

ALL GOOD THINGS

He was in the first third grade class I taught at Saint Mary's School in Morris, Minn. All 34 of my students were dear to me, but Mark Eklund was one in a million. Very neat in appearance, but had that happy-to-be-alive attitude that made even his occasional mischievousness delightful. Mark talked incessantly. I had to remind him again and again that talking without permission was not acceptable.

What impressed me so much, though, was his sincere response every time I had to correct him for misbehaving - "Thank you for correcting me, Sister!"

I didn't know what to make of it at first, but before long I became accustomed to hearing it many times a day. One morning my patience was growing thin when Mark talked once too often, and then I made a novice-teacher's mistake. I looked at Mark and said, "If you say one more word, I am going to tape your mouth shut!"

It wasn't ten seconds later when Chuck blurted out, "Mark is talking again."

I hadn't asked any of the students to help me watch Mark, but since I had stated the punishment in front of the class, I had to act on it. I remember the scene as if it had occurred this morning. I walked to my desk, very deliberately opened my drawer and took out a roll of masking tape. Without saying a word, I proceeded to Mark's desk, tore off two pieces of tape and made a big X with them over his mouth. I then returned to the front of the room. As I glanced at Mark to see how he was doing, he winked at me. That did it!! I started laughing. The class cheered as I walked back to Mark's desk, removed the tape, and shrugged my shoulders. His first words were, "Thank you for correcting me, Sister."

At the end of the year, I was asked to teach junior-high math. The years flew by, and before I knew it Mark was in my classroom again. He was more handsome than ever and just as polite. Since he had to listen carefully to my instruction in the "new math," he did not talk as much in ninth grade as he had in third.

One Friday, things just didn't feel right. We had worked hard on a new concept all week, and I sensed that the students were frowning, frustrated with themselves - and edgy with one another. I had to stop this crankiness before it got out of hand.

So I asked them to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name. Then I told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down.

It took the remainder of the class period to finish their assignment, and as the students left the room, each one handed me the papers. Charlie smiled.

Mark said, "Thank you for teaching me, Sister. Have a good weekend." That Saturday, I wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and I listed what everyone else had said about that individual. On Monday I gave each student his or her list. Before long, the entire class was smiling. "Really?" I heard whispered. "I never knew that meant anything to anyone!" "I didn't know others liked me so much." No one ever mentioned those papers in class again. I never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn't matter.

The exercise had accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another again. That group of students moved on. Several years later, after I returned from vacation, my parents

met me at the airport. As we were driving home, Mother asked me the usual questions about the trip - the weather, my experiences in general.

There was a lull in the conversation. Mother gave Dad a side-ways glance and simply says, "Dad?"

My father cleared his throat as he usually did before something important. "The Eklunds called last night," he began. "Really?" I said. "I haven't heard from them in years. I wonder how Mark is." Dad responded quietly. "Mark was killed in Vietnam," he said.

"The funeral is tomorrow, and his parents would like it if you could attend."

To this day I can still point to the exact spot on I-494 where Dad told me about Mark. I had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. Mark looked so handsome, so mature.

All I could think at that moment was, Mark I would give all the masking tape in the world if only you would talk to me. The church was packed with Mark's friends. Chuck's sister sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Why did it have to rain on the day of the funeral? It was difficult enough at the graveside. The pastor said the usual prayers, and the bugler played taps. One by one those who loved Mark took a last walk by the coffin and sprinkled it with holy water.

I was the last one to bless the coffin. As I stood there, one of the soldiers who acted as pallbearer came up to me. "Were you Mark's math teacher?" he asked. I nodded as I continued to stare at the coffin. "Mark talked about you a lot," he said. After the funeral, most of Mark's former classmates headed to Chuck's farmhouse for lunch.

Mark's mother and father were there, obviously waiting for me. "We want to show you something," his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket. "They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it."

Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notebook paper that had obviously been taped, folded and refolded many times. I knew without looking that the papers were the ones on which I had listed all the good things each of Mark's classmates had said about him. "Thank you so much for doing that," Mark's mother said.

"As you can see, Mark treasured it." Mark's classmates started to gather around us. Charlie smiled rather sheepishly and said, "I still have my list. It's in the top drawer of my desk at home."

Chuck's wife said, "Chuck asked me to put his in our wedding album." "I have mine too," Marilyn said. "It's in my diary."

Then Vicki, another classmate, reached into her pocketbook, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. "I carry this with me at all times," Vicki said without batting an eyelash. "I think we all saved our lists."

That's when I finally sat down and cried. I cried for Mark and for all his friends who would never see him again.

THE END

Written by: Sister Helen P. Mroska

The purpose of this letter is to encourage everyone to compliment the people you love and care about. We often tend to forget the importance of showing our affections and love. Sometimes the smallest of things, could mean the most to another. I am asking you, to please send this letter around and spread the message and encouragement, to express your love and caring by complimenting and being open with communication. The density of people in society is so thick that we forget that life will end one day. And we don't know when that one day will be. So please, I beg of you, to tell the people you love and care for, that they are special and important. Tell them, before it is too late.

Within 1 hour you must send it to other people. Within five days you will have a miraculous occurrence in your relationships. You may find new love or have an old love rekindled. If you do not send it, you will have, once again passed up the opportunity to do something loving and beautiful and continue the trend that gives you problems in your relationships.

If you've received this it is because someone cares for you and it means there is probably at least someone for whom you care.

If you're too busy to take the few minutes that it would take right now to forward this to ten people, would it be the first time you didn't do that little thing that would make a difference in your relationships?

The more people that you send this to, the better luck you will have. And the better you'll get at reaching out to those you care about.

Here's the deal: Forward this letter to at least 10 different people; within 1 hour of receiving it. Do it, and reap what you sow: luck in love, people who care for you, and that warm feeling that comes from loving others.

Here is a little reminder of how important it is to type that email address correctly.

Oops

A businessman from Wisconsin went on a business trip to Louisiana. Upon arrival, he immediately plugged his laptop into the hotel room port and sent a short E-mail back home to his wife, Jennifer Johnson, at her address, JennJohn@world.net

Unfortunately, in his haste, he mistyped a letter and the E-mail ended up going to JeanJohn@world.net, a Jean Johnson in Duluth, the wife of a preacher who had just passed away and was buried that day. The preacher's wife took one look at the E-mail and promptly fainted. It read, "Arrived safely, but it sure is hot down here!"

THE BRIDGE

There once was this turntable bridge which spanned a large river. During most of the day, the bridge sat parallel with the tracks, allowing ships to pass freely on both sides. But at certain times each day a train would come along, and the bridge would be turned sideways across the river allowing the trains to cross. A switchman sat in a small shack on one side of the river where he operated the controls to turn the bridge and lock it into place as the train crossed. One evening as the switchman was waiting for the last train of the day to come, he looked off into the distance through the dimming twilight and caught sight of the train's light. He stepped to the controls and waited until the train was within a prescribed distance when he was to turn the bridge into position. He turned the bridge, but to his horror, found that the locking control didn't work. If the bridge was not locked into position securely, it would wobble back and forth at the ends when the train came onto it. This would cause the train to jump the track and go crashing into the river. This train was a passenger train with many people aboard. He left the bridge turned across the river, and hurried across the bridge to the other side of the

river where there was a lever he could use to operate the lock manually. He could hear the rumble of the train now. He took hold of the lever and leaned backward to apply pressure to keep the mechanism locked. Many lives depended on this man's strength. Then, coming across the bridge from the direction of his control shack he heard a sound that made his blood run cold: "Daddy, where are you?" His four year old son was crossing the bridge to look for him. His first impulse was to cry out to the child, "Run, run!" but the train was to close, the tiny legs would never make it across the bridge in time. The man almost lifted the lever to run and snatch up his son, and carry him to safety, but he realized he could not get back to the lever in time. Either the people on the train or his little son must die. He took just a moment to make his decision. The train sped swiftly and safely on it's way, and no one aboard was aware of the tiny, broken body thrown mercilessly into the river by the rushing train. Nor were they aware of the pitiful figure of a sobbing man still clinging tightly to the lever long after the train had passed. They didn't see him walking home more slowly than he had ever walked, to tell his wife how he had sacrificed her son. Now if you can comprehend the feelings which went through this man's heart, you can understand the feeling of our Heavenly Father when he sacrificed his Son to bridge the gap between us and eternal life. How does He feel when we speed along through life without giving a thought to what was done for us through his Son, Jesus Christ? Can there be any wonder that He caused the earth to tremble and the skies to darken when His only Son died?

Not that Jesus would ever do this, but I thought it was pretty funny!

Jesus is wandering around Jerusalem when he decides he really needs a new robe. After looking around, he sees a sign for "Finkelstein, the Tailor." He goes in and Finkelstein prepares a new robe for him which is an absolute perfect fit.

When he asks how much he owes, Finkelstein brushes him off: "No, there's no charge. But, may I ask a small favor? Maybe when you're giving one of your big shot goyisha sermons, you could mention -- in passing of course -- a little something about how you love your nice robe because it fits so well, and how it's made of such fine cloth, and how it was prepared by Finkelstein the Tailor."

Jesus readily agrees and, as promised, plugs Finkelstein's robe everytime he preaches. Some months later, he is wandering through Jerusalem and happens by Finkelstein's shop. He is amazed to see a huge line of people waiting for Finkelstein's robes. He pushes his way through the crowd to speak with Finkelstein himself. "Jesus, Jesus, look what a marvel you've been for business," gushes Finkelstein. "Would you consider a partnership?" "We could talk, replies Jesus. "Maybe we'll call it Jesus & Finkelstein."

"No, no, no," says Finkelstein. "Finkelstein & Jesus." The two of them argue for some time about the name. Finally, they come to a compromise.

"OK, OK" Jesus says, " Lord & Taylor it is."

I ASK God to take away my pain.

God said no.

It is not for me to take away, but for you to give up.

I asked God to make my handicapped child whole.

God said no.

Her spirit was whole, her body was only temporary.

I asked God to grant me patience.

God said no.

Patience is a by-product of tribulations; it isn't granted, it is earned.

I asked God to give me happiness.

God said no.

I give you blessings. Happiness is up to you.

I asked God to spare me pain.

God said no.

Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me.

I asked God to make my spirit grow.

God said no.

You must grow on your own, but I will prune you to make you fruitful.

I asked for all thing that I might enjoy life.

God said no.

I will give you life so that you may enjoy all things.

I asked God to help me LOVE others, as much as he loves me.

GOD SAID???.ahhhh, finally you have the idea.

A poem picked out by Grandma High for her funeral.

TO THOSE I LOVE AND THOSE WHO LOVE ME

When I am gone, release me, Let me go
I have so many things to see and do
You mustn't tie yourself to me with tears
Be happy that we had so many years.

I gave you my love, you can only guess,
How much you gave to me in happiness.
I thank you for the love each of you has shown.
So keep the memories within your heart

So grieve awhile for me, if grieve you must
Then let your grief be comforted by rust.
It's only for awhile that we must part.
So keep the memories within your heart.

I won't be far away, for life goes on.
So if you need me, call and I will come
Thought you can't see me or touch me, I will be near
and if you'll listen with your heart, you'll hear
All of my love around you soft and clear,
And then when you must come this way alone,
I'll greet you with a smile, and say

?Welcome Home?

A new young Minister was to go to each member of his congregation. At one house he was sure that they were home but did not answer the door. He left his calling card at the door with this bible verse on the back.

Revelation 3:20 Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

The next Sunday the card came back in the collection plate with this new verse for a reply.

Genesis 3:10 He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

Where is God's Perfection?

In Brooklyn, New York, Chush is a school that caters to learning disabled children. Some children remain in Chush for their entire school career, while others can be mainstreamed into conventional schools. At a Chush fund-raising dinner, the father of a Chush child delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended.

