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Buckets and Rainbows

“What’re we going to eat? How long before they shut off the utilities and foreclose?”

The number of people job hunting today is escalating with no light at the end of the tunnel. By contrast I think of the day not long after I got my first two-wheeled bike. Oh was it a gem. I bragged on it for weeks.

It must have been about 3 weeks after I got my bike that my buddy Thomas and I made very special plans for the next rainbow we saw. Hardly had the rain stopped as we put our plan into operation. We each had a modest sized plastic bucket hanging from our bikes as we located the direction of the expected rainbow. Off we both rode certain that we’d be back in a couple hours with our buckets filled from the rainbow’s pot-o-gold.

Thomas and I hadn’t yet reached our teen years but were smart enough to know the importance of buckets - whether you have a job or not. See - pockets are for nickels, frogs, and Captain Midnight decoder rings. But anyone worth their salt has to have a bucket and know how to use it.

Buckets hold water to put out fires, carry milk from the barn to make butter and ice cream. Blockhead the mule gets fed his grain from a bucket and my dad carried his dinner in a bucket with a lid - that is before his company closed down.

A fancy-painted coal bucket sits in the corner of my room just aching to be of some use. I never told them so, but the stress and troubled discussions of mom and dad were spilling over onto me. Often I’d lie on my bed staring at the things in my room asking them how they could help me. Almost like a magnet my eyes often came to rest on the empty useless coal bucket.

I still don’t know what started me doing it, but I began writing my worries and troubles on little pieces of paper and dropped them in the coal bucket. After a few times I began thinking of the fancy-painted coal bucket as a mailbox to God. In some peculiar way I felt relieved as I’d put one burden of my heart after another in the bucket.

As God’s mailbox got fuller, I tried to think of a way to turn the contents into fuel oil or flour for mama’s pantry. Oh how I wished I could be God for just one minute. Just long enough to create bone deep smiles on mama and daddy. Just long enough to show them some of the neat things God can do that I learned about in Vacation Bible School. Just long enough to show them the real light at the end of the tunnel of employment despair is actually a Person with open arms and a bucket of promises far more precious than anything that our imagination can find at the rainbow’s end.

One day while mama was cleaning my room she knocked over the coal bucket. In picking up the strips of paper with my messages, she began reading them. I never never wanted to make mama cry but she sure did that day.

Not quite a week later our family had a party - with cake and ice cream cold enough to freeze your eyeballs. It was the best party ‘cuz mama and daddy held hands with big smiles on their faces. Daddy said, “Son - every party has gifts. Your mother and I want you to know that YOU are a gift. You’re a precious gift God has given to this family.” You never saw a huggin’ session like that and you never will.

That night I removed all the contents of my coal bucket and told all the objects in my room: “Wow! God really does answer His mail!” (End of Story)

Holy-wood Spotlight

The living room got quiet as a graveyard as the lights were switched off and the two families waited for the spotlight to come on. This was the first time the Bandiff family from across the street were invited over to Timmon's home for a bit of fun and popcorn with roasted banana chips. Like a lot of things at the Timmon's house you have to keep an open mind.

It's becoming a tradition of sorts that every other Saturday evening the Timmon family would have their own version of Holy-wood Magazine where everyone would join in. Even Baby Tess would see the lights go out and settle down for what she thought was sleepy time. That is until the spot light was switched on and Jake Timmon spoke into a wooden spoon held like a microphone.

With lots of enthusiasm Jake welcomed his two-family 'audience' and promised some fun and funny stuff to enjoy along with the banana popcorn. He said, "Our theme tonight has to do with jobs and searching. So let's give a big hand to our distinguished visitor Professor Epstein as he struggles to solve another one of mankind's most perplexing problems. Baby Tess almost launched her pacifier as the applause startled her bassinette world.

The spotlight focused on Jake's son Jimmy dressed in sloppy fashion writing odd words, numbers, and symbols on a large piece of cardboard as though it were a blackboard. With a stressed expression he scratched his head and wrote a bit more on his cardboard blackboard. In sort of an old person's tone he then said, "I just can't figure it out. People so often say they don't read their Bibles because they don't have time. Well, when they are between jobs they STILL don't seem to have time to read their Bibles each day. Go figure. I sure don't have that answer." The spotlight switched off for a few seconds for the audience to think about what they'd just heard.

