented in his belly and that he was indeed drunk. He assured me that, not unlike most binges we humans go through, it would wear off after about 4 or 5 hours and to giving him

Pepto Bismol.

Afraid to leave him by himself in the house, Perry and I loaded him up and took him with us to my sister's house for the first Thanksgiving meal of the day. My sister lives outside of Muskogee on a ranch, (10 to 15 minute drive). Rolls firmly secured in the trunk (124 less 12) and drunk dog leaning from the back seat onto the console of the car between Perry and I, we took off. Now I know you probably don't believe that dogs burp, but believe me when I say that after eating a tray of risen unbaked yeast rolls, DOGS WILL BURP. These burps were pure Old Charter. They would have matched or beat any smell in a drunk tank at the police station. But that's not the worst of

it. Now he was beginning to fart and they smelled like baked rolls. God strike me dead if I am not telling the truth! We endured this for the entire trip to Karen's, thankful she didn't live any further away than she did.

Once Jasper was firmly placed in my sister's garage with the door locked, we finally sat down to enjoy our first Thanksgiving meal of the day. The dog was the topic of conversation all morning long and everyone made trips to the garage to witness my drunken dog, each returning with a tale of Jasper's

latest

endeavor to walk without running into something. Of course, as the old adage goes, "what goes in must come out" and Jasper was no exception. Granted if it had been me that had 12

risen, unbaked yeast rolls, you might as well have put a concrete block up my behind, but alas a dog's digestive system is quite different from yours or mine. I discovered this was a mixed blessing when we prepared to leave Karen's house. Having discovered his "packages" on the garage floor, loaded him up in the car so we could hose down the floor.

This was another naive decision on our part. The blast of water from the hose hit the poop on the floor and the poop on the floor withstood the blast from the hose. It was like Portland cement beginning to set up and cure. We finally tried to remove it with a shovel. I (obviously no one else was going to offer their services) had to get on my hands and knees with a coarse brush to get the remnants off of the floor. And as if this wasn't degrading enough, the darn dog in his drunken state had walked through the poop and left paw prints all over the garage floor that had to be brushed too.

Well, by this time the dog was sobering up nicely so we took him home and dropped him off before we left for our second Thanksgiving dinner at Perry's sister's house. I am happy to report that as of today (Monday) the dog is back to normal both in size and temperament. He has had a bath and is no longer tricolor. None the worse for wear I presume. I am also happy to report that just this evening I found 2 risen unbaked yeast rolls hidden inside my closet door.

It appears he must have come to his senses after eating 10 of them but decided hiding 2 of them for later would not be a bad idea. Now, I'm doing research on the computer as to:

"How to clean unbaked dough from the Carpet."

And how was your day?

The only scripture I could think of for this story, is

1Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

=====

may 14

Job Position

=====

POSITION: Mother, Mom, Mama

JOB DESCRIPTION:

Long-term team players needed for challenging permanent work in an often chaotic environment.

Candidates must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work variable hours, which will include evenings and weekends and frequent 24 hour shifts on call.

Some overnight travel required, including trips to primitive camping sites on rainy weekends and endless sports tournaments in far away cities. Travel expenses not reimbursed.

Extensive courier duties also required.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The rest of your life. Must be willing to be hated, at least temporarily, until someone needs \$5. Must be willing to bite tongue repeatedly. Also, must possess the physical stamina of a pack mule and be able to go from zero to 60 mph in three seconds flat in case, this time, the screams from the backyard. Must be willing to face stimulating technical challenges such as small gadget repair, mysteriously sluggish toilets, and stuck zippers.

Must screen phone calls, maintain calendars and coordinate production of multiple homework projects. Must have ability to plan and organize social gatherings for clients of all ages and mental outlooks. Must be willing to be indispensable one minute, an embarrassment the next.

Must handle assembly and product safety testing of a half million cheap plastic toys and battery-operated devices.

Must always hope for the best but be prepared for the worst.

Must assume final, complete accountability for the quality of the end product.

Responsibilities also include floor maintenance and janitorial work throughout the facility.

POSSIBILITY FOR ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION:

Virtually none. Your job is to remain in the same position for years, without complaining, constantly retraining and updating your skills, so that those in your charge can ultimately surpass you.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE:

None required unfortunately.

On-the-job training offered on a continually exhausting basis.

WAGES AND COMPENSATION:

Get this -- you pay them!

Offering frequent raises and bonuses. A balloon payment is due when they turn 18 because of the assumption that college will help them become financially independent.

When you die, you give them whatever is left.

The oddest thing about this reverse-salary scheme is that you actually enjoy it and wish you could only do more.

BENEFITS:

While no health or dental insurance, no pension, no tuition reimbursement, no paid holidays and no stock options are offered, this job supplies limitless opportunities for personal growth and free hugs for life if you play your cards right.

Author unknown

Psalms 113:9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

=====
may 21

"My marriage broke up through no fault of my own."

I was very interested in this statement.

Twenty years ago, my marriage broke up after my spouse had several affairs. I prayed nightly for nothing and no-one to come between us. After my spouse left, he said he knew he would have to be the one to go because I was committed regardless. Actually it was the fear of failure and loneliness that kept me bound as a martyr. It hurt my pride that someone else could make him happier than I could.

After the breakup, I committed my life to the Lord in a deeper way. I was praying (probably complaining to the Lord) about my spouse's infidelity. The Lord told me, lovingly but firmly, that my mistrust and jealousy (He named several other negative characteristics of mine) were as much sin to Him as my spouse's infidelity. "Sin is sin!" He said. It made it very easy to forgive my spouse after I examined my contribution to the situation.

A friend recently said that she had never heard me say anything negative about my ex-spouse. I'm glad because we had good times as well as bad times. When he left, I lost my best friend. We seldom contact each other but when we do, we are comfortable with each other. More people may be in this position. Too often, the good someone has done is totally forgotten or destroyed by back-biting, hatred and greed. This is the case even among Christians. The Lord can turn any situation around and use it for the good while bringing glory to Himself at the same time. That is my "Joseph Prayer", which I use often and the Lord always answers.

