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Cutting Corners Really Hurts

“OUCH! THAT COMPUTER CUT ME!” Everyone looked in the direction of the injury. Judy held her injured finger in her mouth, giving evidence the wound was more sting than stain.

‘Gigabyte Gramps’, with his bright silver hair was the leader of this dozen or so preteen clubbers. The Computer Junk Jockies clubhouse was actually just a condemned building with no heat or electricity. But thanks to God’s goodness, the clubhouse had become an after-school heart hospital for youth with tested souls and troubled spirits. “Call me Gramps,” he often told the club’s visitors.

Gramps wanted to be nowhere else in the whole universe more than this old building. The silver haired retired programmer relished nothing greater than wetting the curiosity of these less fortunate boys and girls and planting it solidly in God’s Word and majesty. With his best grandfather skills, Gramps showed his concern about all the things that happen in each clubber’s life.

About three days out of each month, the clubbers spent making Tech-Trash Evangelism Kits for inter-city missionaries to use. This month they were building God’s Power Box kits. The insides of computer power supplies were used to teach children how much God loves them and also how to share their faith with others.

Jake would begin by removing the small power supply out of one of the many junk computers stacked in the corner. He would then give the supply to Nancy. She would cut off all the long wires and cables, before passing it on to Tommy.

Nancy often had to hide her face till her tears ceased. As she watched worthless computer parts become powerful tools for missionaries, Nancy felt her own life was becoming important to God. Boy, did she ever need that.

Tommy made the most noise in the little assembly line for missions. His job was to use a file and remove any sharp edges of the metal case. Martha and Jack were preparing the cardboard boxes the Power Box kits would be going into. There were labels to put on the outside, with the printed stories and skits to be arranged and neatly packed inside.

Gramps had been training them to pray as they were assembling them, that God would bless the missionary leaders in using the kits. Even the name God’s Power Box should tell anyone the kits would certainly be packed with prayer.

After a few moments, Gramps had all the clubbers sit indian-fashion on the old wooden floor in front of him. He asked each of the clubbers how they were doing their part of the work and if they understood exactly how it was to be done... you know... how to use the tools safely etc.

Tommy admitted to Gramps and the group that he felt sort-of responsible for Judy getting her finger cut, since it was his job to file down the sharp metal edges so no one would get hurt. Tommy looked at Judy and then at Gramps admitting, “I thought if I worked faster I could get more done. I guess I wanted to kind-of show off, at how fast I could do my job. But I now realize that I sacrifice the safety of us clubbers AND those on the mission field that might get hurt also.”

In a soft forgiving tone Gramps asked Tommy so that the other clubbers could also learn the lesson, “Tommy, even if no one did get hurt, don’t you think that Jesus sees how you are doing your job? Do you agree that it hurts Him when we don’t do our best? I have a question or two for all of you clubbers. Do you think Jesus did His best to do the work that His heavenly Father sent Him to do? Would any of us have salvation if He didn’t?”

You and I may never know the consequences of not doing our best, especially in working for the Lord.

(end of story)

The Giant Lens

"Thelma, we're in a fix and I don't know how we'll get out of it this time," Frank began rehearsing in his mind. He often spoke to himself as though he was talking to his wife, sort of listening to the words and how they'd sound as he finished cleaning the gigantic lens. With a firm grip on the knob of the little door, Frank stepped out onto the balcony and surveyed his small island. Most would think Frank, Thelma and their little island to be very unimportant; except for the lighthouse that stood tall and proud. Frank was proud to have this important responsibility though it was quite lonely; except for his precious Thelma and the ship that brought provisions twice a year.

"That was a good supper, hon", Frank said as he cleared the table. The radio was turned on while Thelma picked up both Bibles and the couple settled each in his favorite easy chair. For the next hour the little house connected to the side of the lighthouse was filled with comforting Christian melodies and then a soul-stirring message by their favorite radio pastor, Rick Danison. Even before they raised their heads and opened their eyes (taking part in the closing benediction), Thelma knew what she'd see.... "Frank, you're still disturbed about it, aren't you?"