After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he cried out, "Where is the perfection in my son Shaya? Everything God does is done with perfection. But my child cannot understand things as other children do. My child cannot remember facts and figures as other children do. Where is God's perfection?"

The audience was shocked by the question, pained by the father's anguish and stilled by the piercing query. "I believe," the father answered, "that when God brings a child like this into the world, the perfection that he seeks is in the way people react to this child."

He then told the following story about his son Shaya: One afternoon Shaya and his father walked past a park where some boys Shaya knew were playing baseball. Shaya asked, "Do you think they will let me play?" Shaya's father knew that his son was not at all athletic and that most boys would not want him on their team. But Shaya's father understood that if his son was chosen to play it would give him a comfortable sense of belonging.

Shaya's father approached one of the boys in the field and asked if Shaya could play. The boy looked around for guidance from his teammates. Getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said "We are losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him up to bat in the ninth inning." Shaya's father was ecstatic as Shaya smiled broadly.

Shaya was told to put on a glove and go out to play short center field. In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shaya's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shaya's team scored again and now with two outs and the bases loaded with the potential winning run on base, Shaya was scheduled to be up.

Would the team actually let Shaya bat at this juncture and give away their chance to win the game? Surprisingly, Shaya was given the bat. Everyone knew that it was all but impossible because Shaya didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, let alone hit with it. However as Shaya stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shaya should at least be able to make contact. The first pitch came in and Shaya swung clumsily and missed. One of Shaya's teammates came up to Shaya and together they held the bat and faced the pitcher waiting for the next pitch. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly toward Shaya. As the pitch came in, Shaya and his team-mate swung at the bat and together they hit a slow ground ball to the pitcher. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could easily have thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shaya

would have been out and that would have ended the game. Instead, the pitcher took the ball and threw it on a high arc to right field, far beyond reach of the first baseman. Everyone started yelling, "Shaya, run to first. Run to first." Never in his life had Shaya run to first. He scampered down the baseline wide-eyed and startled. By the time he reached first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second baseman who would tag out Shaya, who was still running. But the right fielder understood what the pitcher's intentions were, so he threw the ball high and far over the third baseman's head. Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second." Shaya ran towards second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases towards home. As Shaya reached second base, the opposing short stop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base and shouted, "Run to third." As Shaya rounded third, the boys from both teams ran behind him screaming, "Shaya run home." Shaya ran home, stepped on home plate and all 18 boys lifted him on their shoulders and made him the hero, as he had just hit a "grand slam" and won the game for his team.

"That day," said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, "those 18 boys reached their level of God's perfection."

TOOTHLESS GRIN I was doing some last-minute Christmas shopping in a toy store and decided to look at Barbie dolls for my nieces. A nicely dressed little girl was excitedly looking through the Barbie dolls as well, with a roll of money clamped tightly in her little hand. When she came upon a Barbie she liked, she would turn and ask her father if she had enough money to buy it. He usually said "yes," but she would keep looking and keep going through their ritual of "do I have enough?" As she was looking, a little boy wandered in across the aisle and started sorting through the Pokemon toys. He was dressed neatly, but in clothes that were obviously rather worn, and wearing a jacket that was probably a couple of sizes too small. He, too, had money in his hand, but it looked to be no more than five dollars or so, at the most. He was with his father as well, and kept picking up the Pokemon video toys. Each time he picked one up and looked at his father, his father shook his head, "no." The little girl had apparently chosen her Barbie, a beautifully dressed, glamorous doll that would have been the envy of every little girl on the block. However, she had stopped and was watching the interchange between the little boy and his father. Rather dejectedly, the boy had given up instead. He and his father then started walking through another aisle of the store. The little girl put her Barbie back on the shelf, and ran over to the Pokemon games. She excitedly picked up one that was lying on top of the other toys, and raced toward the check-out, after speaking with her father. I picked up my purchases and got in line behind them. Then, much to the little girl's obvious delight, the little boy and his father got in line behind me. After the toy was paid for and bagged, the little girl handed it back to the cashier and whispered something in her ear. The cashier smiled and put the package under the counter. I paid for my purchases and was rearranging things in my purse when the little boy came up to the cashier. The cashier rang up his purchases and then said, "Congratulations, you are my hundredth customer today, and you win a prize!" With that, she handed the little boy the Pokemon game, and he could only stare in disbelief. It was, he said, exactly what he had wanted! The little girl and her father had been standing at the doorway during all of this, and I saw the biggest, prettiest, toothless grin on that little girl that I have ever seen in my life. Then they walked out the door, and I followed, close behind them. As I walked back to my car, in amazement over what I had just witnessed, I heard the father ask his daughter why she had done that. I'll never forget what she said to him. "Daddy, didn't Nana and PawPaw want me to buy something that would make me happy?" He said, "Of course they did, honey." To which the little girl replied, "Well, I just did!" With that, she giggled and started skipping toward their car. Apparently, she had decided on the answer to her own question of, "Do I have enough?" I feel very privileged to have witnessed the true spirit of Christmas in that toy store, in the form of a little girl who understands more about the reason for the season than most adults I know! May God bless her and her parents, just as she blessed that little boy, and me, that day! -- Sharon Palmer, Tennessee

My Friends When you are sad, I will dry your tears. When you are scared, I will comfort your fears. When you are worried, I will give you hope. When you are confused, I will help you cope. And when

you are lost, And can't see the light. I shall be your beacon Shining ever so bright This is my oath. I pledge till the end. Why you may ask? Because you're my friend. *Send this to everyone you consider a friend!

It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas-oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it-overspending, the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma, the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else. Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike.

The inspiration came in a usual way. Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended and shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes. As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. As each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn't acknowledge defeat.

Mike seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right of them." Mike loved kids-all kids-and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That's when the idea of his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church. On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years.

For each Christmas, I followed the tradition-one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas and on and on.

The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents. As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn't end there. You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning, it was joined by three more.

Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing around the tree with wide-eyed anticipation watching as their fathers take down the envelope. Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit, will always be with us. May we all remember Christ, who is the reason for the season, and the true Christmas spirit this year and always. God bless and pass this along to your friends and loved ones.

TWO ETHICAL QUESTIONS Q1: If you knew a woman who was pregnant, who had 8 kids already, three who were deaf, two who were blind, one mentally retarded, and she had syphilis; would you recommend that she have an abortion? Read the next question before scrolling down to the answer of this one. **Q2:** It is time to elect the world leader, and your vote counts. Here are the facts about the

three leading candidates: Candidate A Associates with crooked politicians, and consults with astrologists. He's had two mistresses. He also chain smokes and drinks 8 to 10 martinis a day. Candidate B He was kicked out of office twice, sleeps until noon, used opium in college and drinks a quart of whisky every evening. Candidate C He is a decorated war hero. He's a vegetarian, doesn't smoke, drinks an occasional beer and hasn't had any extramarital affairs. Which of these candidates would be your choice? Decide first, no peeking, then scroll down for the answer. Candidate A is Franklin D. Roosevelt Candidate B is Winston Churchill Candidate C is Adolph Hitler and by the way: Answer to the abortion question -- if you said yes, you just killed Beethoven. Scary isn't it???

FIVE GREAT LESSONS:

Some Important Lessons Life Teaches You...

1 ~ Most Important Lesson

During my second month of nursing school, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions, until I read the last one:

"What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?"

Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50s, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank.

Just before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. "Absolutely," said the professor. "In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say, "hello."

"I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy.

Second Important Lesson~ Pickup in the Rain

One night, at 11:30 PM, an older African American woman was standing on the side of an Alabama highway trying to endure a lashing rain storm. Her car had broken down and she desperately needed a ride.

Soaking wet, she decided to flag down the next car. A young white man stopped to help her, generally unheard of in those conflict-filled 1960s. The man took her to safety, helped her get assistance and put her into a taxi cab. She seemed to be in a big hurry, but wrote down his address and thanked him. Seven days went by and a knock came on the man's door. To his surprise, a giant console color TV was delivered to his home. A special note was attached.

It read: "Thank you so much for assisting me on the highway the other night. The rain drenched not only my clothes, but also my spirits. Then you came along. Because of you, I was able to make it to my dying husband's bedside just before he passed away. God bless you for helping me and unselfishly serving others." Sincerely, Mrs. Nat King Cole.

Third Important Lesson ~ Always remember those who serve you

In the days when an ice cream sundae cost much less, a 10 year old boy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass in front of him.

"How much is an ice cream sundae?" he asked.

"Fifty cents," replied the waitress. The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied the coins in it. "Well, how much is a plain dish of ice cream?" he inquired. By now more people were waiting for a table and the waitress was growing impatient.

"Thirty-five cents," she brusquely replied. "The little boy again counted his coins. "I'll have the plain ice cream," he said. The waitress brought the ice cream, put the bill on the table and walked away.

The boy finished the ice cream, paid the cashier and left. When the waitress came back, she began to cry as she wiped down the table. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies - You see, he couldn't have the sundae, because he had to have enough left to leave her a tip.

Fourth Important Lesson ~ The Obstacles in Our Path In ancient times, a King had a boulder placed on a roadway. To see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it.

Many loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, But none did anything about getting the stone out of the way. Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road.

After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. After the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been.

The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the king indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway. The peasant learned what many of us never understand.

Every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve our condition.

Fifth Important Lesson ~ Giving When it Counts

Many years ago, when I worked as a volunteer at a hospital, I got to know a little girl named Liz who was suffering from a rare and serious disease.

Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her 5-year old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness. The doctor explained the situation to her little brother, and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister.

I saw him hesitate for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, "Yes, I'll do it if it will save her." As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister and smiled, as we all did, seeing the color returning to her cheeks. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "Will I start to die right away?"

Being young, the little boy had misunderstood the doctor; he thought he was going to have to give his sister all of his blood in order to save her.

You see understanding and attitude, after all, is everything.

"Why are you crying?" he asked his mom. "Because I'm a mother," she told him. "I don't understand," he said.

His mom just hugged him and said, "You never will." Later, the little boy asked his father why Mother seemed to cry for no reason.

"All mothers cry for no reason" was all his dad could say. The little boy grew up and became a man, still wondering why mothers cry. So he finally put in a call to God and when God got on the phone, the man said "God, why do mothers cry so easily?"

God said, "You see son, when I made mothers they had to be special. I made their shoulders strong enough to carry the weight of the world, yet gentle enough to give comfort. I gave them an inner strength to endure childbirth and the rejection that many times comes from their children.

I gave them a hardiness that allows them to keep going when everyone else gives up, and to take care of their families through sickness and fatigue without complaining.

I gave them the sensitivity to love their child under all circumstances, even when their child has hurt them very badly.

This same sensitivity helps them to make a child's boo-boo feel better and helps them share a teenager's anxieties and fears.

I gave them a tear to shed. It's theirs exclusively, To use whenever it is needed. It's their only weakness, It's a tear for mankind."

THE CHRISTIAN'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (author unknown)

I am free from failure... I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

I am free from want... My God shall supply all my needs...by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

I am free from fear... God has not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

I am free from doubt God has given to every man the measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)

I am free from weakness... The Lord is the strength of my life. (Psalm 27:1)

I am free from the power of Satan... Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world. (I John 4:4)

I am free from defeat... God always causes me to triumph in Christ Jesus. (II Corinthians 2:14)

I am free from ignorance... Christ Jesus is made unto me wisdom from God. (I Corinthians 1:30)

I am free from sin... The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed me from all sin. (I John 1:7)

I am free from worry... I am to "cast all my cares upon Him." (I Peter 5:7)

I am free from condemnation... There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

We should be grateful.... This make us all grateful for what we have.

