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Blind Truth

Mom! A blind man is walking up our sidewalk! I sure hope he leaves before Mr. Hanes gets here!

Just seconds earlier, Sam had heard a car stop in front of their house. His natural twelve-year-old curiosity said he must check this out. The taxi had been told to wait a few moments for Sam and the two travelers. His motive had already peaked because he was expecting Pete Hanes and Mr. Puggs to pick him up any moment for their trip to Pete's place of work. On the face of it, the reason was to show Sam some unusual ways that computers were used in Pete's work.

The deeper reason for the field trip, however, was Pete's heartfelt desire to be a real friend to Sam. Sam's father had died last June. From personal experience, Pete knew what a struggle it is to cope with the loss of important people and things that are an integral part of life. As the doorbell rang, Sam's mom asked him to answer the door. She already knew the startling news that Sam was about to learn.

The door was opened, and Sam saw the blind visitor's captivating smile. "Hi, I'm Pete Hanes and this is Mr. Puggs," he said, pointing to his guide dog. "If the taxi driver did his job right, I should find Sam Wainwright at this house," he continued. Invited in, the two guests greeted Mrs. Wainwright, and then the trio quickly headed back out to the waiting taxi.

During the ride to Pete's work place, Mr. Puggs lay quietly but with his ears and eyes alerted for any possible threat to his master's safety. Sam learned that Pete was a customer service representative for a large credit card company. It surprised the twelve-year-old to learn that this completely blind employee did all of his work in front of a computer. At Pete's computer workstation, Mr. Puggs took his dutiful position under the desk. The twelve-year-old drank in every process that Pete patiently explained to him.

Sam's interest really perked up when he realized that Pete wore two different earphones. The right one was plugged into a telephone, and received the message from a credit card customer. The other earphone was connected to an audible screen reader that told Pete the words and numbers that were close to his mouse cursor on the monitor.

During the taxi ride back to the Wainwright house, Pete silently prayed for Sam as he shared with him the special opportunities a blind person experiences. He further explained how Jesus Christ had made Himself visible in Pete's watchcare everywhere he went. Sensing the interest from Sam, the blind computer operator gave his testimony of salvation along with a clear description of the gospel. Mr. Puggs had noticed that shortly after Pete had begun his conversation, the taxi driver had turned his radio off. He probably wanted to hear the words of peace and encouragement from this blind computer operator.

The taxi driver was instructed to wait until Sam walked into the Wainwright house before driving away. Pete's heart raced with excitement at being able to make good use of what most would think of as a handicap. And more so, to use this with computers in order to share the vision of a life led by God. He gave us eyes, computers, and a burden that others around us would come to know the Savior.

Of course, it doesn't matter what you're talents are. God uses truck drivers, beauticians, insurance salesmen, hard working housewives, and pianists. We all have talents that can be used to share the good news that Jesus shed His precious blood to buy our salvation, once and for all. The question is: What do I enjoy doing and what talent can I use to show someone how special he is in God's eyes?? (end of story)

Time Check at Blinko Point

Timing is not always what you think it is or should be. I've built the guidance platform for many Condor Air-to-Ground Attack missiles and calibrated lots of stable platform gyroscopes that guide the Titan Intercontinental Ballistic Missile to its target using the Polaris Star for reference. I figured I had a good idea of what time was.

Here at Blinko Point one sunny December day, I parked my car and switched the engine off. I looked at my \$9.00 digital crystal watch, then noticed the dancing diamonds of the sun's reflection on the blue water of the lake, was almost straight ahead.

The rhythm of the small waves told me to kick my uncomfortable shoes off and warm my feet in the sun's rays. It felt so relaxing I thought someone should write a poem titled, SHOES OFF AT BLINKO POINT.

I tried to picture this calming scene in September when the International Class hydroplane boats have their time trials that sometimes exceed 130 mph across the water. I'm sure the judges and helicopter reporters are all time-synchronized with Cesium Atomic Clocks, lasers, and satellite positioning. Someone said you can synchronize your clock to 1 second in a thousand years on some Navy government website.

