

Cookie Jar Granny and the

Sally cell phones



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Introduction

My fear is heightened with each cold hard clank – clank – clank

beneath my feet. I'm not sure I should hold my breath as though it'll be my last, or not.

But still the clank – clank – clank... clank – clank – clank. With all my strength I want to scream, "*I don't want to be here!*" but can do little more than open my eyes for a quick small peek. As I do I see treetops disappear beneath me... clank – clank – clank.

For a split second my mind recalls the quiet serenity a few days earlier watching ducks ride the gentle wave crests and troughs on Lake Bluelife.

Across the last 27 years I still remember those sights and sounds and how contrasting they were. Now I chuckle a bit remembering I PAID to have that "Killer" roller coaster shiver my timbers.

Our creator has fashioned our mind and body to learn and to judge with the help of contrasts. We savor the sunset colors by also seeing the white lightning and black skies. How can we deeply enjoy the cool evening breeze without also remembering winter's biting cold winds or the sweltering August heat like a blast furnace? Do your ears enjoy the calls of geese in flight and contrast that against the phone calls, doors slamming, office beeps, and endless clamor?

The following pages will neither amaze nor mystify. The hope is to present some everyday contrasts to the minds of young people and bring God's design, provisions, and plans for us to the forefront of our thinking.

COOKIE JAR GRANNY AND THE SALLY CELL PHONES begins with Granny Sims – by contrast probably the last person on earth to own a cookie jar.

Chapter 1

Granny Sims

She didn't know what she must have been thinking when one of her chums at her Silver Headers Seniors club talked her into buying one of those email machines. Granny understood just enough about this new fangled gadget that it really was not a real computer but just the email part of it. It was about the size of one of her small purses.

Talker Tillie had come over and helped her get the thing running. Whew! That woman could talk the paint off the side of a battleship. But Granny promised she'd give it a try. For fear she'd press the wrong button and it'd shock her, she would type messages with two wooden pencils. Well, at least you have to give her credit for trying.

Talker hadn't told her so, but Granny Sims decided she'd only use it on Thursdays. She figured no sense in wearing the thing out before the garden was up. All day Thursdays she'd sit in front of the fool thing and wait for it to do its thing. But nothing. The creepy thing just sat there like an old shoe with no laces. "WELL THIS IS GONNA STOP!"

Something you need to know about Granny. In her prime she was the leader of a team of women riveters on war ships. If Granny thought you were a slacker, she'd flip you a hot rivet – at least that's what all her team thought. Sunday night's missionary meeting shook the whole church building. When Granny Sims slammed her hand on the table, you thought there was a red-hot rivet in the air, the way everyone took notice.

"**WELL I'M A WAITIN'!** I bought this email thing and it's not getting used." With the same enthusiasm as in her prime, she took her Bible in hand and pointed at Velma, and demanded, "You got one of these email things! By next Thursday I want you to email me a message! If you aren't smart enough to think of something, type in a Bible verse!"

She swung around and looked Barney Paver straight in the eye. He held his breath like looking down a gun barrel. "Barney your grandson got you one of these email things. I remember you puttin' on airs, telling us about it. When I log in next Thursday, I want to see a message from you. I know you like numbers. I want a list of the different light bulb sizes and how many of each are used here in church! If I don't get it, I'll be over on your front yard yellin' you are a no-a-count goof-off so's all your neighbors can hear me! As for me, I'm gonna email our missionaries with some notes from our pastor's great sermon last Sunday. He works hard on those messages and I mean for him to be heard all the way to Venezuela!" "Let's quit committein' and get doing!" She left with the same determination you'd have getting back to putting red-hot rivets in a gun turret.

Beulah didn't know anything that would top that, so she asked Ben to close in prayer. He did and they all quickly left hoping not to see Granny before they got home.

A short story made shorter, Granny Sims the Riveter whipped together a team of 14 silver-haired emailers that were just about to start getting after the little missions-lovin' church about 30 miles down the road. Oh. You'll be happy to know that as of yet there has been no yellin' on Barney's front lawn.

Now do you see that every REAL granny needs a cookie jar?

Cookie Jar

A soldier must have his gun. A farmer can't work without his tractor, a doctor is effective with his stethoscope, and a pilot must have his compass.

No doubt the college course on how to be a granny will emphasize that she must wear small round glasses worn well down on the nose with soft eyes peering over the rims. At least one apron pocket must be chock full of recipe goodies for young people accompanied with stories first shared near the old Southern Comfort wood-burning cook stove. The sleeping cat nearby and the whistling tea kettle are both optional.

But what is NOT optional is a sturdy cookie jar whose contents can only be seen by looking in the top. You see, these jars seem to be the best dream builders. Let me illustrate.