In September 1960, I woke up one morning with six hungry babies and just 75 cents in my pocket. Their father was gone. The boys ranged from three months to seven years; their sister was two. Their Dad had never been much more than a presence they feared. Whenever they heard his tires crunch on the gravel driveway they would scramble to hide under their beds. He did manage to leave 15 dollars a week to buy groceries. Now that he had decided to leave, there would be no more beatings, but no food either. If there was a welfare system in effect in southern Indiana at that time, I certainly knew nothing about it. I scrubbed the kids until they looked brand new and then put on my best homemade dress. I loaded them into the rusty old 51 Chevy and drove off to find a job. The seven of us went to every factory, store and restaurant in our small town. No luck. The kids stayed, crammed into the car and tried to be quiet while I tried to convince whomever would listen that I was willing to learn or do anything. I had to have a job. Still no luck. The last place we went to, just a few miles out of town, was an old Root Beer Barrel drive-in that had been converted to a truck stop. It was called the Big Wheel. An old lady named Granny owned the place and she peeked out of the window from time to time at all those kids. She needed someone on the graveyard shift, 11 at night until seven in the morning. She paid 65 cents an hour and I could start that night. I raced home and called the teenager down the street that baby-sat for people. I bargained with her to come and sleep on my sofa for a dollar a night. She could arrive with her pajamas on and the kids would already be asleep. This seemed like a good arrangement to her, so we made a deal. That night when the little ones and I knelt to say our prayers we all said our thanks for finding Mommy a job. And so I started at the Big Wheel. When I got home in the mornings I woke the baby-sitter up and sent her home with one dollar of my tip money--fully half of what I averaged every night. As the weeks went by, heating bills added another strain to my meager wage. The tires on the old Chevy had the consistency of penny balloons and began to leak. I had to fill them with air on the way to work and again every morning before I could go home. One bleak fall morning, I dragged myself to the car to go home and found four tires in the back seat. New tires! There was no note, no nothing, just those beautiful brand new tires. Had angels taken up residence in Indiana? I wondered. I made a deal with the owner of the local service station. In exchange for his mounting the new tires, I would clean up his office. I remember it took me a lot longer to scrub his floor than it did for him to do the tires. I was now working six nights instead of five and it still wasn't enough. Christmas was coming and I knew there would be no money for toys for the kids. I found a can of red paint and started repairing and painting some old toys. Then I hid them in the basement so there would be something for Santa to deliver on Christmas morning. Clothes were a worry too. I was sewing patches on top of patches on the boys pants and soon they would be too far gone to repair. On Christmas Eve the usual customers were drinking coffee in the Big Wheel. These were the truckers, Les, Frank, and Jim, and a state trooper named Joe. A few musicians were hanging around after a gig at the Legion and were dropping nickels in the pinball machine. The regulars all just sat around and talked through the wee hours of the morning and then left to get home before the sun came up. When it was time for me to go home at seven o'clock on Christmas morning I hurried to the car. I was hoping the kids wouldn't wake up before I managed to get home and get the presents from the basement and place them under the tree. (We had cut down a small cedar tree by the side of the road down by the dump.) It was still dark and I couldn't see much, but there appeared to be some dark shadows in the car--or was that just a trick of the light? Something certainly looked different, but it was hard to tell what. When I reached the car I peered warily into one of the side windows. Then my jaw dropped in amazement. My old battered Chevy was full-full to the top with boxes of all shapes and sizes. I quickly opened the driver's side door, scrambled inside and knelt in the front facing the back seat. Reaching back, I pulled off the lid of the top box. Inside was a whole case of little blue jeans, sizes 2-10! I looked inside another box: It was full of shirts to go with the jeans. Then I peeked inside some of the other boxes: There were candy and nuts and bananas and bags of groceries. There was an enormous ham for baking, and canned vegetables and potatoes. There was pudding and Jell-O and cookies, pie filling and flour. There was a whole bag of laundry supplies and cleaning items. And there were five toy trucks and one beautiful little doll. As I drove back through empty streets as the sun slowly rose on the most amazing Christmas Day of my life, I was sobbing with gratitude. And I will never forget the joy on the faces of my little ones that precious morning. Yes, there were angels in

Indiana that long-ago December. And they all hung out at the Big Wheel truck stop. I BELIEVE IN ANGELS! They live next door, around the corner, work in your office, patrol your neighborhood, call you at midnight to hear you laugh and listen to you cry, teach your children, and you see them everyday without even knowing it! Send this to someone you think is an angel!

How Moms Were Made By the time the Lord made mothers, he was into the sixth day working overtime. An Angel appeared and said "Why are you spending so much time on this one?" And the Lord answered and said, "Have you read the spec sheet on her? She has to be completely washable, but not plastic; have 200 movable parts, all replaceable; run on black coffee and leftovers; have a lap that can hold three children at one time and disappears when she stands up; have a kiss that can cure anything from a scraped knee to a broken heart; and have six pairs of hands." The Angel was astounded at the requirements for this one. "Six pairs of hands! No Way!" said the Angel. The Lord replied, "Oh, it's not the hands that are the problem. It's the three pairs of eyes that mothers must have!" "And that's on the standard model?" the Angel asked. The Lord nodded in agreement, "Yep, one pair of eyes are to see through the closed door as she asks her children what they are doing even though she already knows. Another pair in the back of her head are to see what she needs to know even though no one thinks she can. And the third pair are here in the front of her head. They are for looking at an errant child and saying that she understands and loves him or her without even saying a single word." The Angel tried to stop the Lord. "This is too much work for one day. Wait until tomorrow to finish." "But I can't!" the Lord protested, I am so close to finishing this creation that is so close to my own heart. She already heals herself when she is sick AND can feed a family of six on a pound of hamburger and can get a nine year old to stand in the shower." The Angel moved closer and touched the woman. "But you have made her so soft, Lord." "She is soft," the Lord agreed, "but I have also made her tough. You have no idea what she can endure or accomplish." "Will she be able to think?" asked the Angel. The Lord replied, "Not only will she be able to think, she will be able to reason, and negotiate." The Angel then noticed something and reached out and touched the woman's cheek. "Oops, it looks like you have a leak with this model. I told you that you were trying to put too much into this one." "That's not a leak," the Lord objected. "That's a tear!" "What's the tear for?" the Angel asked. The Lord said, "The tear is her way of expressing her joy, her sorrow, her disappointment, her pain, her loneliness, her grief, and her pride." The Angel was impressed. "You are a genius, Lord. You thought of everything for this one. You even created the tear!" The Lord looked at the Angel and smiled and said, "I'm afraid you are wrong again, my friend. I created the woman, but she created the tear!"

A True Story She was six years old when I first met her on the beach near where I live. I drive to this beach, a distance of three or four miles, whenever the world begins to close in on me. She was building sandcastle or something and looked up, her eyes as blue as the sea. "Hello," she said. I answered with a nod, not really in the mood to bother with a small child. "I'm building," she said. "I see that. What is it?" I asked, not caring. "Oh, I don't know, I just like the feel of sand." That sounds good, I thought, and slipped off my shoes. A sandpiper glided by. "That's a joy," the child said. "It's a what?" "It's a joy. My mama says sandpipers come to bring us joy." The bird went gliding down the beach. "Good-bye joy," I muttered to myself, "Hello pain," and turned to walk on. I was depressed; my life seemed completely out of balance. "What's your name?" She wouldn't give up. "Ruth," I answered. "I'm Ruth Peterson." "Mine's Wendy... I'm six." "Hi, Wendy." She giggled. "You're funny," she said. In spite of my gloom I laughed too and walked on. Her musical giggle followed me. Come again, Mrs. P," she called. "We'll have another happy day." The days and weeks that followed belong to others: a group of unruly Boy Scouts, PTA meetings, and ailing mother. The sun was shining one morning as I took my hands out of the dishwasher. "I need a sandpiper," I said to myself, gathering up my coat. The ever changing balm of the seashore awaited me. The breeze was chilly, but I strode along, trying to recapture the serenity I needed. I had forgotten the child and was startled when she appeared. "Hello, Mrs. P," she said. "Do you want to play?" "What did you have in mind?" I asked, with a twinge of annoyance. "I don't know, you say." "How about charades?" I asked sarcastically. The

tinkling laughter burst forth again. "I don't know what that is." "Then let's just walk." Looking at her, I noticed the delicate fairness of her face. "Where do you live?" I asked. "Over there." She pointed toward a row of summer cottages. Strange, I thought, in winter. "Where do you go to school?" She chattered little girl talk as we strolled up the beach, but my mind was on other things. When I left for home, Wendy said it had been a happy day. Feeling surprisingly better, I smiled at her and agreed. Three weeks later, I rushed to my beach in a state of near panic. I was in no mood to even greet Wendy. I thought I saw her mother on the porch and felt like demanding she keep her child at home. "Look, if you don't mind," I said crossly when Wendy caught up with me, "I'd rather be alone today." She seems unusually pale and out of breath. "Why?" she asked. I turned to her and shouted, "Because my mother died!" and thought, my God, why was I saying this to a little child? "Oh," she said quietly, "then this is a bad day." "Yes, and yesterday and the day before and oh, go away!"

"Did it hurt?" "Did what hurt?" I was exasperated with her, with myself. "When she died?" A month or so after that, when I next went to the beach, she wasn't there. Feeling guilty, ashamed and admitting to myself I missed her, I went up to the cottage after my walk and knocked at the door. A drawn looking young woman with honey colored hair opened the door. "Hello," I said. "I'm Ruth Peterson. I missed your little girl today and wondered where she was." "Oh yes, Mrs. Peterson, please come in. Wendy talked of you so much. I'm afraid I allowed her to bother you. If she was a nuisance, please, accept my apologies." "Not at all. She's a delightful child," I said, suddenly realizing that I meant it. "Where is she?" "Wendy died last week, Mrs. Peterson. She had leukemia. Maybe she didn't tell you." Struck dumb, I groped for a chair. My breath caught. "She loved this beach; so when she asked to come, we couldn't say no. She seemed so much better here and had a lot of what she called happy days. But the last few weeks she declined rapidly..." her voice faltered.

"She left something for you ... if only I can find it. Could you wait a moment while I look?" I nodded stupidly, my mind racing for something, anything, to say to this lovely young woman. She handed me a smeared envelope, with MRS. P printed in bold, childish letters. Inside was a drawing in bright crayon hues: a yellow beach, a blue sea, and a brown bird. Underneath was carefully printed: A SANDPIPER TO BRING YOU JOY. Tears welled up in my eyes, and a heart that had almost forgotten to love opened wide. I took Wendy's mother in my arms. "I'm so sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry," I muttered over and over, and we wept together. The precious little picture is framed now and hangs in my study. Six words one for each year of her life that speak to me of harmony, courage, undemanding love. A gift from a child with sea blue eyes and hair the color of sand who taught me the gift of love. NOTE: I hope you have a few Kleenex tissues in that box. The above is a true story sent out by Ruth Peterson. It serves as a reminder to all of us that we need to take time to enjoy living and life and each other. "The price of hating other human beings is loving oneself less." Life is so complicated, the hustle and bustle of everyday traumas, can make us lose focus about what is truly important or what is only a monetary setback or crisis. Today, be sure to give your love ones extra hugs, and by all means, take a moment...even if it is only ten seconds, and stop and smell the roses. This is for all of you not because I want good luck, but because you all have made an impact on my life in one way or another. Whether you're a new friend or an old one, you are still important to me. It may have somewhere in between. Thank you for everything, friends of mine...

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on each end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water in his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you." "Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?" "I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We are all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, the Lord will use our flaws to grace His Father's table. In God's great economy, nothing goes to waste.

So as we seek ways to minister together, and as God calls you to the tasks He has appointed for you, don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and allow Him to take advantage of them, and you, too, can be the cause of beauty in His pathway.

Go out boldly, knowing that in our weakness we find His strength, and that "In Him every one of God's promises is a Yes."