But Blinko Point will do even better than that. It uses a more accurate measuring system. The quiet at the Point first shakes your senses out of the fast living; forget yesterday time travel we're all anchored to.

The four foot tall marker buoy a ways out from shore sways in the waves like a scolding finger at me asking – do you move a lot and not really go anywhere – like me? Why not pause a bit at Blinko and get synchronized with God's future plans for you?

The trees without leaves all stand straight and tall on the hilly shore. They seem to say, "Grandpa, you humans think you're so smart in counting our growth rings and determining our age. Well, think about this. Every year our Creator uses three or four consecutive deep-cold days to synchronize us with the rest of creation. From that period we know how long to wait to display our blossoms for the bees to pollinate us.

I glance again at the dancing diamonds and see their position has changed exactly to God's timetable. I remember the historical events, confirmed by astronomers, of a day that was actually TWO days long. And what do you suppose the fishermen thought when one day the sun BACKED UP forty minutes in answer to the prayer of just ONE person?

So the two questions for me are:

1. Who is the REAL timekeeper?
 - a. God is. He made time and STILL controls it.
2. Like the marker buoy, Who's schedule am I pointing others to?
 - a. I'm working on it. Or should I say, I'm WAITING on it?

Boring Isn't The Half of It!

(end of story)

Boring 1st Chronicles!

Yuk! I have to read 1st Chronicles! As I began my daily Bible reading in 1st Chronicles chapter 1, my progress quickly slowed to a crawl. I scanned the following chapters and saw all the begats and names that made me almost choke trying to pronounce. Why am I supposed to read all this yucky stuff? Does God have kind of mental distress He wants me to experience, reading this useless text?

Other than Noah's three boys, about the only other name that stands out is Methuselah. He lived 969 years; the longest of any human, then or now. I do remember that his name means "After me the deluge." In the same year of his death the flood occurred. It appears God gave the longest span of time for sinful mankind to repent and obey God. In 900 plus years, do you suppose Methuselah had to read through piles of genealogies very often?

We'll come back to 1st Chronicles shortly.

There is a list, an incredibly important list that would take over 9 years without stopping for any reason, to read through. Whew! Talk about boring... The researchers call the list the Human Genome – our human DNA. This incredible recipe for each of us humans is made up of 3 billion combinations of 4 building blocks.

Even though the entire genome SEQUENCE (list) has not been entirely mapped yet, we see mind-boggling achievements already being used with it. Lots of criminals have been put behind bars because their DNA matched that found on a fallen hair or breath moisture on a telephone receiver. Medical researchers are MATCHING corresponding portions of DNA from a well person and a person with a serious illness are compared to aid healthcare professionals in all fields.¹ The same kinds of potential seem to be possible in the plant and animal worlds.

We now want to take the "sequencing" and "matching" processes back to 1st Chronicles. As we begin again reading the jumble of names there doesn't seem to be any truth or principles we can hang our hat on. We want to shut one eye and trudge ahead. But Bible students the world over can tell you the best commentary for scripture is scripture itself. Well, put a marker where you are in 1st Chron. And turn to Genesis chapter 10 (and also 11).

You must be careful what you are reading, but it is soon clear that Gen 10 and 11 confirm 1st Chronicles 1. The lesson to see here is that the genealogy SEQUENCES MATCH. "So WHAT?" you say. Two different people penned the genealogy sequences many years apart. If they did their work in their own strength, is there a chance they could have missed someone? Do you suppose Moses or Ezra ever had a "bad hair day" like you and I? I'm so glad His inspiration sees that they don't when it comes to giving us His infallible Word.

There is another giant list the Bible talks about. It is the Lamb's Book of Life, which contains the names of everyone that has trusted Christ as their Savior. Among the names of all the famous important Bible characters listed there, will be my name. I'm just small potatoes among them. But God knows each of us by name and even the hairs (including DNA) on our head.