The spotlight came on showing Darla Timmon seated in a chair wearing a man's dress hat that didn't seem to go with her teenage pigtails. Looking through some twisty-tie eyeglass frames she peered over the top of a newspaper she was holding that included a pencil for circling contact information. In a voice lower than her own she loudly spoke as though talking to a spouse in another room, "Hey hon, I just can't find any jobs in this newspaper I know how to do. And it seems each week there are even fewer listed. I hate this not having busy things to do with my time and tools."

Right on queue little Marty ran up to his pretend daddy (That's Darla) but didn't stop fast enough and crashed into the newspaper that had the whole audience laughing at his sincere efforts. He said his lines, "Darla, I mean daddy, if you want a job I think you need to look at another piece of paper. " "Well where is this other piece of paper about help wanted?" In a cocky tone Marty said, "Well I saw Pastor Haines point to it on the bullet board at church. I don't understand it but he said doing those jobs at church gives ya great big benny-fats." As Marty snuggled into his pretend daddy's lap he asked, "Are benny-fats good for ya?" Just before the spotlight went out Darla said, "Oh yes. Those benny-fats, I mean benefits, are just exactly what our family needs."

With each of the following spotlight episodes Ron Bandiff felt his heart release the hopeless stressful feelings that had begun the day his company terminated him. The benny-fats that he so badly needed went far beyond healthcare, retirement, and self-esteem.

With the lights on, the women and children spoiled Baby Tess as Ron Bandiff and Jake Timmon went into a quiet room. With the door still open just a crack, it was possible to see the two fathers sitting at the table with an open Bible between them. Ron was learning there is no other book with more profound lessons and promises for job searches and service than God's Infallible Word. As you uncover and claim those gems, share your time and tools at God's house.

You be faithful and take care of His house through stormy times and He will definitely do the same. Keep your spotlight on Him and His dear Son. (End of Story)

A Person Named Jealous

"DAD! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? Don't tear my house down! I thought you loved me!" I'd just returned home from playing with my 5th grade classmate Jerry that lives about a block away. He's my truly greatest friend and I about live over at his house. My grades are about average and don't think I do stuff that anger my folks, at least not to cause my 'house' to be torn down. I didn't notice at first, but he wasn't destroying the house, just taking it apart.

Mom calls it the 'house' I made but it's really more of a fort. It used to be my absolute favorite spot on Earth 'cuz I could spend real thinking time there without interruption. That was all before Jerry moved down the street with all his cool toys and ideas. I never really sorted it out but I like Jerry the most since he thinks like I do, he has the same questions I do. For sure he never tells me not to get my clothes dirty like mom does.

When I first saw dad tearing my fort down, I thought he was having one of those black-thoughts moments that began the week after his company told him they were moving the business to China. Him and mama both began looking like they never got more than a half-a-night's sleep. The most troubling to me was that dad seemed like he was always looking for the answer why God was treating him like dirt.

The next day my bike came to a stop next to our garage as I noticed dad was sitting on the stack of lumber that used to be my fort. I quietly parked my bike and without words sat next to dad. I didn't know if this was a black-thoughts moment but I knew I needed to show dad that even though I didn't understand why, I wanted to show him he was my dad. He was and is the only dad I have.

We both sat there watching the clouds inch by trying to make sense of it all. In a strange way the fort though all taken apart was still a thinking spot, now for both of us. Still without words my hand tenderly took hold of the tired hand that had fixed my bike chain and so many other things in my world that had come apart. That scarred hand squeezed back still without words.

I couldn't have put it into words, but I realized something I could never have learned from Jerry and his ideas. I decided then and there that being allowed to hold onto a strong hand able to fix anything in my world is far more valuable than any thinking spot, cool toys, or the imaginations of others.

Dad spoke first with a question for me. "Son. Do you know what jealousy is?" "Dad, I think I do. I've been jealous of all the cool toys Jerry has, that I don't have. Is that what you mean?"

"Well... sort of. Jealousy is a part of the feelings we have when someone we love very deeply prefers far more to be with others. Jealousy is a big reason why I dismantled your 'house'; your fort. Along with loosing my job I felt I'd lost your respect and love for your mother and me. Oh sure, I could've grounded you and forced you to stay home, but that's no way for either of us to show our love for the other."