(AUTHOR UNKNOWN)

Fascinating

For all you scientists out there and for all the students who have a hard time convincing these people regarding the truth of the Bible... here's something that shows God's awesome creation and shows that He is still in control.

Did you know that the space program is busy proving that what has been called "myth" in the Bible is true? Mr. Harold Hill, President of the Curtis Engine Company in Baltimore Maryland and a consultant in the space program, relates the following development.

"I think one of the most amazing things that God has for us today happened recently to our astronauts and space scientists at Green Belt, Maryland. They were checking the position of the sun, moon and planets out in Space where they would be 100 years and 1000 years from now. We have to know this so we won't send a satellite, up and have it bump into something later on in its orbits. We have to lay out the orbits in terms of the life of the satellite, and where the planets will be so the whole thing will not bog down. They ran the computer measurement back and forth over the centuries and it came to a halt. The computer stopped and put up a red signal, which meant that there was something wrong either with the information fed into it, or with the results as compared to the standards. They called in the service department to check it out and they said, "what's wrong?" Well, they found there is a day missing in space in elapsed time. They scratched their heads and tore their hair. There was no answer.

Finally, a Christian man on the team said, "You know, one time I heard about the sun standing still. While they didn't believe him, they didn't have an answer either, so they said, "Show us". He got a Bible and went back to the book of Joshua where they found a pretty ridiculous statement for any one with "common sense." There they found the Lord saying to Joshua, "Fear them not, I have delivered them into thy hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee." Joshua was concerned because he was surrounded by the enemy and if darkness fell they would overpower them. So Joshua asked the Lord to make the sun stand still! That's right-"The sun stood still and the moon stayed---and hasted not to go down about a whole day!" (Joshua 10:12-13) The astronauts and scientists said, "There is the missing day!" They checked the computers going back into the time it was written and found it was close but not close enough. The elapsed time that was missing back in Joshua's day was 23 hours and 20 minutes-not a whole day. They read the Bible and there it was "about (approximately) a day" These little words in the Bible are important, but they were still in trouble because if you cannot account for 40 minutes you'll still be in trouble 1,000 years from now. Forty minutes had to be found because it can be multiplied many times over in orbits. As the Christian employee thought about it, he remembered somewhere in the Bible where it said the sun went BACKWARDS. The scientists told him he was out of his mind, but they got out the Book and read these words in 2 Kings that told of the following story; Hezekiah, on his deathbed, was visited by the prophet Isaiah who told him that he was not going to die. Hezekiah asked for a sign as proof. Isaiah said, "Do you want the sun to go ahead 10 degrees?" Hezekiah said "It is nothing for the sun to go ahead 10 degrees, but let the shadow return backward 10 degrees." Isaiah spoke to the Lord and the Lord brought the shadow ten degrees BACKWARD! Ten degrees is exactly 40 minutes! Twenty three hours and 20 minutes in Joshua, plus 40 minutes in second Kings made the missing day in the universe!"

Isn't it amazing?

References: Joshua 10:8 and 12,13 and 2 Kings 20:9-11.

Forward this to as many people who you believe would think this is equally as cool. Never be afraid to try something new.

Remember, amateurs built the ark.
Professionals built the Titanic.

Not a joke but touching

A FATHER'S STORY:

On July 22nd I was enroute to Washington, DC for a business trip. It was all so very ordinary, until we landed in Denver for a plane change. As I collected my belongings from the overhead bin, an announcement was made for Mr. Lloyd Glenn to see the United Customer Service Representative immediately. I thought nothing of it until I reached the door to leave the plane, and I heard a gentleman asking every male if they were Mr. Glenn. At this point I knew something was wrong and my heart sunk. When I got off the plane a solemn-faced young man came toward me and said, "Mr. Glenn, there is an emergency at your home. I do not know what the emergency is, or who is involved, but I will take you to the phone so you can call the hospital."

My heart was now pounding, but the will to be calm took over. Woodenly, I followed this stranger to the distant telephone where I called the number he gave me for he Mission Hospital. My call was put through to the trauma center where I learned that my three-year-old son had been trapped underneath the automatic garage door for several minutes, and that when my wife had found him he was dead. CPR had been performed by a neighbor, who is a doctor, and the paramedics had continued the treatment as Brian was transported to the hospital. By the time of my call, Brian was revived and they

believed he would live, but they did not know how much damage had been done to his brain, nor to his heart.

They explained that the door had completely closed on his little sternum right over his heart. He had been severely crushed. After speaking with the medical staff, my wife sounded worried but not hysterical, and I took comfort in her calmness.

The return flight seemed to last forever, but finally I arrived at the hospital six hours after the garage door had come down. When I walked into the intensive care unit, nothing could have prepared me to see my little son laying so still on a great big bed with tubes and monitors everywhere. He was on a respirator. I glanced at my wife who stood and tried to give me a reassuring smile. It all seemed like a terrible dream. I was filled-in with the details and given a guarded prognosis. Brian was going to live, and the preliminary tests indicated that his heart was OK, two miracles in and of themselves. But only time would tell if his brain received any damage. Throughout the seemingly endless hours, my wife was calm. She felt that Brian would eventually be all right. I hung on to her words and faith like a lifeline.

All that night and the next day Brian remained unconscious. It seemed like forever since I had left for my business trip the day before. Finally at two o'clock that afternoon, our son regained consciousness and sat up uttering the most beautiful words I have ever heard spoken. He said, "Daddy hold me" and he reached for me with his little arms.

[TEAR BREAK...smile] By the next day he was pronounced as having no neurological or physical deficits, and the story of his miraculous survival spread throughout the hospital. You cannot imagine we took Brian home, we felt a unique reverence for the life and love of our Heavenly Father that comes to those who brush death so closely.. In the days that followed there was a special spirit about our home. Our two older children were much closer to their little brother. My wife and I were much closer to each other, and all of us were very close as a whole family. Life took on a less stressful pace. Perspective seemed to be more focused, and balance much easier to gain and maintain. We felt deeply blessed. Our gratitude was truly profound.

The story is not over (smile)!

Almost a month later to the day of the accident, Brian awoke from his afternoon nap and said, "Sit down Mommy. I have something to tell you." At this time in his life, Brian usually spoke in small phrases, so to say a large sentence surprised my wife. She sat down with him on his bed, and he began his sacred and remarkable story. "Do you remember when I got stuck under the garage door? Well, it was so heavy and it hurt really bad. I called to you, but you couldn't hear me. I started to cry, but then it hurt too bad. And then the 'birdies' came. The birdies?" my wife asked puzzled. "Yes," he replied. "The birdies made a whooshing sound and flew into the garage. They took care of me." "They did?" "Yes," he said. "one of the birdies came and got you. She came to tell you I got stuck under the door." A sweet reverent feeling filled the room. The spirit was so strong and yet lighter than air. My wife realized that a three-year-old had no concept of death and spirits, so he was referring to the beings who came to him from beyond as "birdies" because they were up in the air like birds that fly. "What did the birdies look like?" she asked. Brian answered, "They were so beautiful. They were dressed in white, all white. Some of them had green and white. But some of them had on just white." "Did they say anything?" "Yes," he answered. "They told me the baby would be all right." "The baby?" my wife asked confused..Brian answered. "The baby laying on the garage floor." He went on, "You came out and opened the garage door and ran to the baby. You told the baby to stay and not leave." My wife nearly collapsed upon hearing this, for she had indeed gone and knelt beside Brian's body and seeing his crushed chest whispered, "Don't leave us Brian, please stay if you can." As she listened to Brian telling her the words she had spoken, she realized that the spirit had left his body and was looking

down from above on this little lifeless form. "Then what happened?" she asked.. "We went on a trip." he said, "Far, far away." He grew agitated trying to say the things he didn't seem to have the words for. My wife tried to calm and comfort him, and let him know it would be okay. He struggled with wanting to tell something that obviously was very important to him, but finding the words was difficult. "We flew so fast up in the air. They're so pretty Mommy," he added. "And there are lots and lots of birdies."

My wife was stunned. Into her mind the sweet comforting spirit enveloped her more soundly, but with an urgency she had never before known. Brian went on to tell her that the "birdies" had told him that he had to come back and tell everyone about the "birdies." He said they brought him back to the house and that a big fire truck, and an ambulance were there. A man was bringing the baby out on a white bed and he tried to tell the man that the baby would be okay, but the man couldn't hear him. He said the birdies told him he had to go with the ambulance, but they would be near him. He said they were so pretty and so peaceful, and he didn't want to come back. Then the bright light came. He said that the light was so bright and so warm, and he loved the bright light so much. Someone was in the bright light and put their arms around him, and told him, "I love you but you have to go back. you have to play baseball, and tell everyone about the birdies.

"Then the person in the bright light kissed him and waved bye-bye. Then whoosh, the big sound came and they went into the clouds. The story went on for an hour. He taught us that "birdies" were always with us, but we don't see them because we look with our eyes and we don't hear them because we listen with our ears. But they are always there, you can only see them in here (he put his hand over his heart). They whisper the things to help us to do what is right because they love us so much. Brian continued, stating, "I have a plan, Mommy. You have a plan. Daddy has a plan. Everyone has a plan. We must all live our plan and keep our promises. The birdies help us to do that cause they love us so much."

In the weeks that followed, he often came to us and told all, or part of it, again and again. Always the story remained the same. The details were never changed or out of order. A few times he added further bits of information and clarified the message he had already delivered. It never ceased to amaze us how he could tell such detail and speak beyond his ability when he talked about his birdies. Everywhere he went, he told strangers about the "birdies." Surprisingly, no one ever looked at him strangely when he did this. Rather, they always got a softened look on their face and smiled. Needless to say, we have not been the same ever since that day, and I pray we never will be.

An Angel To Watch over You Some people come into our lives and quickly go... Some people become friends and stay a while... leaving beautiful footprints on our hearts... and we are never quite the same because we have made a good friend!!

Yesterday is history.. Tomorrow a mystery.. Today is a gift.. That's why it's called the present! Live and savor every moment.....this is not a dress rehearsal!

He is the First and Last, the Beginning and the End!
He is the keeper of Creation and the Creator of all!
He is the Architect of the universe and
The Manager of all times.
He always was, He always is, and He always will be...
Unmoved, Unchanged, Undefeated, and never Undone!
He was bruised and brought healing!
He was pierced and eased pain!
He was persecuted and brought freedom!
He was dead and brought life!
He is risen and brings power!

He reigns and brings Peace!
The world can't understand him,
The armies can't defeat Him,
The schools can't explain Him, and
The leaders can't ignore Him.
Herod couldn't kill Him,
The Pharisees couldn't confuse Him, and
The people couldn't hold Him!
Nero couldn't crush Him,
Hitler couldn't silence Him,
The New Age can't replace Him, and
Donahue can't explain Him away!
He is light, love, longevity, and Lord.
He is goodness, Kindness, Gentleness, and God.
He is Holy, Righteous, mighty, powerful, and pure.
His ways are right,
His word is eternal,
His will is unchanging, and
His mind is on me.
He is my Redeemer,
He is my Savior,
He is my guide, and
He is my peace!
He is my Joy,
He is my comfort,
He is my Lord, and
He rules my life!
I serve Him because His bond is love,
His burden is light, and
His goal for me is abundant life.
I follow Him because He is the wisdom of the wise,
The power of the powerful,
The ancient of days, the ruler of rulers,
The leader of leaders, the overseer of the overcomers, and
The sovereign Lord of all that was and is and is to come.
And if that seems impressive to you, try this for size.
His goal is a relationship with ME!
He will never leave me,
Never forsake me,
Never mislead me,
Never forget me,
Never overlook me, and
Ever cancel my appointment in His appointment book!
When I fall, He lifts me up!
When I fail, He forgives!
When I am weak, He is strong!
When I am lost, He is the way!
When I am afraid, He is my courage!
When I stumble, He steadies me!
When I am hurt, He heals me!
When I am broken, He mends me!
When I am blind, He leads me!