So easily we count John 3:16, Psalms 23, and others to be precious in God's written communication to each of our hearts. Can you begin to feel the same inspiration that moved those genealogies to be penned? If God included a chapter of powerful Christians in your city, would your name be in God's Word? (end of story)

¹ Learn more at: www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/faq/faqs1.shtml

Bulldozer Secret

[Theme: Bigger isn't necessarily better.]

The secret of the Bulldozer was a challenge to many fellow schoolmates. Bulldozer was the nickname given to Biff Samson, a middle school student about half again larger than most of his fellow classmates. During a typical Saturday football scrimmage, the team that opposed the Bulldozer's team always got an extra player. It only made sense to put two players against Bulldozer, because when Biff got the ball, you'd need help and plenty of it, to tackle him. It was easy to make him the hero. Nobody pushed him around, and if you were lucky enough to be his buddy, certainly no harm would come to you at the hands of any of the other kids. But there was also another side of Bulldozer; he was sort of quiet and humble, not to mention the puzzle of the x's and o's which some of the kids would see him doodling. No one had the courage to come right out and ask him if he really liked playing tic-tac-toe. But they were just dying to find out.

Biff and all his social studies classmates had an assignment to give a speech about themselves before the end of the school semester. Bulldozer wasn't too keen on the assignment, but complied. When his turn came, he began his speech by telling about his mom and dad in a way that left no doubt in anyone's mind that parents are sometimes heroes to children.

More times that could be counted, Biff's dad had related the historic biblical account of Samson (same name, right?) and how God had blessed Samson, but the horrible things that resulted when Samson didn't give God the glory. Mr. Samson wanted his son Biff to always remember that no matter how tall he grew, no matter if someone thought of him as a hero, it is God that gives and God that takes away.

As Bulldozer was finishing up his speech, someone in the back of the class asked him about the x's and o's. Those in the front seats watched his eyes for any warning sign that Bulldozer was going to be angry about the question.

Biff took a magic marker from the teacher's desk and walked over to Jake, one of the smaller class members who was wearing a plain tee shirt and asked him to stand. With just a bit of shivering, Jake stood and Bulldozer had him face away from the rest of the class. Jake was too afraid to move a muscle as Bulldozer started making a line of x's across the back of Jake's shirt, but not at all like any tic-tac-toe game.

Biff explained that an unnamed classmate was teaching him to use a computer, and that person was even smaller than Jake. Biff explained how he was taught to make x's on the computer screen and then a row of o's above each x. Then he'd learned to draw lines back and forth that actually represented football plays and how Bulldozer was supposed to run with the football on this certain play or that one. Jake was beginning to breathe a little easier as Biff continued to draw jagged lines on the back of his tee shirt.

Bulldozer finished up his speech by turning Jake around and putting a big arm around him, as a true friend would do. He explained how David, the small shepherd boy in the Bible became a hero –someone to pattern your life after, because he trusted God as he killed the giant.

About a week later a group gathered around the junior high school's football trophy case. They were all pointing at a tee shirt hanging in there, with x's and o's all over the back of it. The sign below it read, "It's not the size of the shirt that really counts, but what's in it." (end of story)

Boxes and Burdens

Tina was led through a long hallway, past the many offices of Global Missions, Inc. She saw a big banner on one of the walls: “GMI – Sending Out Church Planters the World Over,” it proclaimed in large letters.

The teenager wasn't all that clear about what church planters were. She was, however, emphatically clear about her desire to serve the Lord as a missionary – a front-line missionary. As she was being escorted into the office of Miss Debra Minni, Tina's heart felt as though it was about to explode with excitement. The office walls around her shouted the importance of missions. And here she sat, after so much prayer and preparation for this visit.

Following the introductions, Miss Minni began hearing the fourteen-year-old's testimony and her burden to use her computing skills for missions. Tina's Christian father often said that she wanted to scatter the gospel with her keyboard. As Tina polished off a cup of cocoa, Debra furtively glanced at her watch and wondered how she'd ever complete her agenda for the day.