A couple whom we were friends with went through a similar scenario. However, the wife's attitude was to make her life interesting and ignore his behavior. He eventually realized that his lifestyle was not productive, changed his ways and their relationship came back together. 20 years later, they are still together.

Another thing the Lord showed me at that time was to see people the way He wants us to see them. This helped enormously with my situation and has helped others. It doesn't just apply to just marriage, friendships and work situations; it applies anywhere.

Does attitude count? I believe it does even if it is to make our lives happier in difficult circumstances. Would my situation end differently if my attitude had been different? We can never know but it certainly makes a difference in our happiness. It makes it easier to be less judgmental and more compassionate when we realize that our behavior is not hidden from God. In fact, the hidden flaws are the most dangerous because they are a weakness that we don't know about or won't admit to. They will slowly erode any relationship we enter into.

Afterwards, I hid behind a wall and was afraid to commit to

another person; I didn't want to get hurt again. Lately, I recognized it through the caring Christian men the Lord has brought across my path. I have a heart for older singles and part of my ministry is to help them in the struggles they face accepting loneliness that has been thrust upon them.

I thank the Lord for what He showed me. I was able to accept it as truth and act on it. Am I a saint? As a Christian, I may be a Saint but as a person, definitely not. However, I am learning to assess things more through the eyes of the Lord when I take time to seek Him.

My marriage broke up through no fault of my own until the Lord showed me how He saw me.

Here is a song I wrote during a bad patch last year. It promises hope in our bad times.

Broken Glass Of Shattered Dreams

Chorus: Broken glass of shattered dreams,

All is lost, it would seem

But I have Jesus here with me

Giving me a new dream (Repeat last time)

God hadn't promised my longed for things

So my ways did not go well

But He allowed me my direction

Then He caught me as I fell.

In small pieces my heart was broken.

All the pain destroyed my dreams,

I'd placed my hope in yearned for things,

But now they're gone so it seems.

Though still surrounded by shattered dreams

I'm no longer broken down.

I know that my Lord's right here with me

Shattered dreams will be my crown.

God's ways are not mine but this I see

He has plans to help me grow

I can trust Him because He loves me

So where He leads I will go.

(c) Maureen Lyons 3.8.05

Go on, broken creature, blessed by a love that no human partner can give and more beautiful because of the unique character God has formed from the broken pieces. Each crack tells a story - the story of your life. *by Maureen Lyons*

Mal 2:16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

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may 28

Look Up!

I had to get a new pair of eyeglasses recently. Stigmatism had started to mix with my nearsightedness making things a little bit blurry with my old prescription. Also I had to finally give in to another sign of my aging body and get my first pair of bifocals.

It has taken me several days to get used to the new pair. While it was great seeing clearly at a

distance again and wonderful being able to read a book without it being an inch from my face, the combination lenses were a challenge for me. The problem was that whenever I was looking at something far away I had to keep my eyes up or else I got a wave of blurriness when I accidentally looked through the reading part of the lenses. I am glad that my eyes are now getting the hang of it. It is no fun living in a blurry world. I am grateful for this new pair of glasses for another reason too. They have taught me a truth that I will hold close to my heart forever: whenever you need to see the road ahead clearly, Look Up! Too often in my life I have kept the eyes of my soul looking down to the ground. When I did the world seemed like a scary, blurry, and depressing place. When I raised those eyes up to Heaven, though, my vision always became breathtakingly clear. I saw that God loves me. I saw that this is God's world. I saw that life is good and when I help others I make it even better. I saw that no matter what each day may throw at me, I can face it with a loving heart and a joyful spirit.

Whenever your life seems blurry then, look up! Whenever your life seems frightening or overwhelming, look up!

Whenever you aren't sure what you should do, look up! God is in His Heaven and He is in your heart as well.

Open the eyes of your soul and see clearly just how much God loves you and just how much you can love as well.

Isaiah 17:7 At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.

Hidden 2,000 feet beneath Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, is the world's most sophisticated military headquarters. NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, is a joint U.S. and Canadian command center, set up in the 1960s. Their task was to coordinate military efforts in the event of nuclear attack and monitor the skies and space for possible threats. To accomplish this, NORAD had to be built to survive a direct hit from conventional nuclear weapons. So, 4.5 acres were excavated from solid granite to form a small city of chambers deep beneath the mountain. Twelve of these inner buildings are three stories tall. To enter the complex you must drive down a tunnel one-third of a mile long and through a pair of 25-ton steel blast doors. To resist the shock from a nuclear attack, all of the buildings in the complex are freestanding and do not touch the granite walls. The rooms are mounted on 1,319 steel springs that weigh about 1,000 pounds each. This allows the complex to shift 12 inches in any direction.

To make the compound self-sufficient, it contains a dining facility, medical facility with dental office, pharmacy, and a small clinic. It also has two physical fitness centers with exercise equipment and sauna, a small base exchange, chapel, and barber shop. Water comes from a spring within the mountain and is stored in four reservoirs that hold 1.5 million gallons each. Incoming air can be filtered to remove any harmful germs, chemicals, or radioactive particles. For backup power they have six huge 2,800-hp diesel generators. This self-sufficient design allows NORAD to provide its own power, water, air, and food for up to 800 people for 30 days. But it is still not tough enough to survive the second coming of Christ.

Revelation 6:15-17 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

On that day, not even a command center deep in the earth will hide people from Jesus' coming.

===== Apr 9

My travel Plans for 2017

I have been in many places, but I've never been in Cahoots.

Apparently, you can't go alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone.

I've also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognizes you there.

I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there. I have made several trips there, thanks to my children, friends, family and work.

I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump, and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.

I have also been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go, and I try not to visit there too often.

I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.

Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.

One of my favorite places to be is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenalin flowing and pumps up the old heart! At my age I need all the stimuli I can get!

I may have been in Continent, and I don't remember what country I was in. It's an age thing.

They tell me it is very wet and damp there.

PLEASE DO YOUR PART!

You can do your bit by remembering to send this e-mail to at least one unstable person. My job is done!

Life is too short for negative drama and petty things. So laugh insanely, love truly and forgive quickly!

From one unstable person to another... I hope everyone is happy in your head - we're all doing pretty well in mine!