Two days later dad had a meeting with Bro. Harb at church. Bro. Harb is not really a preacher or missionary, but he has a very strong burden for folks that have job questions and lots of black-thought moments. Other children in our church noticed such a change in their parents that they started lovingly calling him Bro. Heart.

Monday I got back from the grocery with bread for mom and parked my bike. Dad came out of the garage with his toolbox wearing his grubby clothes. "Hey son! I need your help." His tone of voice was bright and cheery. It was like he learned he'd just got a great job. I gave mom the bread and followed dad out toward my old fort.

As we walked, he said, "We're gonna rebuild your house even better and stronger than before. And then we're gonna do some real, I mean REAL, power thinking inside." I didn't know how to take all this 'cuz dad never took this much time with me except when I misbehaved.

My thinking spot came together with a father and son efforts and expectant ideas for expansion.

As we climbed inside my thinking spot (actually, OUR thinking spot) dad spoke first. "Son. We talked some time ago about jealousy. Do you remember? I told you it was the feelings we have when someone we love very deeply prefers far more to be with others. Well... Bro. Harb showed me that Jealous is actually a person's name. It's one of the very important names of God. The reason is that God loves each and every one of us with many gifts to prove it."

"The most precious gift to us is His very own Son Jesus Christ. We daddies get so busy with our jobs and getting the bills paid we put Jesus on the back burner, and do just what we want in life. Bro. Heart showed me verse after verse of God's gifts to daddies, mommies, and children also. Son. Do you remember when you took hold of my hand sitting on this dismantled fort? Well. I recognized I needed to take hold of God's hand since He alone can fix anything in my world."

"Son. I've been talking to mother that maybe God has dismantled my job for a time so I can learn that I've not been holding onto His hand each day, like I should. Bro. Heart calls it the nail-scarred hand that builds worlds, futures, and joyful provisions even when the skies aren't filled with cotton-candy clouds."

"Son. Turn yourself around and let me tell you more about the home builder named JEALOUS." (End of Story)

My 'Killer' Boss

Yikes! My boss is trying to kill me one nerve at a time and I don't understand why! I've looked at my job description many times and I can't figure out how I upset him. Why does my boss hate me so? If only I could get him to realize that employment alternatives here in our community are fast being shipped to far away people who are willing to work for little more than daily food.

On top of that things are really becoming stressed at home also. I need to find some way to show my family that work relationships are disintegrating almost daily. As I pull up the bedcovers each night I stare at the ceiling thinking parts of my family are out to destroy me also.

When the alarm clock wakes me in the morning I know it'll be the beginning of the next round of duking it out with my heart that keeps saying to me, "Oh, what's the use? There can't be any positive outcome of all this daily stress, sweat, sadness, and sure-to-come doom."

Sunday morning church worship has me struggling with every muscle, to hold back visible tears. I want to have a one-on-one with my pastor as he tells me over and over that Jesus wants my joy to be full. He even quotes several verses to prove it. **WHAT JOY? I DON'T HAVE ANY! *Not even a little smidgen!*** "Pastor what planet are you living on?" I want to ask him.

He asks us to open our bibles to his next reference and I leave mine closed on the pew beside me. I just don't have the heart to follow a pastor that doesn't understand me and my boss. But I listen just to be respectful. "Ladies and gentlemen let's all turn to Psalms 23 - probably the most quoted scripture for troubled hearts." The whole congregation read the words in unison while I tried to quote as much of it as I could remember.

I listened to audible phrases like: "I shall not want", "beside the still waters", "fear no evil", "they comfort me", "thou preparest a table", "my cup runneth over". There was no doubt that at the first quiet seconds the person in front of me would hear my heart pounding so loud, they'd invite me to the altar for prayer.

The message continued with hand gestures as pastor told us of the little shepherd boy that slew a bear, a lion, and even a giant on the way to becoming a king of God's beloved nation Israel. I stared at the floor wanting to hide my shame as I listened to the description of David's 'killer boss' King Saul. Over and over I heard of thwarted efforts to kill David even though he was always trying to do his best.

Like an ugly vessel needing remade, my heart learned about David's own son Absalom feverishly trying to kill his own father, David. I couldn't take any more. Even before the invitation music began, I quietly walked forward and knelt at the altar. I didn't care what anyone else thought about me. Somehow I wanted to have an immediate conversation with David and ask him how he handled it. I was starved for some meaning of it all. I don't think God likes to inflict pain on His children. He doesn't do it for His pleasure, does He?