Following the interview, Tina's tour of the Global Missions' offices was fast-paced. She didn't even have an opportunity to explain her belief that God was calling her to be a “keyboard missionary”, rather than an office staffer. Upon hearing the phrase “keyboard missionary,” Miss Minni's facial expression clearly indicated that she didn't take the concept seriously, nor was it considered worthy of the time required for an explanation from Tina.

The mission offices bristled with video and slide presentations, business planning, meetings schedules, agendas, and... the latest technology. The missionary writer's mind was already back on her column about women and missions, as Tina was returned to the lobby.

At her computer once again, Debra struggled for the words to create this month's Women 'n Missions column. But as she heard the sounds of children laughing and clapping, her gaze was drawn outside her office window. Six children were gathered around a few empty cardboard boxes, with two stacked, one on top of the other. Tina sat in front of the boxes while the children watched her every move.

Debra returned to her keyboard, only to be distracted by more children's laughter. She wasn't going anywhere with her column. When the laughter again drew her away from her work, her glance showed her that Tina had made a computer system out of boxes, fueled by her love-filled imagination and passion to blend together the four great loves in her life – Christ, children, computing, and missions.

As Debra continued to watch from her office window, she saw the fourteen-year-old lead the children in learning a rather loud rendition of John 3:16. Then each child was shown how to sit in front of the pretend computer, “type” and remove the invisible paper from the cardboard box printer. This spiritually motivated class, in beginning computer technology, was far beyond margin settings, font size, grammar and punctuation.

When Miss Minni saw Tina and all the children bow their heads in prayer, she glanced over at her state-of-the-art computer that could automatically translate her column into four languages. Hurriedly, she told her secretary to hold all her calls and switched off the computer. Then she went out the door, and headed for a pile of boxes.

Today the missionary columnist was to learn about front-line Keyboard Missionaries.
(end of story)

Brandi's Grandma and The Missions Fair

Brandi was drawing a bead on first place prize at her church's annual Missions Fair as she planned with 'both barrels' as her grandpa would say. I mean, last year's first place winner won't even come close to her entry. OK, so it was pretty neat seeing the ultra-light airplane land right on church property.... and the pilot gave his Christian testimony and call for young people interested in mechanics, electronics, and aviation to dedicate their learning and achievement to the Lord... but Brandi had to come up with a winning entry for this year that the church would never stop talking about.

Brandi's Pastor, Bart Ganton, loved nothing more than to preach and teach the Gospel Story of Redemption from Sin, through the Shed Blood of Jesus Christ in all its majesty and simplicity. Beyond that, you'd think of him as a talent scout. I mean, he searched out hidden talent in his church with grandpa's "both barrels". A perfect method of finding hidden talent was the Missions Fair. The Missions Fair was much like the science fairs the young people participate in, at school.

The next Saturday, Brandi's grand parents paid a visit with all the usual close family exchange of news, food, and fun. As the excitement all quieted down, grandma found Brandi at her computer keyboard just finishing up an email note to her older sister at college.

Grandma surprised Brandi with all the questions about sending messages on the computer and all that stuff.

Well, Brandi's grandma certainly didn't fit the grandma stereotype of shawl, rocking chair, and "Remember when...?". Brandi finally got around to explaining the Missions Fair and the fact that she still hadn't settled on a 'knock-your-socks-off' entry.

That's when the conversation took a spin-around...

"Brandi, a lot of years ago, I did pretty well typing.... back when my fingers were nimble and quick. Scoot over and let me type a little, just to see if I still can." Brandi obeyed.

A bulletin insert near Brandi's keyboard became the text and grandma began, though she wasn't comfortable looking at the results of her typing on the monitor. She enjoyed being able to correct her errors with just the backspace key instead of the ink eraser she used so many times on paper.