"Thelma, we're in a fix, and I don't know how we'll get out of it. I believe it's true that God's Word says we're supposed to go to the highways and byways and speak to the lost about their salvation... and that's the problem !! I believe God meant that for everybody; us too! How are we going to speak to anyone? We've talked to Jake and Lyle while they were unloading provisions last April, but somehow that just doesn't seem enough." Trying to somehow ease his inward pain, Thelma piped in with, "But didn't pastor also say that God always provides a way - and sometimes more to carry out his great commission?"

Although his life wasn't cluttered with many of the frivolous cares we have, Frank's feeling of being trapped on this little island and not being able to share the Gospel, weighed heavy on him. So often, he'd climb the circular stairway to the top of the lighthouse and make his way out onto the balcony and slowly walk around it for long periods of time.

Saturday was a lot like that. Or was it Friday? Oh! Who cares? In a prison all days are the same. Aimless step after aimless step around the little balcony, Thelma's words kept coming to mind... "God always provides a way -- and sometimes more - to carry out His great commission." " God always provides a way." "God always...." "God always"...

That day Frank's eyes scanned the scene, at least all that wasn't under water, wishing the answer to his troubled heart would leap out of the ground to meet him. Like so many times before, his eyes would ask the flower beds over there, or how about the little dingy; no answer. No answer.

Just beyond the only bush on the prison; I mean island, the trash dump could barely be seen. Bags, boxes, cans, paper and ~ **And WHAT?!** Frank's heart leaped within him!

THAT'S IT! THELMA! THELMA THAT'S THE ANSWER! He thought he sprained a finger trying to get the little door open before racing down the circular steps inside the lighthouse. **THELMA! THELMA, HE GAVE US THE ANSWER!**

It made no sense to Thelma when, between deep gasps, Frank told her to get the washtub and many sheets of typewriter paper, before he ran to the trash pile mumbling something.

Almost an hour and a half later, two excited people leaned against the whitewashed tower and gazed at a row of twenty seven sparkling clean catsup bottles; their tops in a pile.

The sun hadn't set more than thirty minutes before Thelma read the note, rolled it up, and put in the last catsup bottle. Frank, sitting on a nearby boulder, watched twenty-six bottles bobbing in the waves not far from shore. He was talking to Someone, though he knew Thelma was too far away to hear.

"Dear friend,

We'd like to introduce you to Someone that can open any prison and set you free. Bridging a gap of geography, judgement, or barriers of man's sin and its consequences.

Christ's hand of forgiveness reaches to where you are right now and shows the scarred palm of love that holds tight forevermore. Trust His shed blood and know the eternal freedom we enjoy...

Frank and Thelma

In case you have some catsup bottles not being used, you'll want to know what one of the notes said:

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Daisy Pedals

THE DARK GRAY SKIES MADE YOU FEEL A CHILL JUST LOOKING AT THEM. The whistling winds around my car tugged at it often. I felt just like one of the many pine trees on the other side of the lake. Only in just a small area of the lake did the sun's reflection make diamonds dance on the waves. My stare gave little notice to them but fixed on the dominant waves of cold steel-gray even more intimidating than the chilly skies above.

As I sat in my car I had no time to notice the last of the autumn leaves of apple reds and the lemon yellows. I kept my attention on the forest of active pine trees. They all wave in chorus that might have impressed other silver-haired folks. But me, I just felt so much like one of those pines – we're alive, lots of action, but not really going any place – not really achieving anything.

It was worse than being a pine, because I felt pain. This pain was awful. It would be more bearable if God would show me. If He would just show me what area of my life had offended Him. Then I'd know the reason why He won't use my 20 years of story writing that honors Him and His Word.

As the cinnamon-brown leaves cart wheeled across the beach I thought of a fictional little Polly Sue. My stiff fingers wrote quickly.