Still at the altar I heard the piano begin to play softly and the pastor told everyone the answer from God's Word. "Folks, the reason David could write precious encouraging truths in troubled times was because he didn't focus on his earthly boss but on his Heavenly Boss. He obeyed his earthly boss, King Saul, knowing that King Saul's boss is God: the creator and ruler of the entire universe."

Allow your heart to accept the love and lordship of the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and Boss of Bosses. Each day serve your leaders with the strength, love, and forgiveness born from above. Many people owe their salvation in part to seeing the lasting joy in others, as they commit each day's events to the Boss with the nail-scarred hands.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. (End of Story)

Fifteen Second Keyboard

[Theme: Poor computing habits usually escalate.]

“What a nightmare!” thought Marv, as he woke up. Even while washing and dressing, he kept seeing that awful nightmarish picture of his computer keyboard with its big 15 second stopwatch. In his dream, the stopwatch actually turned off his computer. What a terrible thing to do to a person—confine his keyboard time to 15 seconds. As the camp staff person in charge of the Bouldering Wall Event, the only way he would be able to squeeze in more keyboarding time was during his lunch hour, and on his break time too.

Then there was Mickey. He was learning a lot of important things about climbing on the Bouldering Wall, and other neat stuff that can be done on a computer. That enthusiastic 8-year-old had taken a real shine to Marv too. He was regularly visiting Marv just before going to his handcraft class. And as if that weren't enough, now Mickey had begun touching base with Marv just after Marv's break.

But Marv had found an Internet website on which he could actually control a real robot, and was having more fun with it every day. But the clock keyboard in his dream kept coming to his mind when there was no reason for it. Thursday, Marv overstayed his lunchtime so he could get the robot to pick up an egg. He figured the few extra minutes wouldn't harm anybody. On Friday, he stayed just a bit longer as he found a technique to pick up the egg without breaking it. That afternoon's break was stretched by yet more minutes as Marv made the online robot do his thing another time.

When Marv got back to his Bouldering Wall station, Mickey wasn't there. Marv's mind began to dwell more and more on his robot successes. That evening, the camp director invited Marv to have a bottle of soda pop with him, away from distractions. It seems that Dave had intercepted a note written by Mickey to Marv.

The spelling and grammar were bad, but both men could see from the note that Mickey had parents who were progressively shoving him out of their busy world, leaving him to fend for himself. He had spent every lunch and afternoon break with Marv, and was gaining in the confidence that he had found a true friend. At least, their friendship had started that way.

The most troubling thing about the intercepted note was that Mickey thought it was his own fault that Marv was spending less and less time with him, and doing so without explanation. No reprimand from Dave could have hurt Marv more than learning of Mickey's disappointment in him, and his thinking that Marv didn't really care about 8-year olds.

Now, Marv certainly doesn't believe in visions and such, but he knew he was going to find some way to “put a clock on his keyboard”. Marv began looking at the others he worked with and who knew him. Maybe he was progressively squeezing them out of his life too. It is one of Satan's tricks to diminish a Christian's testimony toward others by using the attraction of computers. The attraction to computers is not sin in itself. What you and I need to do, though, is to use that attraction as a witnessing tool to teach others Who gave us computers and the gift of salvation He has also given us. (End of Story)

Three Boys

Frozen with fear Yaknel couldn't move a muscle or they'd soon be discovered!

The already overcrowded city was receiving more travelers each minute with many many more to come. Yaknel and his buddy Ben found all this to their liking. Helping with baggage, carrying water, etc. gave them enough coins to fend off hunger for one more day.

As night approached an uncomfortable chill set in and made the teenage boys realize they were in the wrong part of the city to take advantage of their "home" of broken pottery and clay chunks in the north part of the dump.

Taking a shortcut between a restaurant and a primitive animal shelter, Yaknel and Ben heard the strange cry of a baby. The cry was strange only because the sound came not from the restaurant, but from the animal shelter. This turned the boys instantly into detectives of a big case to solve.

In a few moments, being extra quiet, the boys were crouched behind a mound of hay. If you knew the boys for very long you could see Ben was the industrious provider, while Yaknel was the bold protector of the pair. However, in this situation not even Yaknel had the nerve to peek out and survey the situation; both had to settle for audible clues.