Brandi leaned back to get sort-of the big picture as she saw talent coming from a truly unexpected source. Further, she saw a retired person typing church news into a computer and that's what TRIGGERED BOTH BARRELS !! See, Brandi's computer was still in the e-mail program and that clinched it as the Missions Fair to set everyone talking.

In case you're wondering, Brandi didn't win first place...

Brandi's grandma did !! showing the new fangled way for seniors to maintain close church ties with missionaries needing encouragement and news from home.

Brandi won more than first place in the hearts of her Pastor, the 'forgotten generation' of her church, and I'm sure, her Lord. (end of story)

The Church Window Entrance

SOME CAUTIONS ARE IN ORDER BEFORE YOU ENTER THESE WORDS. What you are about to read is not a flowery story, flippant remarks, nor fiction. I have lived the events where and the way being told you now. It would be wise for you to bring your own flashlight.

Not so many years ago, our congregation met in the Concord Community Building, while our church was being erected across our small Ohio town. Many times the Lord's Day activities began with one of us standing on a wooden box helping another climb into church through a rear window. The reason is that the front door lock, then, was about as dependable as my memory is now. Fancy folks wouldn't feel at home in that precious place of spiritual growth and fellowship.

Oh how that little one room palace wooed us to meet with our King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The banquet of songs and fellowship were so tasty we hardly noticed the hard wood pews made from 1 x 12 inch lumber covered with nothing but pastel green paint.

Our preacher got to shoutin' a fair amount. It wasn't that he liked to clean our plow. I think it was more of a shouting match with the nursery children corralled in the corner. (I sometimes think we all need to lend an ear to nursery workers and their 'challenges'.)

The ladies of the church would shriek occasionally which helped the nodders pay attention. The pastor would probably have liked to credit his message for the outbursts. The truth be known, it was our real live church mouse that visited our service without an invitation.

You don't have to believe this, but it's true. Our church services were sweet to be sure. Not just because of the 'sweeter than honey to my mouth' messages, but from the honeybees in the wall. The insulation in the outer church walls consisted of little more than a swarm of bees. I have to believe they didn't appreciate the nursery vocals either.

Tell me what you'd think of, seeing most of the women folk carrying a blanket to church on winter mornings. Would you call them security blankets? Not at all. When you next grumble about your church ushers having the thermostat to cold, visualize our Concord Church ladies singing warm adorations to our Lord with blankets wrapped around their feet.

I've not told you the greatest cold-weather concern. WE DIDN'T HAVE INDOOR PLUMBING! That's right! The facilities were at the end of the path out back. Don't you be critical now. We were modern. Yes there was the handy bag of Lime, but no Sears catalog. We had roll paper. (It wasn't like that at grandpa's.)

Only one time did this arrangement come close to a catastrophe. One Sunday evening we had a movie and we had a packed 'house'. There were a couple problems we hadn't planned well enough. One was that our facilities were one-at-a-time. The bigger problem was that the church lights were on the same switch as the facilities light! During the movie intermission there was a stampede down that path bigger than if that church mouse had brought his family.

But we lived through it all. We loved. And we learned. Often I've cherished those moments our little church gathered around the old piano with many of its ivory keycaps missing. That is the only piano I have ever seen with more black keys than white. But we didn't even notice. We all saw ourselves in Carnage Hall paying homage to our Savior.

The cows watched our baptismal services in nearby creeks and ponds with the same disinterest that most downtown folks would. Due to a miscalculation of mine, the summer day JELLO battle with the youth became the stickiest JELLY battle you've ever witnessed. In those days our blessings came by the buckets.

How I love being a part of our church's "Door to Door" ministry. Arm in arm I escort the ladies from their handicapped parking car door to the church door. The legal tenders of that ministry are a warm smile and a promise of a powerful church service to bask in.

Now the question I have for you is this. How do you enter your church? No, I'm not asking if you enter through the front door or the rear window. Do you first look to see if the custodian has performed as required? Do you notice if small children meet your expectations of being seen but not heard? Did you leave your Bible home, but remember to bring your bucket of burdens? (end of story)

The Button

10...9...8...7...