When I am hungry, He feeds me!
When I face trials, He is with me!
When I face persecution, He shields me!
When I face problems, He comforts me!
When I face loss, He provides for me!
When I face Death, He carries me Home!
He is everything for everybody, everywhere,
Every time, and every way.
He is God, He is faithful.
I am His, and He is mine!
My Father in heaven can whip the father of this world.
So, if you're wondering why I feel so secure, understand this...
He said it and that settles it.
God is in control, I am on His side, and
That means all is well with my soul.
Everyday is a blessing for GOD Is!

PASS THIS ON IF YOU MEAN IT

I love the Lord and thank Him for all that he does in my life,
therefore, I passing this on. Yes I do love Jesus.
He is my source of existence and my Savior.
He keeps me functioning each and everyday.
Without Him, I will be nothing.
Without Him, I am nothing but with Him I can do all things.
Philippians 4:13

Your children are not your children

They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for it's self

They come through you but not of you

You may house their bodies but not their souls

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow

Which you can not visit, not even in your dreams

For life goes not backward nor carries with yesterday

This come comes from the TV show ?Judging Amy? CBS channel 2 February 13, 2001 9:00 PM.

In the following passage can you find the names of sixteen books of the Bible?

I once made a remark about the hidden books of the BIBLE. It was a lulu, kept people looking so hard for facts and for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially since the names of the books were not capitalized, but the truth finally struck home to numbers of readers. To others, it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you. YES, THERE WILL BE SOME REALLY EASY ONES TO SPOT. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to find one of them, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea so she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax now, for there are really sixteen books of the Bible in this story.

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Since the Pledge of Allegiance and The Lord's Prayer are not allowed in most public schools anymore because the word "God" is mentioned....a kid in Arizona wrote the following NEW School prayer.

Now I sit me down in school
Where praying is against the rule
For this great nation under God
Finds mention of Him very odd.

If Scripture now the class recites,
It violates the Bill of Rights.
And anytime my head I bow
Becomes a Federal matter now.
Our hair can be purple, orange or green,
That's no offense; it's a freedom scene.
The law is specific, the law is precise.
Prayers spoken aloud are a serious vice.

For praying in a public hall
Might offend someone with no faith at all.
In silence alone we must meditate,

God's name is prohibited by the state.

We're allowed to cuss and dress like freaks,
And pierce our noses, tongues and cheeks.
They may outlaw guns, but FIRST went the Bible.
To quote the Good Book makes me liable.

We can elect a pregnant Senior Queen,
And the 'unwed daddy,' our Senior King.
It's "inappropriate" to teach right from wrong,
We're taught that such "judgments" do not belong.

We can get our condoms and birth controls,
Study witchcraft, vampires and totem poles.
But the Ten Commandments are not allowed,
No word of God must reach this crowd.

It's scary here I must confess,
When chaos reigns, the school's a mess.
So, Lord, this silent plea I make:
Should I be shot; My soul please take!

Amen

PERFECT HEART

One day a young man was standing in the middle of the town proclaiming that he had the most beautiful heart in the whole valley. A large crowd gathered and they all admired his heart for it was perfect.

There was not a mark or a flaw in it. Yes, they all agreed it truly was the most beautiful heart they had ever seen. The young man was very proud and boasted more loudly about his beautiful heart.

Suddenly, an old man appeared at the front of the crowd and said, "Why, your heart is not nearly as beautiful as mine." The crowd and the young man looked at the old man's heart. It was beating strongly, but full of scars, It had places where pieces had been removed and other pieces put in, but they didn't fit quite right and there were several jagged edges. In fact, in some places there were deep gouges where whole pieces were missing. The people stared, how can he say his heart is more beautiful, they thought?

The young man looked at the old man's heart and saw its state and laughed.

"You must be joking," he said. "Compare your heart with mine, mine is perfect and yours is a mess of scars and tears."

"Yes," said the old man, "Yours is perfect looking but I would never trade with you. You see, every scar represents a person to whom I have given my love - I tear out a piece of my heart and give it to them, and often they give me a piece of their heart which fits into the empty place in my heart, but because the pieces aren't exact, I have some rough edges, which I cherish, because they remind me of the love we shared.

Sometimes I have given pieces of my heart away, and the other person hasn't returned a piece of her heart to me. These are the empty gouges; giving love is taking a chance. Although these gouges are

painful, they stay open, Reminding me of the love I have for these people too, and I hope someday they may return and fill the space I have waiting. So now do you see what true beauty is?"

The young man stood silently with tears running down his cheeks. He walked up to the old man, reached into his perfect young and beautiful heart, and ripped a piece out. He offered it to the old man with trembling hands. The old man took his offering, placed it in his heart and then took a piece from his old scarred heart and placed it in the wound in the young man's heart.

It fit, but not perfectly, as there were some jagged edges.

The young man looked at his heart, not perfect anymore but more beautiful than ever, since love from the old man's heart flowed into his. They embraced and walked away side by side.

How sad it must be to go through life with a whole heart.

Remember...

Work like you don't need the money. Love like you've never been hurt. Dance like nobody is watching.

MEMO FROM GOD

To: YOU
Date: TODAY
From: GOD - The Boss!
Subject: YOURSELF
Reference: LIFE

This is God. Today I will be handling All of your problems for you. I do Not need your help. So, have a nice day.

I love you.

GOD

P.S.

And, remember....

If life happens to deliver a situation to you that you can not handle, do Not attempt to resolve it yourself !! Kindly put it in the SFGTD (something for God to do) box. I will get to it in MY TIME. All situations will be resolved, but in My time, not yours.

P.S.S.

Once the matter is placed into the box, do not hold onto it by worrying about it. Instead, focus on all the wonderful things that are present in your life now.

If you find yourself stuck in traffic; Don't despair. There are people in this world for whom driving is an unheard of privilege.

Should you have a bad day at work; Think of the man who has been out of work for years.

Should you despair over a relationship gone bad; Think of the person who has never known what it's like to love and be loved in return.

Should you grieve the passing of another weekend; Think of the woman in dire straits, working twelve hours a day, seven days a week to feed her children.

Should your car break down, leaving you miles away from assistance; Think of the paraplegic who would love the opportunity to take that walk.

Should you notice a new gray hair in the mirror; Think of the cancer patient in chemo who wishes she had hair to examine.

Should you find yourself at a loss and pondering what is life all about, asking what is my purpose? Be thankful. There are those who didn't live long enough to get the opportunity.

Should you find yourself the victim of other people's bitterness, ignorance, smallness or insecurities; Remember, things could be worse. You could be one of them!

Should you decide to send this to a friend; Thank you, you may have touched their life in ways you will never know!

Now, you have a nice day,
God

Something to definitely think about.

To realize the value of ten years.
Ask a newly divorced couple.

To realize the value of four years.
Ask two, now single, high school sweethearts.

To realize the value of one year.
Ask a student who has failed a final exam.

To realize the value of nine months.
Ask a mother who gave birth to a still born.

To realize the value of one month.
Ask a mother who has given birth to a Premature baby.

To realize the value of one week.
Ask an editor of a weekly newspaper.

To realize the value of one hour.
Ask the lover who are waiting to meet.

To realize the value of one minute.
Ask a person who has missed the train, bus or plane.

To realize the value of second.
Ask a person who has survived an accident.

To realize the value of one millisecond.
Ask a person who has won a silver medal in the Olympics.

Time waits for no one. Treasure every moment you have. You will treasure it even more when you can share it with someone special.

The origin of these letters is unknown

Happiness in marriage is not something that just happens. A good marriage must be created. In the "Art of Marriage" the little things are the big things?

It is never being too old to hold hands.

It is remembering to say "I love you" at least once each day.

It is never going to sleep angry.

It is at no time taking the other one for granted. The courtship shouldn't end with the honeymoon, it should continue through all the years.

It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives; it is standing together facing the world.

It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.

It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the spirit of joy.

It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.

It is not expecting the husband to wear a halo or the wife to have the wings of an angel. It is not looking for perfection in each other. It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humor.

It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.

It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.

It is finding room for things of the spirit. It is a common search for the good and beautiful.

It is establishing a relationship in which the independence is equal, the dependence is mutual, and the obligation is reciprocal.

It is not only marrying the right partner but also being the partner.

It is discovering that marriage can be, at its best as expressed in the words that Mark Twain used in tribute to his wife: "Whenever she was, there was Eden."

May the beacon of love that was Jim and Jeanne Stephens illuminate your marriage?

Dr. Jeanne and Dr. Jim used this poem as they counseled soon-to-be-married couples in the "Art of Marriage." Jeanne and Jim are no longer with us but their 61 years of marriage were a beacon for all those seeking a loving and long-lasting relationship.

A MAN AND HIS DOG

A man and his dog were walking along a road. The man was enjoying the scenery, when it suddenly occurred to him that he was dead. He remembered dying, and that the dog had been dead for years. He wondered where the road was leading them.

After a while, they came to a high, white stone wall along one side of the road. It looked like fine marble. At the top of a long hill, it was broken by a tall arch that glowed in the sunlight. When he was standing before it, he saw a magnificent gate in the arch that looked like mother of pearl, and the street that led to the gate looked like pure gold.

He and the dog walked toward the gate, and as he got closer, he saw a man at a desk to one side. When he was close enough, he called out, "Excuse me, where are we?"

"This is Heaven, sir," the man answered.

"Wow! Would you happen to have some water?" the man asked.

"Of course, sir. Come right in, and I'll have some ice water brought right up." The man gestured, and the gate began to open. "Can my friend," gesturing toward his dog, "come in, too?" the traveler asked.

"I'm sorry, sir, but we don't accept pets.

"The man thought a moment and then turned back toward the road and continued the way he had been going.

After another long walk, and at the top of another long hill, he came to a dirt road which led through a farm gate that looked as if it had never been closed. There was no fence. As he approached the gate, he saw a man inside, leaning against a tree and reading a book.

"Excuse me!" he called to the reader. "Do you have any water?"

"Yeah, sure, there's a pump over there" The man pointed to a place that couldn't be seen from outside the gate. "Come on in."

"How about my friend here?" the traveler gestured to the dog.

"There should be a bowl by the pump." They went through the gate, and sure enough, there was an old fashioned hand pump with a bowl beside it.

The traveler filled the bowl and took a long drink himself, then he gave some to the dog. When they were full, he and the dog walked back toward the man who was standing by the tree waiting for them.

"What do you call this place?" the traveler asked. "This is Heaven," was the answer.

"Well, that's confusing," the traveler said. "The man down the road said that was Heaven, too."

"Oh, you mean the place with the gold street and pearly gates? Nope. That's Hell."

"Doesn't it make you mad for them to use your name like that?" "No. I can see how you might think so, but we're just happy that they screen out the folks who'll leave their best friends behind."

A Deeper Message: Sometimes, we wonder why friends keep forwarding jokes to us without writing a word, maybe this could explain:

"When you are very busy, but still want to keep in touch, guess what you do -- you forward jokes. When you have nothing to say, but still want to keep contact, you forward jokes. When you have something to say, but don't know what, and don't know how, you forward jokes."

"And to let you know that: you are still remembered, you are still important, you are still loved, you are still cared for, guess what you get? A forwarded joke from me."

"So my friend, next time if you get a joke, don't think that I have sent you just a joke, but that I have thought of you today and wanted to send you a smile."

HOW DID YOU LIVE YOUR DASH

I read of a man who stood to speak
At the funeral of a friend
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
From the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came her date of birth
And spoke the following date with tears,
But he said what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years, (1934 - 1998)

For that dash represents all the time
That she spent alive on earth...
And now only those who loved her
Know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own;
The cars...the house?the cash,
What matters is how we live and love
And how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard...
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left,
That can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough
To consider what's true and real,
And always try to understand
The way others people feel.