The increased shivering of the boys was interrupted only by additional commotion from the center of the stable. Only later was it determined this commotion was visiting shepherds that had found the baby with the leading of an angel. Ben and Yaknel thought it sounded like the shepherds were kneeling and worshipping the baby.

Time passed as the boys strained to hear more of this strange event.

Then the worst happened! The boys heard steps coming toward the place where they were hiding. Frozen with fear Yaknel couldn't move a muscle though the steps were getting closer and they'd soon be discovered!

They crouched as small as they could and covered their eyes with one hand and their head with the other. As the steps seemed to stop right next to Yaknel he became almost too scared about his living through the next 10 seconds of his life to shake.

You've had situations in your life that developed into something entirely different than what you'd expected... right? Well, just then Yaknel heard right in his ear a very loud **ba-a-a-a**. And just as astonishing, a moment later the lamb curled up on the hay, cozy between Ben and Yaknel.

Each boy asked himself what the connection might be of a baby born among animals and this threat that became friend. The boys never slept better.

No matter if its being led by an angel or just sharing a warm wool coat for a winter's night; joy and blessings come to those who seek the Child with a repentant heart. (End of Story)

A 50 Gallon What?!

That's the nuttiest list I've ever seen, thought Al. The note next to his breakfast bowl said Mom and Dad had to get right over to Aunt Clara's this morning, so he would have to have his older sister Barb provide transportation for his errands. Saturday's nutty looking list noted:

1. Get an inexpensive light bulb from the hardware store and paint it pink with spray paint from the garage.
2. Buy 200 sturdy plastic spoons from grocery.
3. Get the borrowed outboard motor from the sports store (Mr. Hanson) with its charged battery. Be very careful not to tear the wrapping paper because the motor has been sterilized.
4. Confirm with the freezer plant that two clean 55 gallon drums will be available by next Friday.

Right from the very start, Al wondered if some of the items might be wrong. As he and Barb started working on the list, they both tried to figure out how all this was supposed to fit together. The only strange event coming up that they knew about was next Saturday's Splatter Light Youth Rally. If it's anything like the last rally, it should be a real blast!

Each time Al checked off an item on the list, he'd wonder if Mom and Dad had written down the wrong things. Oh, well!

There were only two things anybody could find out about the surprise rally: who the featured speaker was to be--- a light bulb changer, of all people. So what's he going to do... show everyone how to change a pink light bulb? Barb also found out that one of the other teens was to bring three cookie sheets of squiggly gelatin. This is going to be a really weird rally!

The next Saturday, the rally started outside with the stickiest battle you ever saw. The spoons became the catapults for the blocks of gelatin – boys against the girls. Then everyone sat on a clean spot on the grass in front of some statue with a big tarpaulin draped over it.

The Christian "light bulb changer", Dave Phillips, came out with the pink light bulb in his hand. He described his job to the kids. Many people would think his job to be an unimportant one... that is, until he described where it was. The airport has lots of lights and bulbs to maintain, but the one at the top of the beacon tower is the most important. He told of several foggy instances when pilots of small airplanes staked their lives upon the output of that one light bulb... Dave's light bulb...to get them onto the runway and safety. Dave explained how many times other people had been an inspiration to him and helped him get his life "onto the right runway". He told about Jesus Christ and how He is our guiding light to direct us to salvation and a God-honoring life through His shed blood on the Cross.

Al's sister, Barb was listening very closely to the message of salvation and assurance. She admitted to herself that the assurance of salvation in her life was uncertain. Her feelings about decisions in her life left her guessing many times.

Al saw Barb go forward during Dave's invitation to get things nailed down for sure.

While Barb and others were being counseled in another area, the "statue" was unveiled. There stood two steel drums, one on top of the other. Painted on the front of them were the words, "50 Gallon Milk Shake". At the very top of the drums was the ELECTRIC outboard motor which Al and Barb had picked up that morning. Many large blocks of ice cream were dropped into the top of the shake while milk was added. Then the motor was turned on and began the transformation of the ice cream and milk into milk shake. On the very bottom of the outboard motor was a fin designed to keep weeds out of the propeller. Tonight it was used to poke holes in the blocks of ice cream. No one is sure of this, but the fellows holding the motor would lift it just a little too high sometimes, and the propeller would break the surface and make the biggest fantail of shake you ever saw, splattering two hundred kids.