Everyone in the large room counted out loud as though each had the ultimate responsibility of pushing THE BUTTON.

6...5...4...

A worker from another room, hearing the chorus-like countdown, entered, and saw forty pairs of eyes glued on THE BUTTON.

Barry had worked many weeks on a computer program that would operate the robot arm. What a struggle it was! Every movement or adjustment was dependent on the changes of any of the other joints. Just like a human arm, this robot arm had a “shoulder”, an “elbow”, and a “wrist”. Not often are robots designed with hands and fingers. Their “hands” are usually a fixture designed for special purposes, like welding fenders on a new car, retrieving research items on board an unmanned space vehicle on its way to the planet Venus, or the high-repetition tasks of testing chemicals for new medicines to aid human illness.

3...2...1... As though all the hopes of the free world wished him well, Barry pressed THE BUTTON. Eerie-sounding motors and gears began to follow their programmed commands and the shoulder joint began to raise the entire arm, and then rotated it in a clockwise direction. Hardly had the shoulder joint finished its task, when the elbow joint began the required task on which the whole mission depended. Without this maneuver the task of picking up the small blue box was impossible. As the wrist joint began rotating the grappler claw into position, the eyes of the forty children began whispering, “Come on, come on, you can do it; come on, that’s it!”

No football team ever had a more eager and enthusiastic cheering section than did this experiment. Hope was almost missing from the pediatrics ward of this important children’s hospital. The patients knew first-hand how tough it is for a young person not to act like a baby, but still not be able to function like an adult. On top of all that, many had shoulders that didn’t have the right muscles, and elbows that will live a cast for a lot of playground days

The first time Barry brought his computerized robot arm into the hospital, it was just to cheer up his brother and help him pass the time. But then he began comparing the human arm to the toy robot arm, and realized that God’s design of people is so far superior to anything that man can do, that it can’t even begin to be compared. The grappler claw dutifully, and without thinking, closed ever so gently on the blue box as though the box contained rocket fuel. In reality, the action fueled the imaginations and hopes of the children behind those forty faces. When the toy robot arm lifted the pretend rocket fuel and placed it into the little basket provided, the whole room cheered. Even old Doctor McCartney shouted in delight, right along with the children. One nurse said that was more emotion than she’d seen out of him in months.

Then Barry put a finger to his lips and everyone got very quiet again. He said that even that success was not the best part. He explained to the children how futile and slow it has been for scientists to even begin to design the mechanical equivalent of what we call arms. Barry walked around the beds and asked the children what kind of things we can do with arms. He heard everything from climbing trees and peeling bananas, to working on a space station and doing computer designs. But the one that brought everything to a standstill was Barbara’s answer. With eyes that tell stories not many people want to hear, she said simply, “Hug”.

Whatever God has given to you, you’ll find great joy in sharing your God-given talents and compassion with others, and giving Him the glory. (end of story)

Button Tracts

Remember Leo? Yeah! Right, he's the one that kept finding a tract in his dinner pail on top of his egg sandwich (thanks to his wife). Well, he's had it up to here with the younger guys at the factory where he works. "Oh, this tee-shirt billboarding is driving me up the walls," says Leo. "You've got to figure that these guys' dressers must have a zillion drawers with tee-shirts packed in them saying thrilling cliches like, "I cheated the cheat", or "I don't care what you think, Ma still loves me!" I mean they "talk" to you just like bumper stickers... I suppose they could even reveal things about the person wearing them.

Leo was just finishing a short article in Reader's Digest "Subliminal Advertising", when Tim came in the front door from school. The reason Leo knew it was his son, was because just after the door slammed shut, he heard, "Hi all you lucky people! I'm home!" As Leo peeked around his book to see if any glass was still in the door, he saw something that knocked his socks off. Plastered across his son's chest were the words "He is coming soon! ARE YOU READY?" It wasn't the words that was the shocker, because Leo had trusted Christ as his Savior at the malt shop 23 years ago. He knew Jesus was coming soon and he WAS ready. (Leo was saved with a Tootie-Fruities Float in one hand and a Killer-Diller Burger in the other hand, sitting across the booth from his best friend -- but that's a story for later.)