And be less quick to anger,
And show appreciation more
And love the people in our lives
Like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect,
And more often wear a smile.
Remembering that this special dash

Might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy's being read
With your life's actions to rehash...
Would you be proud of the things they say
About how you spent your dash?

God Speaking

The man whispered, "God, speak to me" And a meadowlark sang.
But the man did not hear.

So the man yelled "God, speak to me" And the thunder & lightning rolled across the sky.
But the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said, "God, let me see you." And a star shined brightly.
But the man did not see.

And, the man shouted, "God, show me a miracle" And a life was born.
But the man did not notice.

So, the man cried out in despair, "Touch me, God, and let me know you are here" Whereupon, God
reached down and touched the man.
But the man brushed the butterfly away and walked on.

I found this to be a great reminder that God is always around us in the little and simple things that we
take for granted. .even in our electronic age . . . so I would like to add one more: The man cried "God,
I need your help" . . . and an e-mail arrived reaching out with good news and encouragement.

But the man deleted it and continued crying..... The good news is that you are loved. Don't miss out on
a blessing because it isn't packaged the way that you expect.

This was sent out on September 5, 2001 only days before the world trade center destruction on
September 11, 2001. I hope that it made a difference to someone who was involved some how with the
disaster.

Something Nice

Many people will walk in and out of your life.
But only true friends will leave footprints in your heart.
To handle yourself, use your head;
To handle others, use your heart.

Anger is only one letter short of danger.
If someone betrays you once, it is his fault;
If he betrays you twice, it is your fault.

Great minds discuss ideas;
Average minds discuss events;
Small minds discuss people.

He, who loses money, loses much;

He, who loses a friend, loses much more;
He, who loses faith, loses all.

Beautiful young people are accidents of nature,

Learn from the mistakes of others.
You can't live long enough to make them all yourself.

Friends, you and me....
You brought another friend....
And then there were 3....
We started our group....
Our circle of friends....
There is no beginning or end....

Yesterday is history.
Tomorrow is mystery.
Today is a gift.

It's National Friendship Week.
Show your friends how much you care....
Send this to everyone you consider a FRIEND.
If it comes back to you, then you'll know you have a circle of friends.

Actual clippings from church newspapers

Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa, will be speaking tonight at Calvary Church. Come tonight and hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.

The cost for attending the Fasting and Prayer conference includes meals.

Our youth basketball team is back in action Wednesday at 8 PM in the recreation hall. Come out and watch us kill Christ the King.

Miss Charlene Mason sang, "I will not pass this way again," giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands.

Next Sunday is the family hayride and bonfire at the Fowlers'. Bring your own hot dogs and guns. Everyone come for a fun time.

The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been canceled due to a conflict.

The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on the Water." The sermon tonight: "Searching for Jesus."

Next Thursday there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.

Barbara remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Jack's sermons.

The Rector will preach his farewell message after which the choir will sing "Break Forth into Joy."

Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community. Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say "hell" to someone who doesn't care much about you.

Don't let worry kill you - let the Church help.

Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What is Hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.

Eight new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

The senior choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoy sinning to join the choir.

Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles, and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person(s) you want remembered.

The church will host an evening of fine dining, superb entertainment, and gracious hostility.

Potluck supper Sunday at 5:00 P.M. Prayer and medication to follow.

The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

This evening at 7 P.M. there will be a hymn sing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

The pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday morning.

Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday. Please use the back door.

The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7 PM. The Congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

Weight Watchers will meet at 7 PM at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.

A pome that Myrtle Peterson sent us after the death of her sister Grace Baur on November 29, 2001.

When I come to the end of the day
And the sun has set for me
I want no rites in a gloom-filled room.

Why cry for a soul set free?
Miss me a little, but not too long
And not with your head bowed low.
Remember the love we one shared?
Miss me, but let me go.

For this is a journey we all must take
And each must go alone.
It's all a part of the Maker's plan
A step on the road to home.
When you are lonely and sick at heart
Go to the friends we know
And bury your sorrows in doing good deeds?
Miss me, but let me go.

Perhaps you'll enjoy this one.

1. Once over the hill, you pick up speed.
2. I love cooking with wine. Sometimes I even put it in the food.
3. If it weren't for STRESS, I'd have no energy at all.
4. Whatever hits the fan will not be evenly distributed.
5. Everyone has a photographic memory. Some just don't have film.
6. I know God won't give me more than I can handle. I just wish He didn't trust me so much.
7. Dogs have owners. Cats have staff.
8. We cannot change the direction of the wind... but we can adjust our sails.
9. Some days are a total waste of makeup.
10. Do you believe in love at first sight ... or should I walk by you again?
11. If the shoe fits.....buy it in every color.
12. If you're too open minded, your brains will fall out.
13. Age is a very high price to pay for maturity.
14. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
15. Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity.
16. If you must choose between two evils, pick the one you've never tried before.
17. My idea of housework is to sweep the room with a glance.
18. Not one shred of evidence supports the notion that life is serious.
19. It is easier to get forgiveness than permission.
20. For every action, there is an equal and opposite government program.
21. If you look like your passport picture, you probably need the trip.
22. Bills travel through the mail at twice the speed of checks.
23. A conscience is what hurts when all your other parts feel so good.
24. Men are from earth. Women are from earth. Deal with it.
25. A balanced diet is a cookie in each hand.
26. Middle age is when broadness of the mind and narrowness of the waist change places.
27. Opportunities always look bigger going than coming.
28. Junk is something you've kept for years and throw away three weeks before you need it.
29. There is always one more imbecile than you counted on.
30. Experience is a wonderful thing. It enables you to recognize a mistake when you make it again.
31. By the time you can make ends meet, they move the ends.
32. Someone who thinks logically, provides a nice contrast to the real world.
33. Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself.

Sermon from Pastor James Bauman Saint John's February 24, 2002

There was an article in the newspapers sometime back about a British husband who walked out on a 38-year marriage because he could not stand his wife's obsessively moving the furniture around their home. John Turner filed for divorce, complaining that his wife Pauline shifted chairs, tables, the television and anything not fixed to the walls. Every single day of their married life.

"Moving furniture about was something I did and I always will do," Pauline stated. "I suppose everybody has their little obsession." She added

It's rare to read about someone who is addicted to change. Most people are more likely to be resistant to change and would easily sympathize with husband John's discomfort to coming home each day to a changed house. Many people find change unsettling and even scary.

Just think of changes that our society has experienced since 1990. Some have been exhilarating like the fall of communism, or the mapping to human genes, or the wiring of our world with the Internet. But other changes have been unnerving such as the horrifying scourge of terrorism, or the rapid spread of AIDS and mad cow disease. And last fall Stephen Hawking warned that computers are developing so rapidly that they could take over the world.

We are told that the current generation of people living right now has witnessed the participated in more change that may to previous generations combined. At the present, human knowledge DOUBLES EVERY two years. It is estimated that knowledge will double every seventy-three days by the year 2020!

So half of what we learn today will either change or be irrelevant in five to seven years. One resource noted that there was more information produced in the 30 years between 1965 and 1995 that was produced in the entire 5,000 year period from 3,000 BC to 1965. Will we be able to continue to adapt and come with the rapid change?

Where does our Christian faith fit into all the changes? What happens to the ancient Creeds? Is Jesus Christ who said, "I am the truth" able to live through all the changes? Is the Church of Christ too stuck in the past to survive, or, instead of sinking, can it be like the ark of Noah riding on the waves of the flood that's changing everything?

People often think that the Church should be a bulwark standing firm against changes in an otherwise frightening world of constant change? So in many congregations there is often strong resistance to the smallest kind of change. Of course there are often others in the very same congregation whose temperament it is to welcome changes, some of whom seem ready to run and embrace every change that see coming down the pike.

Now it is clear to most of us that change itself is generally a neutral thing. We know that some changes are for the better, but that is also true that some changes are for the worse. Change as such is not necessarily good or bad.

It is true that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. But at the core of scriptural Christian teaching there are surprising resources to cope with change.

Let's look for a moment at the story of Abram or Abraham, as he would later be known. His story is at the very beginning of salvation history as it is recorded in the bible for us.

And what is God's first word to Abram? "Change!" is willing now, in your seventies, to leave a very prosperous city, a center of commerce. Take all your possessions with you and go to a land that I will

show you. I will make of you a great nation even though you are childless now. I will bless you and make your name great. Through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Talk about rapid change! And what was Abram's response? So Abram departed, and the Lord had spoken to him.

No argument. No deal making. No foot dragging. Abram trusted and obeyed and changed everything for himself and consequently for the whole world. So rapid change is not foreign to the scriptural understanding of faith.

I dreamed I had an interview with God

"Come in," God said.

"So you would like to interview Me!"

If you have the time," I said

God smiled and said,

"My time is eternity and is enough to do everything. What questions do you have in mind to ask me?"

"What surprises you most about mankind?"

God answered,

"That they get bored of being children, are in a rush to grow up, and then long to be children again."

"That they love their wealth to make money and they lose their money to restore their wealth."

"That by thinking anxiously about the future they forget the present, such that they love neither the present nor the future."

"That they love as if they will never die and they live as if they had never lived."

God's hands took mine and we were silent for a while.

I asked him "As a parent, what are some of life's lessons you want your children to learn?"

God replied with a smile.

"To learn that they cannot make anyone love them. What they can do is to let themselves be loved."

"To learn that what is most valuable is not what they have in their lives, but who they have in their lives."

"To learn that it is not good to compare themselves to others. All will be judged individually on their own merits not as a group on a comparison basis!"

I then asked him, "As a parent, what are some of life's lessons you want your children to learn?"

God replied with a smile.

?To learn that a rich person is not the one who has the most, but is one who needs the least.?

?To learn that it only takes a few seconds to open profound wounds in persons we love, and that it takes many years to heal them.?

?To learn to forgive by practicing forgiveness.?

?To learn that there are person who love them dearly, but simply do not know how to express or show their feelings.?

?To learn that money can buy everything but happiness.?

?To learn that two people can look at the same thing and see it totally different.?

?To learn that a true friend is someone who knows everything about them, and likes them anyway.?

?To learn that it is not always enough that they be forgiven by others buy that they have to forgive themselves.?

I sat there for a while enjoying the moment, I thanked Him for His time and for all that He has down for me and my family, He replied, ?Anytime. I?m here 24 hours, a day. All you have to do is ask for me, and I?ll answer.?

?I?ll always be there.?

If God had a refrigerator

If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it.

If He had a wallet, your photo would be in it.

He sends you flowers every spring.

He sends you a sunrise every morning.

Whenever you want to talk, He listens.

He can live anywhere in the universe, but He chose... your heart.

Face it friend, He is crazy about you!

God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, sun without rain, but He did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears, and light for the way.

God is a little like?

God is a little like General Electric He lights your path.

God is a little like Bayer Aspirin He works wonders.

God is a little like Hallmark Cards He cared enough to send the very best

God is a little like Tide He gets out the stains that others leave behind.

God is a little like Alberto VO-5 Hair Spray He holds through all kinds of weather. He works wonders.

God is a little like Dial Soap Aren?t you glad you know him? Don?t you which everyone did?

God is a little like Sears He has everything.

God is a little like Scotch Tape YOU can?t see him but you know He?s there!

God is a little like The Copper Top Battery Nothing can outlast Him.

God is a little like American Express Don?t leave home without Him.

I believe-

That no matter how good a friend is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while and you must forgive them for that.

I believe-

That you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life.

I believe-

That it's taking me a long time to become the person I want to be.

I believe-

That you should always leave loved ones with loving words. It may be the last time you see them.

I believe-

We have too many smart people in the world and too few good people.

I believe-

That you can keep going long after you can't.