With one hand on the log, she leaned out just a bit using the lake water as a mirror. Her older brother, Tom, walked by with a fishing pole in his hand as the little girl held a dandelion up to her chin. She'd seen Tom do the dandelion test using a mirror. Her version of the test to see if her chin would turn yellow only proved the lake water was murky and too wavy.

Tom continued past Polly Sue and said in a laughing way, "Little girls, what do they know about anything?" About 6 wiggly fishing worms later and no fish on his stringer, Tom walked back past Polly Sue, toward his tried-and-true fishing spot that seldom failed him. Little sister had a daisy in front of her face and while pulling each pedal off she'd say, "He loves me."

Big brother baited his hook and threw the hook and line out to just the right place where a hungry fish ought to be. The tall bobber swayed in the gentle breeze about like a pine tree would. But he probably would not have noticed if a fish moved his bobber. His mind's eye kept focusing on what his little sister kept saying.

He remembered that every single pedal she pulled off, she said the same thing, "He loves me." Tom thought to himself, I can't stand this any more. She's only a little girl. I don't think she's even old enough to care about the affections of the opposite gender. But he laid down his pole and went over and sat next to Polly Sue.

He began, "Polly, you're not doing it right. You're supposed to pull a pedal off and say, 'He loves me.'" But the very next pedal you pull off, you're supposed to say, 'He loves me not.' The next pedal you say, 'He loves me.' Do you see what I'm saying?" She pulled one more pedal off and said, "He loves me." She looked down at the pulled pedals on the ground and then up at her big brother. "Miss Maimee taught us a chorus last week in Sunday School. Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so." The little girl didn't remember any more of the words so repeated what she did know, "Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so."

Without any further explanation she picked up another daisy, and slowly picked off each pedal in succession. Each time she'd repeat with assurance, "He loves me. He loves me."

As my pen finished the conversation between a brother, a sister, and a daisy, I looked up and saw a powder blue sky all around me with lots of cotton candy clouds. The sun came out and poured warmth through my windshield. I suppose my chin was golden yellow because my whole body was reflecting the yellow gold from glory's gates.

Polly Sue was right, "He loves me. He loves me. The Bible tells me so."
(end of story)

Dancing Diamonds

As I sit in the warm sunlight and watch the diamonds of sunlight dancing on the lake before me, I should be calmed but I am not. These past weeks have found me anxious and wanting to be busy with new computing projects for the Lord. This distress has been so strong, I have questioned God more than once, if there was some reason He had put me on the shelf and not allowed the joy of service to Him.

If I were paying close attention, the diamonds were probably sending out their own type of Morse code to me saying they reflect the sun. The sun was put there to establish time, among other things. The sun and its timing are consistent and obedient to the Master Scheduler, God.

I opened my Bible for my daily reading I enjoy so much. The portion for this morning was Psalm 40. This portion of God's Word was penned by a shepherd boy that was so courageous he killed a lion by first grabbing the lion's beard. We also remember him killing the bear, and then killing the giant, which most every child has heard about.

As I picked up my red pen for underlining, I began to read what was about to shake me to my roots and water to my eyes. There is a buildup, a crescendo starting in verse one. It unfolds as a sunrise of God's provision for the discouraged heart like mine. Briefly,

He inclined to me – He gave his attention to me
 Heard my cry – He keyed in to how I was feeling
 Out of a horrible pit – a good description of where sometimes I feel I am
 Miry Clay – the situation has its hold on me
 Set my feet – He doesn't just yank us out of our mess, but fits us to serve Him again
 Upon rock – sure foundation as we remember His is our Rock
 Established my goings – He's given us new marching orders
 New song in my mouth – a rescue that includes joy
 Praise to our God – our joy is really adoration for our rescuer
 Many shall see it – our testimony is always witnessed – good or bad
 Trust in the Lord – no better result of our actions that are God-led

You'd think that was enough, and maybe so. But God fills our joy-cup to overflowing in the following manner:

Many are His works – His salvation is not an occasional thing with Him
 Are to us-ward – you don't have to guess who God loves
 Reckoned up in order – We can't begin to list them in order
 More than can be numbered – He blesses us beyond our ability to count or imagine.