What are your travel plans? - Submitted by Earl

Matthew 11.28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

=====

apr 14

EASTER - a time we celebrate our redemption

Jesus' Death - 60 seconds to understand 60 seconds with God...

For the next 60 seconds, set aside whatever you're doing and take this opportunity!

Let's see if Satan can stop this.

THE (SCIENTIFIC) DEATH OF JESUS

At the age of 33, Jesus was condemned to the death penalty.

At the time crucifixion was the "worst" death. Only the worst criminals were condemned to be crucified. Jesus was to be nailed to the cross by His hands and feet.

Each nail was 6 to 8 inches long.

The nails were driven into His wrist.

Not into His palms as is commonly portrayed.

There's a tendon in the wrist that extends to the shoulder.

The Roman guards knew that when the nails were being hammered into the wrist, that

tendon would tear and break, forcing Jesus to use His back muscles to support himself so that He could breathe.

Both of His feet were nailed together. Thus He was forced to support Himself on the single nail that impaled His feet to the cross. Jesus could not support himself with His legs because of the pain, so He was forced to alternate between arching His back then using his legs just to continue to breathe. Imagine the struggle, the pain, the suffering, the courage. Jesus endured this reality for over 3 hours.

Yes, over 3 hours!

Can you imagine this kind of suffering? A few minutes before He died, Jesus stopped bleeding. He was simply pouring water from his wounds.

From common images, we see wounds to His hands and feet and even the spear wound to His side... But do we realize His wounds were actually made in his body. A hammer driving large nails through the wrist, the feet overlapped and an even large nail hammered through the arches, then a Roman guard piercing His side with a spear.

But before the nails and the spear, Jesus was whipped and beaten. The whipping was so severe that it tore the flesh from His body. The beating so horrific that His face was torn and his beard ripped from His face. The crown of thorns cut deeply into His scalp. Most men would not have survived this torture.

He had no more blood to bleed out, only water poured from His wounds. The human adult body contains about 3.5 liters (just less than a gallon) of blood.

Jesus poured all 3.5 liters of his blood; He had three nails hammered into His members; a crown of thorns on His head, and beyond that, a Roman soldier who stabbed a spear into His chest.

All these without mentioning the humiliation passed after carrying His own cross for almost 2 kilometers, while the crowd spat in his face and threw stones (the cross was almost 30 kg of weight, only for its higher part, where His hands were nailed).

Jesus had to endure this experience, so that we can have free access to God.

So that our sins could be "washed" away. All of them, with no exception!

JESUS CHRIST DIED FOR US!

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

===== Apr 23

The Delivery Plan Unknown

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I had a bit of an epiphany just now as I reflect on something that happened to me last night. Every Friday and Saturday night I moonlight as a food courier for a local food delivery company

- and this is in

addition to my

regular, daytime, 40 hours a week full time job. I work this 2nd

job to pay off some bank and personal debt that have accumulated due to some unfortunate circumstances that

have happened to me the last few years.

Anyway, something happened to me last night that gave me an insight into how God operates.

It was about 1.5 hours prior to the end of my shift and I got an

order in which the restaurant and customer's house were pretty far away from each other - but in the case of my this is actually a good thing since a) the customer gets charged a higher

delivery fee which is paid to me and b) other orders, this customer is a good tipper which means this order is lucrative enough to start out with.

Anyway, I picked up the customer's food and drove to the customer's house. Despite the fact I was using Google Maps I was having problems finding the customer's house.

I called the customer to ask him how to get to his house and clarified his address. He then told me the address on the order was wrong - the address on the order was 72 Avenue and 138 Street, and the customer told me his address was

actually 138 Avenue and 72 Street.

Whoops.

I then became infuriated and notified my dispatcher that the address on the order was wrong (they have put the wrong address on the order in the past, so a precedent had set for my frustration).

By this time I had already spent 30 mins on this order and wasn't happy to hear this - and I had already lost another

order which got reassigned to another customer in the process, meaning I had just lost income because of this screw-up!

In my city the address on the order is in the Southwest end of the city, and the customer's actual address is now the Northeast end of the city.

I had ~ a 30 minute drive at night to get to the customer's actual address now.

So, I plugged the new information into Google Maps and made my way to the actual address.

I got to the customer's door and I expected him to be in a bad mood because his delivery had taken so long (despite the fact it wasn't my fault).

Instead, I was greeted by a very pleasant customer who explained to me that his wife put in the order on the

company's website and paid for it online, and her vision is not that great so she put in the wrong address in the by accident, so this whole thing was their own fault.

I felt so bad for this customer the whole time, but the customer said he felt so bad for me that he decided to throw math out the window and gave me an additional \$30 cash for my trouble.

My company also confirmed to me after I told them that they'd pay me a little extra for the order as well since I such a long drive on this order.

This means that in total on this 1 order, factoring in the guy's \$30 tip, I made \$45 on just this order - and ended up setting a record for income in 1 shift. I made 3 figures off this one night, something that has never happened to me before.

The real kicker is the order I lost I might've made \$10-15 on at most, but with all the extra money I made because of this gaffe I ended up making way more than I would've otherwise.

As I reflected on this today, it struck me that this is often the way God works.

God throws all kinds of stress and adversity our way and oftentimes we get angry, stressed out, frustrated, or anxious asking him "Why me?" When oftentimes once the situation plays

itself out, we end up on the other side of it in better shape than we were before.

That food order took me almost 1.5 hours to deliver, but I made more money on it than I would've if I had the right address from the start and moved on to another order sooner.

How many times have we heard people who have gone on a weight loss journey in their 40s, 50, or older and after

they reach their goal they say "I have more energy now than I did when I was in my 30s."

This is often what adversity will do to us. We see it as a bad thing at the time but God has a plan for us and is shaping us in his image, so that we can fulfill his purpose for our life.

Oftentimes we end up better once we get out of it than we were before we got into it.

So if you're going through adversity right now, just remember that God has your back and you'll come out at the

other end of it

better than you were before.

God bless, and as a great Canadian TV Show once said, "Keep your stick on the

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

===== Apr 30

Just Stay

A nurse took the tired, anxious serviceman to the bedside.

"Your son is here," she said to the old man.

She had to repeat the words several times before the patient's eyes opened.