From the moment the pastor of my preteen years announced a planned church pot luck dinner, I began to dream of mom's cookie jar...no foolin'. Before pastor got all the event details out of his lips I could see myself sitting in the back seat of the old Ford with the cookie jar on my lap and fork at the ready. Oh, the dreaming and praying I did to make sure there were cookie jar leftovers. What you don't know yet, is that great cookie jars also make fantastic bean pots. After all these years I can still taste those beans in the back seat. Mom had added her customary molasses and brown sugar. Like frosting on a cake she would top the beans with sweet onion slivers and strips of bacon that were toasted to curl around your tongue for that extra taste bud trip.

Rain Barrel Boat Races

You have to know there is no way to learn the full potential of a cookie jar without also learning about rain barrels. It's an absolute fact. Rain barrels hold truths about cookie jars that can hardly be learned anywhere else.

Over half a century ago, when I was about 8 or 9, I spent the summer with my grandparents. There and then I learned about boat races and rain barrels. The bottom line is that they don't go together. I had made a simple boat with a small flat piece of wood by carving out a large notch in one end of the wood. I stretched a couple rubber bands across the two protruding prongs and inserted a shortened popsicle stick between them. It put to mind a paddle wheel river boat.

Now that was all well and good except I had no river, pond, or puddle to test my engineering. The trouble began when I discovered grandma's rain barrel. Now a rain barrel is a simple but crucial device for doing all sorts of things. The roof downspout feeds fresh soft rain water into the top of the barrel while a small hole near the top prevents the excess from spilling over the top. Its outside appearance gives nothing to write home about. But when the cover is removed, and the sun is just right, you can see cool clear refreshing water all the way to the bottom.

When grandma caught me having boat races in her rain barrel, I thought sure my bottom was going to enter the picture too. I think that probably would have been better. I mean to get it over and done with, rather than spending the next half hour being dragged all over the property by the ear and shown everywhere that rainwater was used.

Never, never again did I let the rain barrel and its life giving cleansing contents be my playground. Never again did I not give second thoughts to the value of things by only looking just at the outsides, whether it's rain barrels, cookie jars, or people.

Emilee

Emilee is one of the principle characters of this tale and a bundle of contrasts in her own right. She's a flower talker and good at it, but not in a way you'd think her strange. Just as dependable as the tides, she shows up at granny's each Saturday morning and carefully takes the cover off the rain barrel. As her left hand stands the lid against the barrel her other hand dutifully dips the plastic milk jug into the water for the first of 5 or 6 trips.

As though no one or nothing else mattered, Emilee begins her watering chore at the north side of the driveway entrance. Even though she is only 9 years old she has already learned that talking to the flowers while giving them a drink somehow makes them blossom better... at least it does her.

There are no other children on Emilee's street, no brothers or sisters, or even a father (after the factory accident that is.) The funeral was especially hard on the 9 year old with a powder blue streamer ribbon setting off the flowing slightly blond hair hiding the once-in-a-lifetime kind of tears.

Her mother works 54 hours a week and has precious little time for listening to little girl woes. But the daffodils, zinnias, and marigolds listen with no complaints. Another trip with water and more flower talk came from the young heart so full of questions without answers.

Drying the last of the breakfast dishes, Granny watches Emilee from the kitchen window. "Emilee!" she calls out the window. "Would you water a couple of my house plants?" Granny's plan is now in motion. If you were a house mouse watching these events unfolding – you'd swear that some precious powerful things were to follow.

Emilee finished watering as she was told, while Granny set two cups of cocoa on saucers on the table. Step two of the Granny Plan: "Emilee. I hope you'll drink some cocoa with me... and maybe have a homemade cookie." With a 9 yr old's smile of approval, both sat down and cautiously took sips of the smoothest cocoa you ever put your lips to.

Now that "How to be a Granny" college course put great emphasis on listening. No. Not the listening to give a robotic answer; but deep listening till you can hear the heart speaking. This was one of Cookie Jar Granny's specialties. Emilee took another slow sip of the cocoa and enjoying the warmth through her fingers. Her eyes stared at the big cookie jar in front of her.

Her first discovery was all the chips and cracks in it. Emilee imagined its first trip was in a wagon traveling along the pioneer trail. Its owners couldn't imagine it would wind up on a kitchen table in front of a little girl hungry for comfort, for some kind of meaning to all these stressful events in her life and more over the horizon.

The second discovery was that the outside wasn't fancy at all. She slowly, careful of the table cloth, rotated the cookie jar to prove to herself the outside had no writing, decorations, bumps, lumps, or even handles. To Emilee it was like the cookie container was saying, "don't bother with my outside appearance, dive into what I have waiting inside."

For just a moment, she softly laid her hand on Granny's forearm and a smile that said, "This is a good place. I want to come here often. I want to learn more of the true insides of things." Granny's hand, so full of wrinkles and scars of bygone days, covered Emilee's hand with the same warm comfort she felt from the cocoa cup.