Now the thing that turned all this on and made these indescribable blessings flow is in the first six words. Notice it doesn't say, "I waited for the Lord." That sounds like the Lord is behind schedule (ours) and we need to let Him catch up. The word "patiently" is the key. We need to wait on the inside. We need to collect our thoughts of all that God has done thus far and expect Him to continue to love us with the same adoration He took to Cross.

Verse 6 reminds us we are not expected to "perform" to please God. The next verse makes it clear the Book that gives us hope and peace, is cover to cover a biography of the One Who gave us time. This fact is repeated in Hebrews 10:7.

Should we repeat these facts in our quiet time with His biography open and watching the Dancing Diamonds?

(end of story)

Internet Dinner-Pail Mailers

This division involves the children in the family and the church family. The purpose is twofold.

1. First is to provide the student and parent of their responsibility to make God-honoring use of the Internet wherever they are. The reminder would come from a small child of the family, maybe one that is just learning to write his or her name.
2. The second purpose to remind the parent and student that their keyboard performance is so fragile that even the children need to remember the users. The parents will be reminded at lunch or other times they have a small one praying for them.

Children learn and enjoy very quickly, comes like “hide and seek”. It doesn’t matter whether the object is a person or a piece of paper.

The Secret Message

With all the stealth of a super spy, little Jessica watched for her chance. It was critical that she not be discovered in this most important deed. To help her not be discovered, she gave Barfy a doggie cookie and she was careful to wear socks but no shoes. So far so good. The big hand on the clock went almost all the way around as she prepared the secret message, but it was worth every minute of it.

She took two more steps and was able to see the target, daddy’s open dinner pail. Three ore steps put her in reach of target and completion of her mission. She slipped the message into the side of the pail and just as quietly returned to her bedroom toybox just about the time Barfy finished his cookie and was looking for some action.

The next day Jessie’s daddy was finishing his lunch and he noticed a piece of paper in the side of his dinner pail. He pulled it out, smiled, and then showed it to Jake across the lunch table from him. The secret message was written in crayon and looked something like:
Jessie’s daddy understood the note and remembered the little heart at home that was concerned for how daddy used his computer.

Little notes like this will fit in school books, blouse pockets, pants pockets, and have even been known to be taped to the bedroom computer joystick. (end)

For the children to learn how to create these little notes, the senior citizens can be great teachers. It can be a fun game, but the little ones should also be taught to ask God to bless their notes.

(end of story)

Dog lessons for Christians

The news and conversations of so many are fretting about the increase in fuel prices. Actually it reminds me of the 'panic' with the Y2K frenzy over the computers not being able to handle the century date change over. It was a big joke on people.

But what really disturbs me is that long-time Christians are chiming right in with the world on these issues. It seems that many Christians are hunky-dory saints. As long as the world and its commerce float along, so does their spirituality.

Wouldn't you just love to talk for one hour to one of the Jewish brick makers in Egypt when word came down that there would be no more straw provided by the government? "You have to scrounge your own stubble and still keep up the same production," they were told. In my mind I imagine God was very sad in those days as He formed the most powerful and lasting nation on the planet starting with a whole bunch of crybabies that never seemed satisfied. But it was the only way.

Now understand, I've had plenty of pity parties for myself and truth be told, I probably have a few more left in me. I could teach a class on them. It's been my fault (never God's) that in rushing to teach others about the plagues of Egypt that I skip over some critical facts about them. These facts teach me some principles I need to internalize each and every day.