Heavily sedated because of the pain of his heart attack, he dimly saw the young uniformed Marine standing outside the oxygen tent. He reached out his hand. The Marine wrapped his toughened fingers around the old man's limp ones, squeezing a message of love and encouragement.

The nurse brought a chair so that the Marine could sit beside the bed. All through the night the young Marine sat there in the poorly lighted ward, holding the old man's hand and offering him words of love and strength. Occasionally, the nurse suggested that the Marine move away and rest awhile.

He refused. Whenever the nurse came into the ward, the Marine was oblivious of her and of the night noises of the hospital - the clanking of the oxygen tank, the laughter of the night staff members exchanging greetings, the cries and moans of the other patients.

Now and then she heard him say a few gentle words. The dying man said nothing, only held tightly to his son all through the night.

Along towards dawn, the old man died. The Marine released the now lifeless hand he had been holding and went to tell the nurse. While she did what she had to do, he waited.

Finally, she returned. She started to offer words of sympathy, but the Marine interrupted her.

"Who was that man?" he ask.

The nurse was startled, "He was your father," she answered

"No, he wasn't," the Marine replied. "I never saw him before in my life."

"Then why didn't you say something when I took you to him?"

"I knew right away there had been a mistake, but I also knew he needed his son, and his son just wasn't here.

When I realized that he was too sick to tell whether or not I was his son, knowing how much he needed me, I stayed."

I came here tonight to find a Mr. William Grey.

His son was Killed in Iraq today, and I was sent to inform him. What was this Gentleman's name?

The Nurse with Tears in
Her Eyes Answered,
Mr. William Grey.....

Ecclesiastes 3:8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

The Biggest Mathematical Miracle in the World!

Moses and his people were in the desert, but what was he going to do with them? They had to be fed, and fed is what he did.

According to the Quartermaster General in the Army. It is reported that Moses would have to have had 1500 tons of food each day. Do you know that to bring that much food each day, two freight trains, each a mile long, would be required!

Besides you must remember, they were out in the desert, so they would have to have firewood to use in cooking the food. This would take 4000 tons of wood and a few more freight trains, each a mile long, just for one day.

And just think, they were forty years in transit.

And oh yes! They would have to have water. If they only had enough to drink and wash a few dishes, it would take 11,000,000 gallons each day, and a freight train with tank cars, 1800 miles long, just to bring water!

And then another thing! They had to get across the Red Sea at night. (They did?) Now, if they went on a narrow path, double file, the line would be 800 miles long and would require 35 days and nights to get through. So, there had to be a space in the Red Sea, 3 miles wide so that they could walk 5000 abreast to get over in one night.

But then, there is another problem.

Each time they camped at the end of the day, a campground two-thirds the size of the state of Rhode Island was required, or a total of 750 square miles long...think of it! This space just for nightly camping.

Do you think Moses figured all this out before he left Egypt? I think not!

You see, Moses believed in God. God took care of these things for him.

Now do you think God has any problem taking care of all your needs?

Oh and by the way, their cloths didn't wear out for 40 years either.

De 8:4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

Ne 9:21 Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.

The Real Sad Part About all this, is it TOOK CHILD LIKE FAITH.

It is like when you were young, you would ask your dad what something meant, he would give you an answer and you would say, OH OK.

You excepted it as the truth, you didn't call up 45000 Philadelphia lawyers to check out what he actually meant.

You see, if Moses would of considered all that was required, his child like faith would have gone the tube and there probably would never have been an exodus from Egypt.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

The measure is like a grain of mustard seed. **Mt 17:20**

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Mar 12

An 11-year-old girl from Redmond, Washington, says she has had enough of the low-cut, tight-fitting styles of today.

And recently she did something about it.

Rising sixth-grader Ella Gunderson wrote a letter to a Nordstrom department store, complaining of how few modest clothing choices were available for girls. She says she had two

very important reasons for objecting to the immodest styles she found so prevalent on the store's racks: "One, they're not comfortable, and two, you really shouldn't sacrifice your human dignity for the sake of fashion."

The Seattle-area youngster wrote that, while clothes shopping at a local Nordstrom store, a clerk had suggested to her that "there is only one look," a bit of fashion advice Ella resisted. "If that is true," she wrote to Nordstrom, "then girls are suppose (sic) to walk around half naked. I think that you should change that."

Ella also stated, "I see all these girls who walk around with pants that show their belly button and underwear. Even at my age, I know that is not modest."

The child's letter, which founds its way up the Nordstrom's corporate ladder -- all the way to executive vice president Pete Nordstrom -- drew an overwhelming response and prompted company officials to write back, promising to offer a wider range of clothes.

And as Ella's mother, Pam Gunderson, notes, not only did Nordstrom's write back, but so did almost every girls' clothier around. "There seems to be a note that was struck that really spoke to a lot of people about this," she says.

But the very thing that struck such a resonant chord with the clothiers merely struck Gunderson and her daughter as obvious: that the trend toward provocative and immodest garb has been taking over in the clothing industry. "I think the funny thing for us is that we don't think it's news. We think anyone who's been buying clothing for girls or women has known this for a long time," she says.

Nevertheless, the Seattle-area family found themselves in a media maelstrom after word spread about Ella's letter.

So not long afterwards, Ella and her friends in a Catholic girls group called Challenge took advantage of the spotlight

and held a fashion show to demonstrate what kind of clothing they wanted to wear.

Gunderson says the windfall of fame her daughter's letter prompted was unexpected, but God led the message. And she adds, what has been great about the whole experience is "the prayer power behind it."

The mother says her family and the others involved started praying a special Catholic prayer called the Novena nine days before the fashion show. "Our whole prayer was just that it would be God's will," she explains, "just that the fashion show would be whatever He wanted it to be and would speak to whomever He wanted to hear about it."

Gunderson says right after the group started praying, a story appeared about them in the local paper. And soon afterward, she adds, news outlets around the country began to take notice as well. An article in the Catholic Northwest Progress, a publication of the Archdiocese of Seattle, notes that Ella Gunderson has so far been interviewed on NBC's Today show and on CNN about her campaign for more modest clothing style choices, and that newspapers and magazines around the country have helped spread her pro-modesty message, as have thousands Internet publishers.