Later Barb told Al about the verse she'd learned about. "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God*". 1John 5:13. No second-guessing, no second opinion needed, and it's right there in black and white, forever. (End of Story)

Ain't Done Yet!

"I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN HOLD OUT!" was Patty's heart cry. But each time before, her missionary eyes would look into those 16 pairs of dark little eyes still begging for more of heaven's light for hope and purpose. There was nothing else on this planet that Patty Neese wanted to do more than sit on the breezy hillside with the children around her and share the majesty of God's provision and passion.

Her place of ministry was a small Pacific island about half way between Hawaii and Australia. Patty has been laboring with love to the hungry families for over two years. The grown-ups are just now starting to talk about building a palm tree school that Miss Neese can also use as a church. The weather has been more than rough on the people, the electric generator, and Patty's only communication link with the outside world – her laptop.

It just seemed that her hopes were doomed one day at a time. Just recently one of Christ's questions from the cross was becoming her's also, "My God my God why has thou forsaken me?" She couldn't count the number of times she'd examined her life, present day attitudes, and actions looking for that unconfessed sin that had so terribly dishonored God to discard her mission efforts.

The island's electric generator was started and ran for about an hour as was customary three times a week. As the microwave communications link was being turned on, Patty Neese prayed with every ounce of self that God would show her what was wrong... what more she could sacrifice to continue the vital ministry. Her Bible was still open as she had just read again the verse that seemed to apply to all the billions of people on the earth except her and the little island in a big ocean...

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

Wondering if her laptop was going to last much longer in all this salty humidity she opened the cover. Patty then turned it on to check her email almost as a last resort, to feed her own soul. As she began removing all the spam messages that cost her precious time before the generator was turned off, she saw a message from someone she didn't know. The subject line all in capital letters seemed to shout, "GOD AIN'T DONE YET!"

Patty's printer ink had long since ran out so she couldn't print this precious message or anything else. The message went something like this:

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You don't know me but I live in a little place in that isn't even listed on any of Nevada state maps. We've got enough wind and sand all around us it seems like we're on another planet. I have no idea where I got your email address from but it just seemed to light up on my computer like God wanted me to email you. Me and Rascal (that's my seeing eye dog, sleeping under my bedroom desk) want to obey God when He says we should tell others about Him, so we're doin' it now. My daddy got a gadget for my computer that I plug my earphones into. When I move my cursor around on the computer screen, the earphones tell me what the words and numbers are, around the cursor arrow. The earphones will say the words green, red, yellow, golden and others. These words don't mean much to me 'cuz I was born blind. Daddy whispered to me one night that mama cried for a month when I was born. Mama thought God was whippin' her since I can't see. My computer has a Bible in it and I can read it every day that way. I know you're busy doing important things so I'll just share with you a favorite verse of me and Rascal. I don't know if this message will get to you but at least I can tell Jesus I done what He said to do.

Signed, Benny and Rascal.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Ephesians 3:20

(End of Story)

An E in Class

The hand of every student in the class was waving enthusiastically at me with eyes lit like r rockets. Standing before the class, I had just asked who of them liked computers. I went on to show them how they could make a worthless computer keyboard, with some of its keys missing, beautiful in God's eyes. I had two students come forward and have them alternately pick a key and use the letter on a keycap to identify an important fact about Jesus.

Samuel said, "E could stand for Everybody. And that's who Jesus loves." Daren said, "D could remind us of Jesus' death. He died for all our sins. This class of FIRST graders got more excited about the game with every key. They saw a fun way to use computers, even broken ones, to share their faith. Doing this they bring divine beauty to something the world thinks is useless. Most every computer part can be given this beauty in God's

God's Word teaches the database structure in many places. A small one with a twist is found in Mark 8:19, 20. The columns are [Food], [Fed], and [Fragments]. Computer programmers know of one of the reasons why Jesus only quizzed His students about the fragments.

The next step is to show them other wonders of God's Word, as up to date as tomorrow's newspaper, especially God's plan for their eternity. Never consider God's provisions untimely. He made time. He can stop or back it up any time He wishes. ~

Using computer parts as metaphors in carrying out the Great Commission is the first of two rich relationships not as yet tapped by the young and old. This is the MINISTRIES relationship. Later, before a classroom of adults I suggested that dishonorable computing is the natural result until we begin teaching the bountiful computing principles in God's precious Word. Their eyes lit up like I had just said the Bible mentions rocket ships. .