A few questions I have for you:

1. When God, through the hands of Moses, cursed the all the land with flies, were the Israelites bothered with them? (Chapter 8)
 2. And in chapter 9 how many of the cattle of God's people suffered from the grievous murrain?
 3. Surely some of the horrible hail must have destroyed crops, cattle, and persons of God's nation (in the making). You better check it out.
 4. Chapter 10 tells of the plague of darkness; darkness so thick you could feel it. Now tell me, did the Israelites experience this removal of light from the earth?
 5. Clearly the plague I enjoy the most teaching others about is the 10th plague of the Passover of the Death Angel. Oh sure, we teach others about the blood of a perfect innocent lamb being applied on the door posts, and the promised safety to all those who stayed inside. But what about the dogs. In all the years we've had God's inspired word, in our own language too, the dogs have been there. With all the depravity and death of man and beast around them, they teach us simple truths. First they obeyed God, even when it didn't seem to be their nature. Second, they became simple instruments pictured in scripture to show the world what destruction and obedience in God's hands are all about – everywhere on the planet. They didn't bark, they didn't join the clamor of the world over circumstances around them. Exodus 11:7 says this dog silence is to show the world that God always provides for those that love Him.
- Christian, does your tongue show the difference God has made between you and the world? Does your unrepentant heart scream about the straw taken from your budget?
 - When we teach the lesson of Elijah being taken by God into heaven in a fiery chariot, do you suppose Elijah cared about the price of oil? Such a discussion would certainly be out of place, almost silly. Do you know that wasting God's time by discussing the price of oil and potatoes is just as out of place now?
 - Pretend you could easily see over your shoulder behind you. Can you the soul that knows nothing of God's consuming desire to wrap His arms of hope and truth around that soul. Discussion about worldly prices is out of place when you consider the price heaven paid for your soul.
- (end of story)

The Drainpipe

They're small and very unimportant. I mean, do you know of any drainpipe anywhere that has a name? Nobody knows and nobody cares, as long as they do the job they were designed to do, and don't bother people.

That was true until two years ago. Then the drainpipe under Seventh and Canal Streets became front-page news. Ten minutes after the news camera crews got there and were set up, the unnamed drainpipe was seen on coast-to-coast emergency-alert TV newscasts. Somehow, little Timmy had got out of his backyard and apparently crawled after something, right into the drainpipe. The barking dogs attracted a passerby, who notified the emergency squad, and soon the whole country knew about it.

But the trouble had just started. The drainpipe was small -- too small for any of the emergency people to climb in after four-year-old crying Timmy. The road construction men couldn't use their big machines and dig up the road because they didn't know exactly where Timmy was in the drain. Then someone yelled, "Get Nina Tomen! Get Nina Tomen!"

Now, most everybody in the small town knew of Nina. But very few thought much about her. When they did, they thought she should be in some carnival or a sideshow somewhere that displayed odd-looking people.

As Danny typed the above story on his computer, the words started to blur. Tears do that. Danny thought about all the times at school that he had listened without comment to the kids making ugly and cruel remarks about the little people, calling them dwarfs, freaks and the like. Not many of them knew they were also referring to Danny's mom.

Wiping away some tears, he continued with his "I'm sorry" that he was actually writing for his mom, though she'd only be able to read it from heaven. Danny's story continued on his computer screen...

Nina was rushed to the drainpipe quickly, and was told all that was then known about Timmy and the drainpipe situation. Because of sticks and rocks and other debris in the pipe, there would be no means for anyone who entered to turn back, even though that person might become very scared. That's why no children were involved in the rescue and little Nina Tomen was perfect for the task. All the verbal abuse, staring, and laughing over the years had made Nina a very determined person. She always finished what she started. That's what everyone was counting on.

Danny struggled to finish his story. He worked harder than he'd ever worked on anything before. To the left of his keyboard was his open Bible; and on the other side, behind his computer mouse, was a picture cut out of a newspaper. The newspaper picture showed an open drainpipe and in front of it, two smiling, dirty, little faces, which belonged to Timmy and Nina.

When Danny finally spell-checked his computer story, he added the date and his name: "Danny Tomen". Then he added these words: "Little doesn't mean less or that something is missing. Little means, "Fashioned by the Creator for tasks others aren't privileged to do".