By Mary Rettig and Jenni Parker (

Ester 8:11 Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey,

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Mar 19

THE OLD FISHERMAN - submitted by Peggy

Our house was directly across the street from the clinic entrance of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. We lived downstairs & rented the upstairs rooms to out-patients at the Clinic. One summer evening as I was fixing supper, there was a knock at the door. I opened it to see a truly awful looking man. 'Why, he's hardly taller than my eight-year-old,' I thought as I stared at the stooped, shriveled body.

But the appalling thing was his face, lopsided from swelling, red & raw. Yet, his voice was pleasant as he said, 'Good evening. I've come to see if you've a room for just one night. I came for a treatment this morning from the eastern shore, & there's no bus 'till morning.'

He told me he'd been hunting for a room since noon but with no success; no one seemed to have a room. 'I guess it's my face. I know it looks terrible, but my doctor says with a few more treatments...'

For a moment I hesitated, but his next words convinced me, 'I could sleep in this rocking chair on the porch. My bus leaves early in the morning.' I told him we would find him a bed, but to rest on the porch. I went inside & finished getting supper. When we were ready, I asked the old man if he would join us. 'No thank you. I have plenty' and he held up a brown paper bag.

When I had finished the dishes, I went out on the porch to talk with him a few minutes. It didn't take a long time to see that this old man had an over sized heart crowded into that tiny body. He told me he fished for a living to support his daughter, her five children & her husband, who was hopelessly crippled from a back injury.

He didn't tell it by way of complaint; in fact, every other sentence was prefaced with thanks to God for a blessing. He was grateful that no pain accompanied his disease, which was apparently a form of skin cancer. He was thankful for the strength to keep going.

At bedtime, we put a camp cot in the children's room for him. When I got up in the morning, the bed linens were neatly folded, & the little man was out on the porch.

He refused breakfast, but just before he left for his bus, haltingly, as if asking a great favor, he said, 'Could I please come back & stay the next time I have a treatment? I won't put you out a bit. I can sleep fine in a chair.' He paused a moment & then added, 'Your children made me feel at home. Grownups are bothered by my face, but children don't seem to mind.' I told him he was welcome to come again.

And on his next trip he arrived a little after seven in the morning. As a gift, he brought a big fish

& a quart of the largest oysters I had ever seen. He said he had shucked them that morning before he left so that they'd be nice & fresh. I knew his bus left at 4 a.m., & I wondered what time he had to get up in order to do this for us.

In the years he came to stay overnight with us there was never a time that he did not bring us fish or oysters or vegetables from his garden.

Other times we received packages in the mail, always by special delivery; fish & oysters packed in a box of fresh young spinach or kale, every leaf carefully washed. Knowing that he must walk three miles to mail these & knowing how little money he had made the gifts doubly precious.

When I received these little remembrances, I often thought of a comment our next-door neighbor made after he left that first morning. 'Did you keep that awful looking man last night? I turned him away! You can lose roomers by putting up such people!'

Maybe we did lose roomers once or twice But, oh if only they could have known him, perhaps their illness would have been easier to bear. I know our family always will be grateful to have known him; from him we learned what it was to accept the bad without complaint & the good with gratitude.

Recently I was visiting a friend who has a greenhouse. As she showed me her flowers, we came to the most beautiful one of all, a golden chrysanthemum, bursting with blooms. But to my great surprise, it was growing in an old dented, rusty bucket. I thought to myself, 'If this were my plant, I'd put it in the loveliest container I had!'

My friend changed my mind. 'I ran short of pots,' she explained, 'and knowing how beautiful this one would be, I thought it wouldn't mind starting out in this old pail. It's just for a little while, till I can put it out in the garden.'

She must have wondered why I laughed so delightedly, but I was imagining just such a scene in heaven. There's an especially beautiful one, 'God might have said when he came to the soul of the sweet old fisherman. 'He won't mind starting in this small body.'

All this happened long ago -- and now, in God's garden, how tall this lovely soul must stand.

The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'

Friends are very special. They make you smile & encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear & they share a word of praise. Show your friends how much you care.

Pass this on, & brighten someone's day.

Never look down on anybody, unless you're helping them up.

"Life without God is like an unsharpened pencil - it has no point."

WISHING YOU LOVE IN YOUR HEART...PEACE IN YOUR SOUL..AND JOY IN YOUR LIFE.....

1Corinthians 6:5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

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mar 26

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

For some reason, people have difficulty structuring their arguments when arguing against supporting the currently proposed immigration revisions. This lady made the argument pretty simple.

NOT printed in the Orange County Newspapers they simply won't publish letters to the editor which they either deem politically incorrect (read below) or which do not agree with the philosophy they're pushing on the public. This woman wrote a great letter to the editor that should have been published; but, with your help, it will get published via cyberspace!

From: "David LaBonte"

My wife, Rosemary, wrote a wonderful letter to the editor of the OC Register which, of course, was not printed. So, I decided to "print" it myself by sending it out on the Internet. Pass it along

if you feel so inclined.