I then asked them, "What does ALL mean?" I added, "To help with your definition, I'll use it in a sentence.'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.'"

The second relationship is MASTERIES. Here we learn to optimize our computing skills using non-technical principles taught in scripture.

The remainder of the class time the adult students discovered the many computing principles sorely needed by students of all ages in this information age. The pastor/principal of this Christian school could not have been more proud of this God-given textbook whose ragged yellow pages never grow old.

I held up the receipt I was handed the last time I had a meal in my favorite fast food restaurant. It said, "3 pc. Dinner, + breadstick, - hush-puppies, + bake potato - French fries." With no difficulty the class figured out what had been on my tray and what had not. The same logic is understood by replacing each plus sign with the word AND. Each minus sign should also be replaced with the word NOT.

We use the very same symbols when doing advanced searches at the public library and Internet searches like in Yahoo etc. In the mid-1800's George Boole identified what we now call Boolean logic. (Or so he thought.) Turn to a portion of scripture most often skipped over as useless text. Now remember the "ALL scripture is profitable...?"

In Leviticus 11:2 we see the menu of clean animals for the Jewish nation. The next four verses give examples of unclean animals using so-called "Boolean logic". With a highlighter identify the ANDs and the NOTs in the verses. Show your friends how you can put plus signs in place of the ANDs while replacing the NOTs with minus signs.

Another computing principle found in scripture has an exciting twist.

Most everyone is familiar with the fancy lists that computers use. They are called databases. We use a database list every time we look up a phone number. Each record is in the same sequence; [last name], [first name] etc. (End of Story)

What An Aroma !!

“JUDITH - I JUST HAD TO COME OVER AND SEE YOU,” said Marian. Continuing with, “It’s bugging me to pieces; especially since your husband Simon doesn’t have leprosy anymore. It seems like more and more unusual things have been happening over here.”

Judith smiled at her easily excited neighbor from a few houses down. Her mind raced over the recent events that had revived and refreshed her home. Miss ‘Excitement’ continued with, “Judith, maybe you’re not paying attention to what’s going on, but most of the neighborhood’s talking about this house – YOUR HOUSE!”

Marian then added, “After she visited you Friday, Deborah told me, she was walking back home and noticed her clothes had picked up so much of that mysterious fragrance in your house. I guess she was afraid her husband would accuse her of spending some grocery money on perfume...”

Judith put up her hands in a STOP fashion, and said, “Marian, before you pop a cork, sit down and try my new date bread recipe and I believe I can explain.” Even before the whole story had ended, both wives were wiping away the tears.

As Marian was walking back home at a very slow pace, she kept hearing Judith’s words over and over... “All we did was invite Jesus in and share with Him what we had...” Marian held several strands of her hair out in front of her. She was sort of fingering them; trying to cover part of her face. Marian didn’t want the children playing in the street to ask her why the tears were still coming down.

Marian looked at her feet slowly take each step toward home as she thought through Judith’s description of a lady visitor that covered Jesus with expensive perfume from an alabaster box. Everyone that visited Judith and Simon’s house after that day went home carrying some of the aroma from the perfume present and the wonderful explanation that Judith would share with each of them.

Little did anyone realize that the sacrifice of the unnamed lady visitor would be spoken of by everyone reading God’s precious word for all time to come. Even more than the lasting aroma of the meaning of this event, so long ago, is that covering Jesus with this perfume was a prelude to Him being anointed before He was put in the grave.

That isn’t the end of the story. The grave couldn’t hold Him. He is alive to lead and love us here and now. The two events of anointing the Lord Jesus are not stories. They are history – His-story.

Would you like to change your neighborhood?

1. Read the actual account found in Mark 14:3-9.
2. Next, invite Jesus into your **heart**.
3. Then invite Him into your **home** to meet with others who crave the aroma of acts of love to the Son of God.

(End of Story)

Bible Fireworks

Bang! Boom! Boom! Whizz. Boom!

Even when I was a very small child, I remember seeing the night sky light up with gigantic exploding balls of color. The blues, the reds, and whites all seemed louder and larger than the one before. But when it was my turn to shine, I would wave my little sparkler above my head knowing it was visible only a short distance away.

My imagination began at a very early age to picture me creating my big boom for humanity. People would look at what I'd done and pat me on the back. But after three score years and many stories put to paper, I remain not even a little sparkler.