"Oh noooo," moans Leo, "first billboarding at work, and now at home too! Next thing you know they'll be doing it at church." "Dad, I found it pays to advertise" said Tim. "Great shirt don't you think?" Well, Leo realized what you and I already know, the church is selling them... and at cost.

The following Saturday when Tim and Leo were at the church, mowing; Tim showed his dad the other shirts in the collection. Then Leo found what he was looking for, a button with bright red letters that said, "Have you met Him?" What Leo liked though, was the package of tracts with a picture of that same button. He couldn't get his wallet out fast enough to latch onto that comeback for bill-boarding. Leo put the pin on his shirt lapel, and checked a few of the tracts in the pack to make sure that the church address was on them. "Just wait until one of those guys at work stick their crazy tee-shirts in my face; I've got my comeback!"

Later, at home, as Leo and Tim were brushing the grass off their coveralls, Mrs. Reynolds came out to the garage, and spying the button right-off, she asked, "Have I met who, Honey?" Leo pulled out a tract with the picture of the button. "Here you go Barb, read this first and I'll be back and we can talk about it...."

Well, to make a long story short, Monday morning Leo was almost late for work looking for his missing comeback button and matching tracts. A soft knock on Mimi's bedroom door before entering and Leo got another shocker.. His 13 year old daughter had her blouse and skirt laying across the chair and, I'm not going to tell you what was pinned to her collar. Tell me, how long has it been since you've seen tears of joy on a grown man's face?

At work during lunch, Leo was relating all of the events I've just described to you, to a bunch of the guys. As they were walking with Leo back to their work stations, one of the guys says, "Ok, now are you going to finish the story? What did it say? Have I met who!"

IF YOU WERE LEO, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY??

You had better plan right now what you will say and do, because a hungry soul might not wait for you to run home to get your button and handful of tracts. ~~
(end of story)

Catsup and Granny Totter

She was strange in more ways than one. I'm talking about Granny Totter. Actually, her name is Mary Totter. But she'll tell you straight off she prefers "Granny Totter". If it wasn't for her catsup and comic books, she'd pass for anyone's favorite grandmother, with thick white curly hair and small round glasses worn almost to the end of her nose.

Now I don't often use the words 'weird' or 'strange' in describing old folks. But anyone that puts catsup on her barbecue potato chips or catsup on her butter pecan ice cream... cannot possibly have more than one oar in the water.

But stranger than her appetite for catsup, is her habit for reading comic books. It's not very often you'll catch her without her old pillowcase sack. If you had x-ray eyes you'd see she always had one or two comic books inside. Now these comics were filled with scary ghosts and gruesome monsters. And on most every page there were words used that should never be found around grandchildren or polite God-fearin' folks anywhere.

A couple times last week, Granny noticed herself using some of those ugly words while she was talking with Ol' Mrs. Simms at the yard sale. It was really creepy how the things she'd read and see would slip into her thoughts and talk. What's more, she was sure that it was getting more regular.

Granny had offered to donate a stack of her comic books to the church yard sale, but they were very clear they'd not accept them. She thought it a bit strange that the church would turn down a donation. She asked herself, "Can they actually be that bad? Can't I read and have anything I want? Isn't this a free country?"

Well, then it happened...

Granny Totter's telephone rang at an alarming 11:30 pm. The caller didn't even have time to say goodbye to Mary Totter before she dropped the phone on its cradle, grabbed her hat, jammed her always-handy pillowcase sack under her arm, and headed for the hospital.

The nurse gave Granny directions to Mrs. Simms hospital room in a soft voice. She further cautioned Granny that Mrs. Simms had hit her head while falling on the concrete steps and her expectations of recovery were definitely not good. The minister had been called and close relatives would be arriving at the nearby airport in a couple hours.