Written in response to a series of letters to the editor in the Orange County Register:

~~~~~  
**Dear Editor:**

**So many letter writers have based their arguments on how this land is made up of immigrants. Ernie Lujan for one, suggests we should tear down the Statue of Liberty because**

**the people now in question aren't being treated the same as those who passed through Ellis**

**Island and other ports of entry.**

**Maybe we should turn to our history books and point out to people like Mr. Lujan why**

**today's American is not willing to accept this new kind of immigrant any longer.**

**Back in 1900 when there was a rush from all areas of Europe to come to the United States,**

**people had to get off a ship and stand in a long line in New York and be documented. Some**

**would even get down on their hands and knees and kiss the ground.**

**They made a pledge to uphold the laws and support their new country in good and bad times.**

**They made learning English a primary rule in their new American households and some even**

**changed their names to blend in with their new home.**

**They had waved good-bye to their birth place to give their children a new life and did**

**everything in their power to help their children assimilate into one culture.**

**Nothing was handed to them. No free lunches, no welfare, no labor laws to protect them. All**

**they had were the skills and craftsmanship they had brought with them to trade for a future**

**of prosperity.**

**Most of their children came of age when World War II broke out. My father fought alongside**

**men whose parents had come straight over from Germany , Italy , France and Japan**

**None of these 1st generation Americans ever gave any thought about what country their**

**parents had come from.**

**They were Americans fighting Hitler, Mussolini and the Emperor of Japan .**

**They were defending the United States of America as one people.**

**When we liberated France , no one in those villages were looking for the French-American or**

**the German-American or the Irish-American. The people of France saw only Americans. And**

**we carried one flag that represented one country.**

**Not one of those immigrant sons would have thought about picking up another country's flag**

**and waving it to represent who they were. It would have been a disgrace to their parents**

**who had sacrificed so much to be here.**

**These immigrants truly knew what it meant to be an American. They stirred the**

**melting pot**

**into one Red, White and Blue bowl.**

**And here we are with a new kind of immigrant who wants the same rights and privileges.**

**Only they want to achieve it by playing with a different set of rules, one that includes the**

**entitlement card and a guarantee of being faithful to their mother country**

**I'm sorry, that's not what being an American is all about. I believe that the**

**immigrants who**

**landed on Ellis Island in the early 1900's deserve better than that for all the toil, hard work**

**and sacrifice in raising future generations to create a land that has become a beacon for those**

**legally searching for a better life.**

**I think they would be appalled that they are being used as an example by those waving**

**foreign country flags.**

**And for that suggestion about taking down the Statue of Liberty , it happens to mean a lot to**

**the citizens who are voting on the immigration bill. I wouldn't start talking about dismantling**

**the United States just yet.**

**(signed)**

**Rosemary LaBonte**

**KEEP THIS LETTER MOVING. FOR THE WRONG THINGS TO PREVAIL THE RIGHTFUL MAJORITY NEEDS TO REMAIN COMPLACENT AND QUIET!! LET THIS NEVER HAPPEN!!**

**ALL TERRORISTS, And ALL PROTESTORS (violent or semi violent) are NOT from God!**

**Feb 5/17**

**A Generous Business Partner.**

**One day, a very wealthy man was walking on the road. Along the way, he saw a beggar on the sidewalk. The rich man looks kindly on the beggar and asked, "How did you become a beggar?"**

**The beggar said, "Sir, I've been applying for a job for a year now but haven't found any. You look like a rich man. Sir, if you'll give me a job, I'll stop begging."**

**The rich man smiled and said, "I want to help you. But I won't give you a job. I'll do something better. I want you to be my business partner. Let's start a business together.**

**The beggar blinked hard. He didn't understand what the older man was saying. "What do you mean, Sir?"**

**"I own a rice plantation. You could sell my rice in the market. I'll provide you the sacks of rice. I'll pay the rent for the market stall. I'll even give you food allowance everyday for the next 30 days. All you'll have to do is sell my rice. And at the end of the month, as Business Partners, we'll share in the profits."**

**Tears of joy rolled down his cheeks. "Oh Sir," he said, "you're a gift from Heaven. You're the answer to my prayers. Thank you, thank you, thank you!"**

**He then paused and said, "Sir, how will we divide the profits? Do I keep 10% and you get the 90%? Do I keep 5% and you get the 95%? I'll be happy with any arrangement."**

**The rich man shook his head and chuckled. "No, I want you to give me the 10%. And you keep the 90%."**

**For a moment, the beggar couldn't speak. When he tried to speak, it was gibberish. "Uh, gee, uh, wow, I mean, huh?"**

**He couldn't believe his ears. The deal was too preposterous.**

The rich man laughed more loudly. He explained, "I don't need the money, my friend. I'm already wealthy beyond what you can ever imagine. I want you to give me 10% of your profits so you grow in faithfulness and gratitude."

The beggar knelt down before his benefactor and said, "Yes Sir, I will do as you say. Even now, I'm so grateful for what you've done for me!"

And so that was what happened. He forgets where the blessings came from. Each day, the beggar now dressed a little bit better, operated a store selling rice in the market. He worked very hard. He woke up early in the morning and slept late at night. And sales were brisk, also because the rice was of good quality. And after 30 days, the profits were astounding.

At the end of the month, as the ex-beggar was counting the money, and liking very much the feeling of money in his hands, an idea grew in his mind. He told himself, Gee, why should I give 10% to my Business Partner? I didn't see him the whole month! I was the one who was working day and night for this business. I did all this work! I deserve the 100% profits!

A few minutes later, the rich man was knocking on the door to collect his 10% of the profits. The ex-beggar opened the door and said, "You don't deserve the 10%. I worked hard for this. I deserve all of it!" And he slammed the door.

If you were his Business Partner, how would you feel?

Friend, this is exactly what happens to us.

God gave us everything, God is Our Business Partner.

God gave us life - every single moment, every single breath, every single second. God gave us talents - ability to talk, to create, to earn money. God gave us a body - eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, heart. God gave us mind - imagination, emotions, reasoning, language.

So we need to give back Our Business Partner something in return.

God bless you all !!!

Who is the beggar?

**Matthew 25:26** His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

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feb 12/17

### **Today's religious people's sentiment**

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The busier I get, the less I get done...

The faster I go, the less I progress...

The Bible?! I don't have time to read that.

I'll hear it on Sunday anyway...

Prayer?

God knows my heart and the Holy Spirit can read my mind...

I cannot stop to pick him up,

appointments won't allow...

to get into a conversation--

I cannot see how...

I don't have time to listen to

that man that said "Hello..."

Have I too many things to do

to really get to know?

Who are those people growing up

before my very eyes?

It seems each time I stop and look

they are another size!

Who is that woman in my home?  