I believe-

That we are responsible for what we do, no matter how we feel.

I believe-

That either you control your attitude or it controls you.

I believe-

That regardless of how hot and steamy a relationship is at first, the passion fades and there had better be something else to take its place.

I believe-

That heroes are the people who do what has to be done when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.

I believe-

That money is a lousy way of keeping score.

I believe-

We should talk softly to our children, regardless of how angry we are with them.

I believe-

That my best friend and I can do anything or nothing and have the best time.

I believe-

That sometimes the people you expect to kick you when you're down, will be the ones to help you get back up.

I believe-

That sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.

I believe-

That just because someone doesn't love you the way you want them to doesn't mean they don't love you with all they have.

I believe-

That maturity has more to do with what types of experiences you've had and what you've learned from them and less to do with how many birthdays you've celebrated.

I believe-

That it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others. Sometimes you have to learn to forgive yourself.

I believe-

That no matter how bad your heart is broken, the world doesn't stop for your grief.

I believe-

That our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.

I believe-

That just because two people argue, it doesn't mean they don't love each other. And just because they don't argue, it doesn't mean they do.

I believe-

That you shouldn't be so eager to find out a secret. It could change your life forever.

I believe-

Those two people can look at the exact same thing and see something totally different.

I believe-

That your life can be changed in a matter of hours by people who don't even know you.

I believe-

That evens when you think you have no more to give, when a friend cries out to you, you will find the strength to help.

I believe-

Those credentials on the wall do not make you a decent human being.

I believe-

That the people you care about most in life are taken from you too soon.

Thought you might enjoy this tongue in cheek Bible trivia.

1.Q. What kind of man was Boaz before he married?

A. Ruthless.

2.Q. What do they call pastors in Germany?

A. German shepherds

3.Q. Who was the greatest financier in the bible?

A. Noah. He was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.

4.Q. What was the greatest female financier in the bible?

A. Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

5.Q. What kind of motor vehicles are in the bible?

A. 1. Jehovah drove Adam and eve out of the garden in a fury

2. David's triumph was heard throughout the land.

3. Honda, because the apostles were all in one accord.

6.Q. Who was the greatest comedian in the bible?

A. Samson, he brought the house down.

7.Q. What excuse did Adam give to his children as to why he no longer lived in Eden?

A. Your mother ate us out of house and home.

8.Q. Which servant of god was the most flagrant lawbreaker in the bible?

A. Moses. He broke all 10 commandments at once.

9.Q. Which area of Palestine was especially wealthy?

> a. The area around Jordan. The banks were always overflowing.

10.Q. Who is the greatest baby sitter mentioned in the bible?

A. David, he rocked Goliath to a very deep sleep.

11.Q. Which bible character had no parents?

A. Joshua, son of nun.

One Sunday morning during service, a 2,000 member congregation was surprised to see two men enter, both covered from head to toe in black and carrying submachine guns. One of the men proclaimed, "Anyone willing to take a bullet for Christ, remain where you are."

Immediately, the choir fled, the deacons fled, and most of the congregation fled. Out of the 2,000 there only remained around 20. The man who had spoken took off his hood, looked at the preacher and said "Okay Pastor, I got rid of all the hypocrites. Now you may begin your service. Have a nice day!" And the two men turned and walked out.

Too deep not to pass on...

Funny how simple it is for people to trash God ... and then wonder why the world is in the condition it is today. Funny how we believe what the newspapers say, but question what the Bible says. Funny how everyone wants to go to heaven provided they do not have to believe, think, say, or do anything the Bible says. Funny or is it scary? Funny how someone can say "I believe in God" but still follow Satan (who, by the way, also "believes" in God).

Funny how you can send a thousand 'jokes' through e-mail and they spread like wildfire, but when you start sending messages regarding the Lord, people think twice about sharing. Funny how the lewd, crude, vulgar and obscene pass freely through cyberspace, but the public discussion of Jesus is suppressed in the school and work place. Funny, isn't it? Funny how someone can be so fired up for Christ on Sunday, but be an invisible Christian the rest of the week. Are you laughing? Funny how when you go to forward this message, you will not send it to many on your address list because you're not sure what they believe, or what they will think of you for sending it to them. Funny how I can be more worried about what other people think of me than what God thinks of me.

Are you thinking? Will you share this with people you care about? Or not? I picked you~

My instructions were to send this to people that I wanted God to bless and I picked you. Please Send to People you want to Bless, if you want too.

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 at least 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. 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 much space for 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?

I asked the Lord to bless you As I prayed for you today. To guide you and protect you as you go along your way..... His love is always with you, His promises are true, And when we give Him all our cares, You know He will see us through.

Our God is an Awesome God!!

So when the road you're traveling on seems difficult at best, just remember I'm praying and God will do the rest.

Exodus 12:37 (NRSV) The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.

This verse is the bases on how many people left Egypt during the exodus. The word for thousand also might have meant tent. In those days only men counted and women and children were extras. Also by the age 40 you were getting over the hill and would be ready for grandchildren, remember the old ones did not go by stayed in Egypt.

A basketball in Michael Jordan's hands is worth about \$33 million.

It depends on whose hands it's in...

A baseball in my hands is worth about \$6.

A baseball in Mark McGuire's hands is worth 19 million.

It depends on whose hands it's in...

A golf club is almost useless in my hands.

A golf club in Tiger Wood's hands is a 4 Major Golf Championship.

It depends on whose hands it's in...

A rod in my hands will keep away a wild animal.
A rod in Moses' hands will part the mighty sea.

It depends on whose hands it's in...

A sling shot in my hands is a toy.
A slingshot in David's hands is a mighty weapon.

It depends on whose hands it's in...

Two fish and five loaves in my hands is a couple of fish sandwiches.
Two fish and five loaves in Jesus' hands will feed thousands.

It depends on whose hands they're in...

Nails in my hands might produce a bird house.
Nails in Christ Jesus' hands will produce salvation for the entire world.

It depends on whose hands they're in...

As you see now it depends on whose hands it's in...

So put your concerns, your worries, your fears, your hopes, your dreams,
your families and your relationships in God's Hands because... "It depends
on whose hands they're in."

This e-mail is now in your hands, will you share it?

Whoever came up with this one must have had some divine guidance, I was impressed!
Although things are not perfect
Because of trial or pain
Continue in thanksgiving
Do not begin to blame
Even when the times are hard
Fierce winds are bound to blow
God is forever able
Hold on to what you know
Imagine life without His love
Joy would cease to be
Keep thanking Him for all the things
Love imparts to thee
Move out of "Camp Complaining"
No weapon that is known
On earth can yield the power

Praise can do alone
Quit looking at the future
Redeem the time at hand
Start every day with worship
To "thank" is a command
Until we see Him coming
Victorious in the sky
We'll run the race with gratitude
Exalting God most high
Yes, there'll be good times and yes some will be bad, but...
Zion waits in glory...where none are ever sad!

"I AM Too blessed to be stressed!" The shortest distance between a problem and a solution is the distance between your knees and the floor.
The one who kneels to the Lord can stand up to anything. Love and peace be with you forever, Amen.

THE LORD'S BASEBALL GAME

Freddy and the Lord stood by to observe a baseball game. The Lord's team was playing Satan's team.

The Lord's team was at bat, the score was tied zero to zero, and it was the bottom of the 9th inning with two outs. They continued to watch as a batter stepped up to the plate whose name was Love. Love swung at the first pitch and hit a single, because Love never fails.

The next batter was named Faith, who also got a single because Faith works with Love.

The next batter up was named Godly Wisdom. Satan wound up and threw the first pitch. Godly Wisdom looked it over and let it pass: Ball one. Three more pitches and Godly Wisdom walked, because Godly Wisdom never swings at what Satan throws.

The bases were now loaded. The Lord then turned to Freddy and told him He was now going to bring in His star player. Up to the plate stepped Grace. Freddy said, "He sure doesn't look like much!"

Satan's whole team relaxed when they saw Grace. Thinking he had won the game, Satan wound up and fired his first pitch. To the shock of everyone, Grace hit the ball harder than anyone had ever seen. But Satan was not worried; his center fielder let very few get by. He went up for the ball, but it went right through his glove, hit him on the head and sent him crashing on the ground; then it continued over the fence for a home run!

The Lord's team won!

The Lord then asked Freddy if he knew why Love, Faith, and Godly Wisdom could get on base but could not win the game. Freddy answered that he did not know why.

The Lord explained, "If your love, faith, and wisdom had won the game you would think you had done it by yourself. Love, Faith and Wisdom will get you on base but only My Grace can get you Home.

Psalm 84:11, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

Jesus Test: This is an easy test, you score 100 or zero. It's your choice. If you aren't ashamed to do this, please follow the directions. Jesus said, "If you are ashamed of me, I will be ashamed of you before my Father." Not ashamed Pass this on. only if you mean it.

Yes, I do Love God. He is my source of existence. He keeps me functioning each and everyday. Without Him, I am nothing, but with Him can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Phil 4:13

This is the simplest test . . if you Love God, and are not ashamed of all the marvelous things he has done for you.

A woman was asked by a coworker, "What is it like to be a Christian?"

The coworker replied, "It is like being a pumpkin. God picks you from the patch, brings you in, and washes all the dirt off of you. Then he cuts off the top and scoops out all the yucky stuff. He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, greed, etc., and then He carves you a new smiling face and puts His light inside of you to shine for all the world to see."

This was passed on to me from another pumpkin. Now, it is your turn to pass it to a pumpkin. I liked this enough to send it to all the pumpkins in my patch.

One day in the Garden of Eden, Eve calls out to God. "Lord, I have a problem."

"What's the problem, Eve?"

I know that you created me and provided this beautiful garden and all of these wonderful animals, as well as that hilarious comedic snake, but I'm just just not happy."

"And why is that Eve?"

Lord, I am lonely, and I'm sick to death of apples."

"Well, Eve, in that case, I have a solution. I shall create a man for you".

"Man? What is that Lord?"

A flawed creature, with many bad traits. He'll lie, cheat and be vain; all in all, he'll give you a hard time. But he'll be bigger, faster and will like to hunt and kill things. He will look silly when he is aroused, but since you've been complaining, I'll create him in such way that he will satisfy your physical needs. He will be witless and will revel in childish things like fighting and kicking a ball about. He won't be too smart, so he will also need your advice to think properly."

"Sounds great," says Eve, with ironically raised eyebrows, "but what's the catch Lord?"

"Well, you can have him on one condition."

"And what's that Lord?"

"As I said, he'll be proud, arrogant and self-admiring..... so you'll have to let him believe that I made him first.....

And it will have to be our little secret..

....You know, woman to woman."

UNFOLDING THE ROSE A young, new preacher was walking with an older, more seasoned preacher in the garden one day. Feeling a bit insecure about what God had for him to do, he was asking the older preacher for some advice. The older preacher walked up to a rose bush and handed the young preacher a rosebud and told him to open it without tearing off any petals. The young preacher looked in disbelief at the older preacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the will of God for his life and ministry. But because of his great respect for the older preacher, he proceeded to try to unfold the rose, while keeping every petal intact... It wasn't long before he realized how impossible this was to do. Noticing the younger preacher's inability to unfold the rosebud without tearing it, the older preacher began to recite the following poem...

It is only a tiny rosebud, A flower of God's design;
But I cannot unfold the petals
With these clumsy hands of mine.
The secret of unfolding flowers
Is not known to such as I.
GOD opens this flower so sweetly, Then in my hands they die.
If I cannot unfold a rosebud, This flower of God's design,
Then how can I have the wisdom To unfold this life of mine?
So I'll trust in Him for leading Each moment of my day.
I will look to Him for His guidance Each step of the pilgrim way.
The pathway that lies before me Only my Heavenly Father knows.
I'll trust Him to unfold the moments, Just as He unfolds the rose.