Do you think of your ministry to be little and of small importance, to God or anyone else? Maybe you've been teased or bullied for your service. Know for sure there's a Timmy almost within your reach. Maybe if you take one more step or two you'll hear his cry that no one else hears or cares.

(end of story)

Hear the Footsteps?

“Can you hear them?” were the words that began the pastor’s message. He repeated, “listen close, can you hear them? Can you hear the footsteps?” All those present in the small church looked around and saw no one walking around. They each had a “who’s footsteps” expression on their face.

He continued, “No I’m not loony. I’ve heard them several times this week. I’ve heard children’s footsteps. I’ve heard them clear enough to know they are coming closer.” This grabbed the heartstrings of most all the members. They have been praying expectantly that God would build a bridge that would bring many children to their church that had only one or two.

The bridge their hearts cried to God for, was not made of steel, or wood, or concrete, but a bridge that would carry their heart’s yearning to the homes and children in the nearby neighborhood. The bridge needed to be steadfast to bring the expectant children with all their questions and curiosity to the fold of the little church. The pastor said he could best hear the coming children’s footsteps when he was on church property.

Last Thursday was the day he never heard the footsteps at all. That was the day he selfishly wanted children in the church to preserve it’s future. But that night, he repented with great tears for wanting to safeguard the church building and it’s presence in the community. Repentant tears made it easy to now see the children.

After relating what happened Thursday, Pastor said Friday he heard a separate distinct set of footsteps. Something in his mind suggested the walker wore sandals and a robe. Verses kept coming to his mind about behold I come quickly, like a thief in the night, be diligent.

Monday morning, pastor drove over to the church to pick up a book he needed and hardly believed what he saw in the church’s parking lot. One mother with a baby in her arms was picking up twigs on the grass. Old Mr. Slade walked with great difficulty and his cane, “Hi Pastor. My arthritis won’t let me do much, but I can carry a glass of water. I can water one flower at a time. When the children get here, I want them to find me busy.”

From another direction, “Pastor, look over here!” Came the words spoken very haltingly. Deana had gotten one of those small brooms that children play house with. She was using the broom from her wheelchair and brushing one stone at a time from the parking lot. With a grin from ear to ear, she waved the small broom over her head triumphantly, and shouted to the pastor, “I want to hear the footsteps too!”

(end of story)

Forgetful Fireman

“Yeeeoowwww!” Fred the forgetful fireman had done it again.

Gramps began one of his wonderful old yarns that kept the boys and girls on the edge of their seats. All the SpaceGate Computer Clubbers loved the white haired old gentleman and the simple but important things he taught them with his stories. He continued with the forgetful fireman.

“Late one night the super loud alarm sounded waking all the firemen up. They jumped in their clothes and one at a time grabbed the shiny pole and slid down to where the bright red fire trucks were ready to race out the big doors. As the firemen started putting their boots and hat on, they heard a painful “Yeeeoowwww!” Everyone looked in the direction of the yell to see Forgetful Fred sliding down the pole with out his long pants on.”

The clubbers all laughed so hard they about shook the old condemned building they used for the clubhouse. Gramps continued the story...

“Fred got his special fire pants, boots, coat, and hat on and jumped on the fire truck just in the nick of time. I’m telling you it was the funniest thing you’d ever see in all your natural born days. That big red fire truck racing down the street with its siren screaming for all the cars to get out of the way. And one of the fireman, who else but Fred, fanning his pants because his legs felt they were on fire themselves.”

It took a moment or two for all the clubbers to calm down from Gramps’ story. He got a serious look on his face as all eyes were on him. “We giggle at Forgetful Fred the Fireman. But he teaches us a very important principle to live by. We need to think about what we are about to do next and know they are important. When we sit down to the dinner table and pick up our fork, we know how important it is to begin with table grace. We thank the Lord for our food and those that have fixed it. We ask God to bless our eating the food that we might honor Him with the strength we get from it.”

The boys and girls all nodded in agreement.