With no one else in the room, Granny took off her hat and laid down her sack on a nearby table. She walked to the bedside and just couldn't find sincere comforting words for the one laying on the bed near death.

Granny walked back to her pillow case sack to get a couple tissues and saw only the scary comic books she thought would never harm anybody. How she wished she had chosen to carry and read one of the Bible's she'd seen at the yard sale. With her back to the patient, Granny realized that her choice to spend time in the comics gave her mind no words of comfort and encouragement she could share with friends and loved ones.

It was only a couple minutes before a couple nurses quickly entered the room and told Granny to leave immediately.

Now you may have begun reading these words with a smile. But these words are meant to remind us what Granny Mary Totter has just learned in a very sad way... What we feed our bodies; what we feed our minds will definitely affect us, but more importantly... will affect others and the way we are able to help them. Neither comic books nor anything else should be substituted for regular feeding our body and mind with God's precious word, His warnings and our invitation to trust Christ's shed blood for salvation. (end of story)

Chat Room Christmas

The chat room chatter was very busy that night with over 12 users all typing in their comments one at a time. But everything came to a screeching halt when someone typed in:

“Sorry, I donet type goood. Sinse my accidentt I have to spell with my mouth-stick. I would like to know what a manjer is. Tanks, Tony.”

These three sentences had drained his strength so Tony logged out of this first visit to a chat room and rested. When He logged in the next night, two chatters gave him the dictionary description of a manger. But then Dotty wrote:

“Tony,
God gives us life in a variety of ways
Strength enough for each of our days
The life He gives we gratefully use
Praise Him always whatever the news.

A manger is just a cradle with hay
To feed the animals at the end of day.
But just this once it became a bed.
All was just as the scriptures said.

This manger bed it held that One
The shepherds found God’s own son
God gives us life in all sorts of ways
Praise Him whatever. It always pays.

Next to the cows His bed full of hay
Your bed of wires & tubes you stay
All He has done His best is for you
His love is sufficient without a clue.

There on the Cross no bed like yours
A doctor He needs unspeakable sores
This was His choice great love for you.
Your future in Heaven don’t feel blue.

That He finds you busy in all you do.
He is coming again looking for you
To see your life and victories won.
Run your race till your day is done.

His bed led to a sacrifice for all mankind
What will your bed lead to?

Tony, be grateful for your mouth-stick.
I can’t use one anymore. Regards... Dotty”
(end of story)

Sermon on the Church Steps

Gramps' teeth were chattering big time. The winter wind delivered a real bite as it crossed the church front steps on more than one Sunday morning. But it was more than worth it to safely escort the many silver haired ladies across the somewhat slippery parking lot. Seeing folks smile big as they entered church and its warm hospitality kept Gramps diligent at his post.

Many of the folks entered the side driveway to park in the rear of the church. As Gramps stood on the church steps waiting to apply his ushering skills he'd see children waving from the distant cars entering that side driveway. With tired arms he'd return the wave and smile to those children.

In no time many of the parents would wave and smile through the car windows on their way to hearing songs and sermons about God's 'In spite-of' love and His will for their lives.

Oh sure there were plenty of cars that produced no waves or smiles. 'Chances are they were still fretting about burdens, budgets, and broken dreams. Worse yet, they'll probably carry the same discouraging thoughts into the service and never hear the sermons of the Savior's provisions for our todays and tomorrows.

Out on the cold front steps a voice asked my heart, "Gramps – are you waving only at those you are sure will wave back? Gramps – are you doing what you're doing because of whom and what they are? Or are you doing service because of whom you are, Gramps?"

Gramps arrived at the proper reason by thinking of Salvation's Sacrifice on the Cross. Why did Jesus die on the Cross for my sins? Was it because of how important Gramps is? Or because of Who Jesus Christ is? (end of story)

End of Bundle #02