Her beauty changes not,  
but if I have to ask these,  
what priorities have I got?  
"O where did I ignore that compass  
keeping me on track?  
Each chapter and each verse of such--  
Lord, have I been that slack?  
Stable me again upon  
that course that prospers all:  
where I am guided by Your Spirit--  
answering Your call."  
Repentance. It MUST be from the heart!  
It MUST start in the home.

It MUST be done if I am to be effective at all...

ANYWHERE! by Jim Busby at [www.WordsToHisServant.com](http://www.WordsToHisServant.com)

**Joel 2:9** They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

**Matthew 6:33** But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

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feb 19

*I guarantee that this story will "Make your Day*

This is worth reading - God is good!

*If this doesn't light your fire ... your wood is wet.*

The Folded Napkin ... A Truckers Story.

I try not to be biased, but I had my doubts about hiring Stevie. His placement counsellor assured me that he would be a good, reliable busboy.

But I had never had a mentally handicapped employee and wasn't sure I wanted one. I wasn't sure how my customers would react to Stevie.

He was short, a little dumpy with the smooth facial features and thick-tongued speech of Downs Syndrome. I wasn't worried about most of my trucker customers because truckers don't generally care who buses tables as long as the meatloaf platter is good and the pies are homemade.

The four-wheeler drivers were the ones who concerned me; the mouthy college kids traveling to school; the yuppie snobs who secretly polish their silverware with their napkins for fear of catching some dreaded "truck stop germ," the pairs of white-shirted business men on expense accounts who think every truck stop waitress wants to be flirted with. I knew those people would be uncomfortable around Stevie so I closely watched him for the first few weeks.

I shouldn't have worried. After the first week, Stevie had my staff wrapped around his stubby little finger, and within a month my truck regulars had adopted him as their official truck stop mascot.

After that, I really didn't care what the rest of the customers thought of him. He was like a 21-year-old kid in blue jeans and Nikes, eager to laugh and eager to please, but fierce in his attention to his duties. Every salt and pepper shaker was exactly in its place, not a bread crumb or coffee spill was visible when Stevie got done with the table. Our only problem was persuading him to wait to clean a table until after the customers were finished. He would hover in the background, shifting his weight from one foot to the other, scanning the dining room until a table was empty. Then he would scurry to the empty table and carefully bus dishes and glasses onto his cart and meticulously wipe the

table up with a practiced flourish of his rag. If he thought a customer was watching, his brow would pucker with added concentration. He took pride in doing his job exactly right, and you had to love how hard he tried to please each and every person he met. Over time, we learned that he lived with his mother, a widow who was disabled after repeated surgeries for cancer. They lived on their Social Security benefits in public housing two miles from the truck stop. Their social worker, who stopped to check on him every so often, admitted they had fallen between the cracks. Money was tight, and what I paid him was probably the difference between them being able to live together and Stevie being sent to a group home. That's why the restaurant was a gloomy place that morning last August, the first morning in three years that Stevie missed work.

He was at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester getting a new valve or something put in his heart. His social worker said that people with Downs Syndrome often have heart problems at an early age so this wasn't unexpected, and there was a good chance he would come through the surgery in good shape and be back at work in a few months.

A ripple of excitement ran through the staff later that morning when word came that he was out of surgery, in recovery, and doing fine. Frannie, the head waitress, let out a war hoop and did a little dance in the aisle when she heard the good news.

Marvin Ringers, one of our regular trucker customers, stared at the sight of this 50-year-old grandmother of four doing a victory shimmy beside his table. Frannie blushed, smoothed her apron and shot Marvin a withering look. He grinned. "OK, Frannie, what was that all about?" he asked.

"We just got word that Stevie is out of surgery and going to be okay." "I was wondering where he was. I had a new joke to tell him. What was the surgery about?" Frannie quickly told Marvin and the other two drivers sitting at his booth about Stevie's surgery, then sighed: "Yeah, I'm glad he is going to be OK," she said. "But I don't know how he and his Mom are going to handle all the bills. From what I hear, they're barely getting by as it is." Marvin nodded thoughtfully, and Frannie hurried off to wait on the rest of her tables. Since I hadn't had time to round up a busboy to replace Stevie and really didn't want to replace him, the girls were busing their own tables that day until we decided what to do. After the morning rush, Frannie walked into my office. She had a couple of paper napkins in her hand and a funny look on her face.

"What's up?" I asked. "I didn't get that table where Marvin and his friends were sitting cleared off after they left, and Pete and Tony were sitting there when I got back to clean it off," she said. "This was folded and tucked under a coffee cup." She handed the napkin to me, and three \$20 bills fell onto my desk when I opened it. On the outside, in big, bold letters, was printed "Something For Stevie." "Pete asked me what that was all about," she said, "so I told him about Stevie and his Mom and everything, and Pete looked at Tony and Tony looked at Pete, and they ended up giving me this." She handed me another paper napkin that had "Something For Stevie" scrawled on its outside. Two \$50 bills were tucked within its folds. Frannie looked at me with wet, shiny eyes, shook her head and said simply: "truckers."

That was three months ago. Today is Thanksgiving, the first day Stevie is supposed to be back to work.

His placement worker said he's been counting the days until the doctor said he could work, and it didn't matter at all that it was a holiday. He called 10 times in the past week, making sure we knew he was coming, fearful that we had forgotten him or that his job was in jeopardy. I arranged to have his mother bring him to work. I then met them in the parking lot and invited them both to celebrate his day back.

Stevie was thinner and paler, but couldn't stop grinning as he pushed through the doors and headed for the back room where his apron and bussing cart were waiting.

"Hold up there, Stevie, not so fast," I said. I took him and his mother by their arms.

"Work can wait for a minute. To celebrate your coming back, breakfast for you and your

mother is on me!" I led them toward a large corner booth at the rear of the room. I could feel and hear the rest of the staff following behind as we marched through the dining room. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw booth after booth of grinning truckers empty and join the procession. We stopped in front of the big table. Its surface was covered with coffee cups, saucers and dinner plates, all sitting slightly crooked on dozens of folded paper napkins. "First thing you have to do, Stevie, is clean up this mess," I said. I tried to sound stern.

Stevie looked at me, and then at his mother, then pulled out one of the napkins. It had "Something for Stevie" printed on the outside. As he picked it up, two \$10 bills fell onto the table.

Stevie stared at the money, then at all the napkins peeking from beneath the tableware, each with his name printed or scrawled on it. I turned to his mother. "There's more than \$10,000 in cash and checks on that table, all from truckers and trucking companies that heard about your problems. "Happy Thanksgiving."