Topic: Name

Sub-Topic: Of Jesus

Title: He is ...

To the artist He is the One Altogether Lovely.
To the architect He is the Chief Cornerstone.
To the astronomer He is the Sun of Righteousness.
To the baker He is the Living Bread.
To the banker He is the Hidden Treasure.
To the biologist He is the Life.
To the carpenter He is the Sure Foundation.
To the doctor He is the Great Physician.
To the educator He is the Great Teacher.
To the farmer He is the Sower and Lord of the Harvest.
To the florist He is the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon.
To the geologist He is the Rock of Ages.
To the horticulturist He is the True Vine.
To the judge He is the Righteous Judge.
To the juror He is the True Witness.
To the jeweler He is the Pearl of Great Price.
To the editor He is the Good Tidings of Great Joy.
To the oculist He is the Light of the Eyes.
To the philosopher He is the Wisdom of God.

To the Printer He is the True Type.
To the servant He is the Good Master.
To the student He is the Incarnate Truth.
To the toiler He is the Giver of Rest.
To the Sinner He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.
To the Christian, He is the Son of the Living God, the Savior, the Redeemer and Lord!
See: Matt 16:16; John 1:29

There is a story about three small-town preachers who were discussing ways of getting rid of bats in their bell towers. The Presbyterian minister said, "I tried shooting them, but all I succeeded in doing was putting holes in the roof."

The Lutheran minister said, "I tried something very different. I trapped them and took them 25 miles outside of town. (This was the ecologically correct minister.) But in less than 24 hours, they were all back!"

Then the Episcopal minister spoke up. "I got rid of every bat," he said. "None are left."

"How in the world did you accomplish that?" the others queried.

"It was easy," came the reply. "First I baptized them. Then I confirmed them. Then I asked them to support the church with their prayers, their presence, their gifts, and their service, and I gave them a box of offering envelopes. And I haven't seen them since!"

Sometimes I think that many churches feel that way about stewardship. We have a hard time talking about it. It's uncomfortable.

How many Christians does it take to change a light bulb?

Charismatic : Only 1

- Hands are already in the air.

Pentecostal : 10

- One to change the bulb, and nine to pray against the spirit of darkness.

Presbyterians : None

- Lights will go on and off at predestined times.

Roman Catholic : None

- Candles only.

Baptists : At least 15.

- One to change the light bulb, three committees to approve the change, and 11 to decide who brings the potato salad and fried chicken.

Episcopalians: 3

- One to call the electrician, one to mix the drinks and one to talk about how much better the old one was.

Mormons : 5

- One man to change the bulb, and four wives to tell him how to do it.

Unitarians :

- We choose not to make a statement either in favor of or against the need for a light bulb. However, if in your own journey you have found that light bulbs work for you, you are invited to write a poem or compose a modern dance about your light bulb for the next Sunday service, in which we will explore a number of light bulb traditions, including incandescent, fluorescent, 3-way, long-life and tinted, all of which are equally valid paths to luminescence.

Methodists :

- Undetermined. Whether your light is bright, dull, or completely out, you are loved. You can be a light bulb, turnip bulb, or tulip bulb. Bring a bulb of your choice to the Sunday lighting service and a covered dish to pass.

Nazarene : 6

- One woman to replace the bulb while five men review church lighting policy.

Lutherans: ! None

- Lutherans don't believe in change.

Amish :

- What's a light bulb?

Why the Ten Commandments were given to the Jews

God went to the Germans and said, "I have Commandments for you that will make your lives better."

And the Germans asked, "What are Commandments?"

And the Lord said, "They are rules for living."

"Can you give us an example?"

"Thou shalt not kill."

"Not kill? We're not interested."

So He went to the Italians and said, "I have Commandments."

And the Italians wanted an example, and the Lord said, "Thou shalt not steal."

"Not steal? We're not interested."

He went to the French and said, "I have Commandments."

The French wanted an example and the Lord said, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife."

"Not covet my neighbor's wife? We're not interested."

He went to the Jews and said, "I have Commandments." "Commandments?" they said, "how much are they?"

"They're free."

"We'll take 10."

From Utah Joker, Jill Adler, comes this little-known Biblical history.
Enjoy, Jokers. Jules

Who started Christmas?

This morning I heard a story on the radio of a woman who was out Christmas shopping with her two children.

After many hours of looking at row after row of toys and everything else imaginable.

And after hours of hearing both her children asking for everything they saw on those many shelves, she finally made it to the elevator with her two kids.

She was feeling what so many of us feel during the holiday season time of the year.

Overwhelming pressure to go to every party, every housewarming, taste all the holiday food and treats, getting that perfect gift for every single person on our shopping list, making sure we don't forget anyone on our card list, and the pressure of making sure we respond to everyone who sent us a card. Finally the elevator doors opened and there was already a crowd in the car.

She pushed her way into the car and dragged her two kids in with her and all the bags of stuff.

When the doors closed she couldn't take it anymore and stated, "Whoever started this whole Christmas thing should be found, strung up and shot."

From the back of the car everyone heard a quiet calm voice respond, "Don't worry we already crucified him."

For the rest of the trip down the elevator it was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop.

Don't forget this year to keep the One who started this whole Christmas thing in your every thought, deed, purchase, and word.

If we all did it, just think of how different this whole world would be.

AMEN.....

Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus Editorial Page, New York Sun, 1897

We take pleasure in answering thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of The Sun:

I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, "If you see it in The Sun, it's so." Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus? Virginia O'Hanlon

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a sceptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge. Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a sceptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The external light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus? Thank God he lives and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!!!

From The People's Almanac, pp. 1358-9.

Francis P. Church's editorial, "Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus" was an immediate sensation, and became one of the most famous editorials ever written. It first appeared in the The New York Sun in 1897, almost a hundred years ago, and was reprinted annually until 1949 when the paper went out of business.

Thirty-six years after her letter was printed, Virginia O'Hanlon recalled the events that prompted her letter:

"Quite naturally I believed in Santa Claus, for he had never disappointed me. But when less fortunate little boys and girls said there wasn't any Santa Claus, I was filled with doubts. I asked my father, and he was a little evasive on the subject.

"It was a habit in our family that whenever any doubts came up as to how to pronounce a word or some question of historical fact was in doubt, we wrote to the Question and Answer column in The Sun. Father would always say, 'If you see it in the The Sun, it's so,' and that settled the matter.

" 'Well, I'm just going to write The Sun and find out the real truth,' I said to father. "He said, 'Go ahead, Virginia. I'm sure The Sun will give you the right answer, as it always does.' " And so Virginia sat down and wrote her parents' favorite newspaper.

Her letter found its way into the hands of a veteran editor, Francis P. Church. Son of a Baptist minister, Church had covered the Civil War for The New York Times and had worked on the The New York Sun for 20 years, more recently as an anonymous editorial writer. Church, a sardonic man, had for his personal motto, "Endeavour to clear your mind of cant." When controversial subjects had to be tackled on the editorial page, especially those dealing with theology, the assignments were usually given to Church. Now, he had in his hands a little girl's letter on a most controversial matter, and he was burdened with the responsibility of answering it.

"Is there a Santa Claus?" the childish scrawl in the letter asked. At once, Church knew that there was no avoiding the question. He must answer, and he must answer truthfully. And so he turned to his desk, and he began his reply which was to become one of the most memorable editorials in newspaper history.

Church married shortly after the editorial appeared. He died in April, 1906, leaving no children.

Virginia O'Hanlon went on to graduate from Hunter College with a Bachelor of Arts degree at age 21. The following year she received her Master's from Columbia, and in 1912 she began teaching in the New York City school system, later becoming a principal. After 47 years, she retired as an educator. Throughout her life she received a steady stream of mail about her Santa Claus letter, and to each reply she attached an attractive printed copy of the Church editorial. Virginia O'Hanlon Douglas died on May 13, 1971, at the age of 81, in a nursing home in Valatie, N.Y.

Yes, Virginia, There Is A Savior
By Debra Marie Ferguson

This season brings out all the carolers singing
The plastic Kris Kringles, the reindeer bells jingling
The pine scented snow in the aerosol cans
The gift wrap, the ribbon, and Christmas tree stands

But, does anyone ponder what all this is worth?
When we've all but practically wiped out His birth?
We're blinded by Santas and stockings and elves
The garland, the tinsel, and toys on the shelves

We're decking the halls, the walls and the trees
Our kids write to Santa, and hope...he is pleased?

Being good all year round because....Santa sees all?
Making Saint Nick the Savior, and Jesus so small

Let all who forget, now think on these things
The price that He paid versus what Santa brings
Jesus said, let the little ones come unto me
But first thing Christmas morning, they run for the tree!

If all the worlds Christians would just dare to start
Telling children Saint Nick was a man with a heart
Full of love for all people, and love for the Lord
That's what made him admired and greatly adored!

But after he died, well, we know all the rest
They dug up his memory and changed his address
Created an image that never would die
One that made children behave and not cry

One that had power to get them to bed
With visions of Christmas rewards in their head
They're told to remember that Santa keeps track!
Incentives for Santa to bring a big sack!

Whoever dreamed up all these things I've no doubt
Took great pains to make sure that they left Jesus out!
No, we can't blame a child for what they've been taught
Though its something each parent should give special thought

That Christmas would mean more than reindeer and gifts
And the same goes for Easter Eggs, bunnies and Chicks
If at Easter and Christmas, we told the true story
Stopped breaking his heart and gave God all the glory

The most wonderful present a parent can give?
Is to share with their children that Jesus did live
That He's not just a fable, a storybook lie
He came to give life, and for that He would die

The most precious of gifts, that a parent receives?
Is the moment they're sure, that their child believes
That three short days later he rose from the dead
And He's coming again, because that's what He said!

So let all the believers now gather to sing
Happy Birthday to Jesus, the King of All Kings!
And be freed from the bonds of traditional behavior
And start telling Virginia, yes...., there IS a Savior!

Pass this on to the teachers you know. It has a wonderful reminder for them. THE PERFUME A story for all you teachers (and ex-teachers) out there....this has a good message.

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 his whole 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." Warm someone's heart today. pass this along. Just try to make a difference in someone's life today? tomorrow? just "do it". Random acts of kindness, I think they call it?

Home Rules

Always be honest

Proverbs 12:22

Count your blessings

Psalms 34:1-3

Bear each other's burdens

Galatians 6:2

Forgive and forget

Micah 7:18

Be kind and tender hearted

Ephesians 4:32

Comfort one another

1 Thessalonians 4:18

Keep your promises

Romans 4:21

Be supportive of one another

Acts 20:35

Be true to each other

Revelations 15:3

Look after each other

Deuteronomy 15:11

Treat each other

like you treat your friends

Matthew 7:12

But most important

Love One Another

Deeply from the heart

1 Peter 1:22

From the movie "Christmas lilies of the field?"

Reframe

Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen;

See the baby

Wrapped in a manger

On Christmas morning

R

See him in the temple

Talking with the elders

Who marveled at his wisdom?

R

Down at the Jordon
Where John was baptizing
And saving all sinners
R

Marching into Jerusalem
Over palm branches
In prompt and splendor
R

See him in the garden
Praying to his father
In deepest sorrow
R

Lead before Pilot
Then they crucified him
But he rose on Easter
R

Halleluiah
He died to save us
And lives for ever
R

From the UCC hymnal #161

Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen;

O see the little baby
Lying in a manger
On Christmas morning.
R

See Jesus in the temple
Talking to the elders,
How they all marveled!
R

See Jesus at the seashore
Preaching to the people,
Healing all the sick ones!
R

See Jesus on the cross
Bearing all my sins
In bitter agony!
R

Yes Jesus died to save us,
Rose on Easter morning,

And lives for ever!

R

We're singing alleluia!

Jesus is my Savior,

Who lives for ever!

R