“I’ve been watching and listening as Ben teaches you clubbers fun stuff about computers and God. Computers are extremely powerful machines. They can do bazillions of wonderful things. But they can also do wasteful and terrible things too. So as sure as I’ve got silver hair on my head, I believe we should all begin every computing task with Computer Grace. Yes, I call it Computer Grace.”

“To do safe and productive computing we must first THANK God for giving us all good gifts, including computers. We must ask Him to GUIDE us in how we spend our time on the keyboard. And we must ask Him to GUARD us against going to websites and chat rooms where we know that God is not honored. Then we should ASK that He use our fruits of computing to His honor and the salvation of souls.”

It’s very wise to realize that others are watching us and learning from us. Even when we think they are not. Are we showing them by our computing we love God and thankful for His great love He showed us by dying on the Cross?

(end of story)

The Fourth Step

“You’ve all made a dreadful mistake and you have only three days to fix it,” were the words the mayor shouted at the workers. “I don’t care if it was designed in a computer, it is wrong!” The fifteen or so students decorating their college float made brief eye contact with the mayor and then went back to their tasks.

The mayor stepped back and took one more look at the overall float. It was named, “The Fourth Step.” Its appearance certainly made you think of the Olympics and the all determination to win, with its color and symbolism. What had disturbed the mayor so, was the 4th step above the expected three winner’s steps of bronze, silver, and gold.

This was only the second such annual parade in the small country town with a nearby struggling college. The parade was always a morale booster to the hard working citizens and students of all ages. To help extend the festivities on parade day, the leader of each float was invited to use the public address system to explain the theme of each respective float entry.

The procession and events of the day were all working as planned while the mayor harbored the dismay of the college students not correcting their float design. All was about to be made clear when the fourth step’s leader stepped up to the new pa system that still had its occasional screeching contempt for having been taken out of its box.

The speaker used great polish in thanking the small town for all they have provide to the college and its growing library of knowledge. He then told all the hearers the “The Fourth Step” float pointed to an incredible truth about challenge and rewards listed in only one sentence, in only one book in all the world of knowledge we get from space, from the seas, or we get from other cultures.

The sentence and the one before it was read slowly and with great diligence so everyone could hear:

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” Romans 8:37

The speaker said, “Only a personal reading of the verses before and after will bring home the range of this verse. Olympians all through the years have labored long and hard to stand on the third step – and receive the gold medal of excellence. But “more than conquerors” means that God wants us to MORE THAN win. He wants us to stand on that fourth step as “more than a conqueror.”

“Mr. Mayor and all who hear me, the best of man’s achievement can only offer bronze, silver, and gold. God asks us to stand on the fourth step with “him that loved us”.

(end of story)

Fur Ball Lessons

There were 11 fur balls all in a row. You can learn a whole lot from them you know. Each of the 11 had feet sticking out the bottom and a bill pointing toward their parent leading this family of Canadian geese.

I had been sitting in my car parked a few feet from a large calm lake stretched out before me. Except for an occasional fish jumping for its winged breakfast, the lake was just like a mirror reflecting the God-given beauty from above. While the fur ball family was plucking its green breakfast, I was feeding on tasty scripture, to help me grow too. I had just finished Genesis in this my morning reading – I mean feeding.

If you can really slow yourself down you'll notice several crucial lessons from those little fur balls that have no idea what the future holds for them. But there they are, teaching me with my silver hair and disappearing memory. They tell me to watch the leaders and follow close. Without pulpit or computer screen they tell me how important it is to eat right. Do I want to know how, just follow my leader? An occasional glance over my furry shoulder reminds me I have a big strong knowledgeable guardian watching my back door.

I go back to my Bible feeding and see another march that church folks call the Exodus. That march of people God loves so dearly was toward a future full of challenges, blessings, but most of all heaven-sent leadership. The fur balls and parents have moved on to greener patches. My eyes settle on a big clump of tall weeds right down at the water's edge. I try to imagine a little boat made from woven reeds. Wonder of wonders, in the little boat is a live human baby.

With the baby's sister watching from a distance, this baby already carries the death sentence on his life. His death was demanded even before he took his first breath.