Well, it got real noisy about that time, with everybody hollering and shouting, and there were a few tears, as well.

But you know what's funny? While everybody else was busy shaking hands and hugging each other, Stevie, with a big smile on his face, was busy clearing all the cups and dishes from the table..

Best worker I ever hired.

**Psalms 86:15** But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

=====

feb 26

A minute with GOD

I spent a minute and hope you will too.

I LOVE THE OPENING SENTENCE:

With what is going on in the world these days, Heaven could end up a ghost town? My name is GOD. You hardly have time for Me. I love you and will always bless you. I am always with you. I need you to spend 30 seconds of your time with Me today. Don't pray, just praise. Today I want this message to go across the world before midnight. You see, I'm coming for my church very, very soon and if you do not put me first, you will be left behind to go through the seven year tribulation. Will you help? Please do not delete it and I'll help you with something that you are in need of.

Just dare Me! A blessing is coming your way. Please drop everything and pass it on.

Why are prayers getting smaller, but bars and clubs are expanding?

Why is it so easy to worship a celebrity, but very difficult to engage with God?

Think about it, are you going to forward this or are you going to ignore it because you think you will get laughed at?

Forward this to all your friends. 80% of you won't. GOD said if you deny me in front of your friends, I will deny you on the day of judgment.

When one door closes, God opens two. If GOD has opened doors for you, send this message to everyone...

*Submitted to us by Patricia Borle*

**Isaiah 55:6** Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

**Revelation 3.10** Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Happy New Year, may you be ready and blessed when the Lord calls, Come Up Hither.

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Givens has been in the Cincinnati Police Department for over 26 years,

but in all that time he's never had an experience that compares to this one.

<unknown.jpg>

On Monday, Givens was sitting in his patrol car in a parking lot when he was accosted by one very unexpected visitor who seemed dead set on getting his attention.

"This goose came up and started pecking on the side of the car," Givens told The Dodo.

"I threw some food out for her, but she didn't take it. She just kept pecking and quacking.

Then she walked away, stopped and looked back.

Then came over again and pecked some more."

When the goose walked away a second time, and again looked back,

Givens decided to follow her. And it's a good thing that he did.

<unknown\_1.jpg>

"She led me about 100 yards away to this grassy area near a creek.

That's when I saw one of her babies all tangled up in some string from a balloon.

His little feet were kicking," said Givens. "She led me straight to him."

Though stunned by what just happened, Givens was wary of approaching the trapped gosling, fearing that the goose might attack if he did.

So instead he radioed the SPCA, but no wildlife rescuers were immediately available.

Givens' colleague, Officer Cecilia Charron, heard the call and volunteered to help.

"She showed up on her own," he said. "I told her to be careful, but she just walked over and untangled the baby. The mother goose just watched, like she knew. It was amazing."

Once the baby was untangled, Givens and Charron looked on as he rejoined his mom and swam away safely. Not surprisingly, the officers were in disbelief about how it all played out from start to finish.

Charron even started to tear up, telling Givens it was the highlight of her 24 years on the force.

"It seems like something made up. It was just incredible," said Givens.

"I honestly don't know why I decided to follow her, but I did.

It makes me wonder — do they know to turn to humans when they need help?"

<unknown\_2.jpg>

Though we'll never be sure if the desperate mother goose did indeed approach the officer knowing he would help, what is certain is that he did — and that's what made the difference.

"I don't know what it all means," Givens said, "but I hope it might inspire more compassion in other

**1Corinthians 1:27** But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

=====

Jan 8

More month than money is a staple in our household.

As a single, disabled mother of two (one in college) on a fixed income, saying that money is tight is an understatement.

Our living situation dictated that we move from the overpriced rented apartment we had been in for nearly three years to something more affordable.

Divine providence led us to a wonderful house that the owners needed to sell right away because the wife's job had moved to another state. Blessing #1, the mortgage payment would be significantly less than our apartment had been.

A few months later I felt led to donate money to my church's world hunger drive. I gave a few dollars, but felt God telling me that local families were hungry, too. So, I planned to

gather a few canned goods and staples to take to the local food bank, but, again, seemed to hear God telling me that cash was the way to go.

"But I can barely pay my family's bills now. How can I afford to give money to feed other families?" I thought. I figured God must somehow be affiliated with Nike because His response was, "Just do it."

I did as instructed, wondering which bill I could skip paying that month.

About a week later I received a letter from the title company that handled my home purchase. It stated that the enclosed check was a refund for hazard insurance.

I had no idea what that meant, and really didn't care.

All I knew was that, once again, God showed His faithfulness.

The check was for 20 times more than I had donated to the local food bank. from a MountainWings moment

**1Corinthians 1:27** But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

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Jan 15

### **The Cookie Thief**

The woman arrived at an airport one night  
With several long hours before her flight.  
She hunted for a book in the airport shop,  
Bought a bag of cookies and found a place to drop.  
She was engrossed in her book but happened to see,  
That the man sitting beside her, as bold as could be,  
Grabbed a cookie or two from the bag in between,  
Which she tried to ignore to avoid a scene.  
So she munched the cookies and watched the clock,  
As the gutsy cookie thief diminished her stock.  
She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by,  
Thinking, "If I wasn't so nice, I would blacken his eye."  
With each cookie she took, he took one too,  
When only one was left, she wondered what he would do.  
With a smile on his face, and a nervous laugh,  
He took the last cookie and broke it in half.  
He offered her half, as he ate the other,  
She snatched it from him and thought... ooh, brother!  
This guy has some nerve and he's also rude,  
Why he didn't even show any gratitude!  
She had never known when she had been so galled,  
And sighed with relief when her flight was called.  
She gathered her belongings and headed to the gate,  
Refusing to look back at the thieving ingrate.  
She boarded the plane, and sank in her seat,  
Then she sought her book, which was almost complete.  
As she reached in her baggage, she gasped with surprise,  
There was her bag of cookies, in front of her eyes.  
If mine are here, she moaned in despair,  
The others were his, and he tried to share.

Too late to apologize, she realized with grief,  
That she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief!  
How many times have we absolutely known that something was a  
certain way, only to discover later that what we believed to be  
true was not?

Keep an open mind and an open heart, because you just never  
know, you might be eating someone else's cookies....

by Valerie

**Hebrews 13:2** Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some  
have entertained angels unawares.

=====

jan 22