In my daily Bible reading, I savor the bang and boom verses of Psalm 119. Shelves provide the many books written, that applaud the structure and statements of that largest chapter in God's inspired Word. Wow! It would be impossible to imagine all the sermons and Sunday school lessons the world over that have brought out all the colors of those 176 verses.

But then I'm reminded of what I call my Shadow Psalm... little Psalm 117. Appearing quietly in the shadow of its neighboring Ps. 119, it easily gets ignored by most readers. How can those 2 verses of 117 possibly hold a candle to 119? Well, one of the subtle truths I learn from the whole of scripture is that God has precious uses for little sparklers in His Word.

Our Creator has provided challenges, promises, and provisions just the right size for each of us, whether we boom or sparkle. We see it easier to hide in our heart those 2 verses of 117 than all of Ps 119. As we do memorize those two verses much more color explodes from them. Though Ps 117 is the smallest chapter in scripture, it is the CENTER OF THE BIBLE! It just blows my mind to think that the Eternity Past of Genesis and the Eternity Future of Revelation both meet in 2 little verses of my Shadow Psalm.

I am only now learning that the size of my sparkle isn't nearly as important as my position as I hold it. How far could my little sparkle be seen if I held it steadfastly behind the lens of a lighthouse? Would my sparkle keep a ship of souls off the deadly rocks of distraction? Is there a way I can use my little sparkle to ignite the sparklers of others to brighten our Jerusalem? And then I view the deeper colors of little Psalm 117.

"O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD."

The central theme of this Central Psalm is praise - stated 3 times in 2 verses. We're told who is to praise God; who is to sparkle for Him and for what. We are to shine for Him as a nation; our leaders at the forefront. Secondly, we are to sparkle for Him as a people; as an individual; wherever we are.

The two great colors of our praise are to be these:

1. First, praising Him for His merciful kindness toward us. He sacrificed His Only Son for our sins. That act alone pales any other action in time.
2. The second color of our praise is His Word 'that endureth forever'. When we hear the bombs and booms of war around us, hold your sparkle from scripture high for all to cherish.

And then, if our position is in Christ, our little sparkling praise is seen all the way to heaven.
(End of Story)

Black Holes in My Blood

It was like something out of the 23rd century!

The professor told Donna's Bio class about many of the DNA discoveries and the Genome Projects. He seemed to think it was the answer to all of man's ills, both physical and mental. Donna typed facts as fast as she could on the laptop in front of her.

She tried to build a list of "what's inside of what." She began with:

1. Every living thing has one or more cells that differ just like we have nerve cells and blood cells.
2. At the center of every cell is an area called its nucleus.
3. In every nucleus are chromosomes.
4. Inside every chromosome is the complete DNA ladder we refer to as the "Double Helix" or Genome.
5. Certain groups of the rungs of the Double Helix make up genes.

Donna's mental state was becoming like that Double Helix corkscrew. Professor Makin almost had his head in the clouds as he told of DNA's ability to someday do things Donna believed only God could do. It bothered her a great deal thinking mankind could design his future children, plants, and animals around him.

She thought that mankind is doing a shameful job of using the skills and knowledge God has already given him. Could it be God's test of being "faithful with a few things..." on a grand scale? Would Satan's forces be creating monstrous leaders within dark corners of the world? Donna's first impulse was to plug her ears and run from the room and never return.

Before she could act, her mind's eye saw the double helix with some glaring rungs missing. She imagined all of mankind's computer technology, electronic microscopes, nanomechanics researchers and others trying to determine what the missing rungs were for. They all asked each other and their instruments what was supposed to go in the holes of the DNA ladders inside of every cell of our bodies. No one could give an answer.

Something made Donna think back to the Black Holes of information she had learned were so important to locate and fill, in her resume. She thought of the almost indescribable power and attraction of light and truths in the black holes of outer space. Though no one has ever seen one yet, evidence of their existence is indisputable.

Donna envisioned herself standing tall and bold with one finger pointed toward heaven, "It's God that goes in that DNA black hole! For a person to be truly alive God has to live in every cell of us. He alone knows the plan and properties of life. There are no gene partners that can approach the potential of being partners with Jesus Christ. The genes may rule how cells function, but with God we'll rule the world."

In her heart of hearts, Donna was shouting to the world,

"...eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9

(End of Story)

End of Bundle #01