So how's your day? What do you see lies before you...probably not cute furry geese or serene reflections of fleecy clouds on calm waters?

What's to become of that tiny helpless baby in the little boat? Well, for one, he gets a name any mighty leader would be proud of... Moses. In circumstances that only God could provide, Moses is cared for by his own mother (in spite of the death sentence). And the queen paid her to do it! But that's only the beginning. Moses is then given all the best of everything in the palace of the king; that had decreed the death sentence on him to begin with!

Oh what would have happened if Moses' sister wasn't watching his backside?

Could that little baby in the weeds ever have imagined that someday, with arms outstretched to God, he'd witness God rolling back the sea to give His loving children a home flowing with milk and honey? When Moses looked over his shoulder near the Red Sea he first saw the most dreaded enemy on the face of the earth. But a moment later He witnessed the pillars of God's promise and protection of his backside, and ours. Even before the mighty waters were parted, God's plan had already pronounced death on that enemy of God's people.

We have folks around us that hold the sentence of death on them because of sin's curse. We must be faithful in leading them to the blood covered Cross that opens God's gate of salvation to an eternal future that man's words can't fully describe.

1. The point is, whether you have a fragile coat of fur and 10 waddling brothers and sisters following you, or God's most precious earthly possession (souls to be led home), trust that He's guarding your backside in ways you can't imagine.
2. Know that serving the King of Kings allows no stragglers or spectators.
3. Above all, feed often in God's word and **FOLLOW CLOSE!**

(end of story)

GAS POWERED FLY SWATTERS

**CLOSE OUT SALE ON OUR FINEST MODEL!
THE GP-17 "NIGHT NAILER" IS GUARANTEED
TO DISPOSSESS A HORSEFLY AT 4 FEET
USING ITS 3-CYCLE TURBO GAS ENGINE.
THE GP-17 IS THE ONLY MODEL HAVING
THE 14-WATT ILLUMINA LAMP FOR
YOUR 24 HOUR PROTECTON!**

Like so many times before, Jake spies another customer walking into his hardware store looking bewildered. Before the customer can ask the usual question, Jake strains to keep a serious look and puts up both hands in front of him in a stop gesture.

"I need to tell you it was false reporting," Jake said. "When the newspaper said one of our GP-17's got loose in STIPPS FIREWORKS FACTORY, it was a malicious lie! Yes, it did take the SWAT team 34 minutes to convince Beulah to unlock the storeroom door. But she always was afraid of gasoline engines!"

The GP-17 story you've just read is no more preposterous than the notion people have that God does things for no reason or lets things happen by His neglect.

To show you what I mean, let's take the fly. While aggravating to us, flies are marvelous examples of engineering to the scientist. Certain kinds of flies have become tiny Guinea pigs for genetics research advancement. But you say, "So who cares? I don't live in a laboratory!"

Hmmmm. OK, let's say Jake takes his family for a picnic. "There's a shaded picnic table over there..." Running ahead of your family, your precious little Dede pipes up with, "But daddy, look at all those flies in that one spot... it's dirty. Instead, how about that table by the flag pole?" Your little 7-year-old has your smarts, right?

Or, back at the house, your wife says, "Hey, Hon! The house is full of flies again. Jake I wish you'd fix that screened door!" Isn't it something how a tiny fly can ruin a grown man's leisure-planned afternoon?

I'll wave God's flag and say that all He has done and said, is for His finest achievement – you and I. With a willingness to seek His love and share it with others, we really understand the value of all the things He's created; you and I, and the fruit fly.

Five primary senses plus more than fifteen combinations, makes us God's crowning creation. We're to be watchmen, caretakers of all that's around us. From nursing home residents to the Ozone layer, we must trust His leadership ...His Lordship in all that we do.

God has placed someone near you that needs what you can give best. Share with them the peace and power that comes from accepting New Life from the Savior and Creator of all things.

Be as expedient as the GP-17...

(end of story)

End of Bundle #04