Step three of the Granny Plan: "Sweetie. Would you ask your mom if you could come over Wednesday? I promise I'll be sure to have the cookie jar out and full. Will you do that?" An excited "Yes. I sure will. I better cover the rain barrel and get home to lunch. Thanks for the cookie. See ya!"

After the door closed, Granny's gaze panned across the room, noticing the doily fashioned like a flower with raised edges displaying its pure white beauty stirring imaginations of all the work that made it. At its center were the two glass blown horses so fragile they looked like they would disintegrate if you stared at them too long. They were a gift from Brother Charles to Granny and her departed Ernie that she misses so much.

Her gaze moved to the wall plaque given her at her retirement. It proudly states, "To Lucy Handler in appreciation of 25 years of faithful loving service to the Hebron Public Library." Oh how her arms ached to hug a young one to her lap in the library corner and open a book to the wonders and hopes of a bright future.

Her gaze across the room stopped at that plain old beat-up cookie jar. Out loud, Granny asked the cookie jar, "What is it you are up to? Are you about to brighten the dreams of an old worn out lady and a 9 year old sweet heart?"

The Cat Named Dawg.

To understand Cookie Jar Granny (that's Lucy Handler) you need to know some about Ernie; her spouse of 57 years. Ernie's greatest passion was learning more and more about his Savior Jesus Christ. The second thing was getting folks to realize they were mostly taking life's struggles a bit too serious. He's say, "Loosen up, God's in control, give Him a chance to show you," with his best grandpa smile.

Granny was reminded often to loosen up like the time he was napping with his slippers on, in his favorite easy chair. If you looked the second time you'd see he had his socks on the OUTSIDE of his slippers. And then back in the summer of '62 Ernie got a calico cat for Granny. The problem was...Granny said he could name it. Now you can see trouble coming, right? Well, he named the cat Dawg. That's "D...A...W...G..." Ernie tells folks, "We've got a calico cat named Dawg. So loosen up!"

He once told Granny the whole world thinks that nothing's worth anything unless its got batteries with it. So he took his super sticky tape and taped two batteries to the side of the cookie jar (a.k.a. bean pot). Lucy didn't wash the outside of the jar for three weeks because she thought the batteries would explode in the dish water. I suppose every family tree needs an Ernie. I think.

Lonely Fingers

The usual weekend watering and flower talking continued until about two weeks later. That Saturday morning Cookie Jar Granny was dusting off the several photos of her and Ernie. Her favorite was of Ernie, Jack, and Barney. Oh how Ernie enjoyed that team of mules. Granny and Ernie had visited a park situated on what had been a part of the Erie Canal. For a small admission fee you could ride a short distance in a real canal boat pulled by Jack and Barney – the two mules. Barney was the one with his long ears protruding through the old straw hat.

Granny picked up the photo and caressed the frame with lonely fingers. She remembered Ernie sometimes being as stubborn as both those mules put together.

The cherished photo was put back just a second or two before the customary flower talking began on the north side of the driveway. But now there was a noticeable difference. Today there were two voices. The second was a young lady about the same age as Emilee.

Without knowing any of the techniques about the fine art of On-the-job training or mentoring, Emilee was teaching her new friend all the details of watering, watching things grow – or just being a friend.

From the window Granny saw the newcomer as a clean courteous little girl with groomed medium length dark hair. Her cautious smile almost kept you from noticing the two rips in her dress or the dog's chew marks on her left flip-flop. Granny smiled at the two and busied herself in the back bedroom, not seeing the two anymore till Wednesday.

Wednesday Cookie Jar Granny answered a knock at her door and it was Emilee and her friend of last Saturday. Emilee began, "Granny. This is my new friend Dede Hoann. She's a year younger than me. She's eight. Would it be ok if I showed Dede about watering your house plants?"

Granny's lonely feelings were swept away with two shiny smiles and an invitation inside. "I'll finish my mending while you two tend to the watering." Now seated, she picked up her mending task making sure not to distract the two girls. The silver-haired lady became no more than a house mouse eavesdropping on the preteen training.

She almost chuckled out loud hearing Emilee make it crystal clear, "Dede don't even breathe on those glass horses. You'd break them and we'll both be in deep trouble." The girls discussed how difficult it must have been for Ernie to whittle the three foot piece of chain with a cage on the end of it with a ball inside. All of it is interconnected and from the same piece of wood. Their favorite was the goofy mechanical bird that rocked back and forth continuously getting a drink out of the water glass.

Over in the corner, almost unnoticeable was one of Ernie's favorite sayings in the later years of his life, "Smiles and hugs and listening ears; silver hair to quiet young fears. – see PS. 71:18". Little did Lucy Handler realize she was becoming a part of that fulfillment with the help of a cookie jar.

Granny would occasionally sneak a peek at Dede and noticed she had the same dress on, though it was fresh laundered and still showed two rips. It took every bit of her strength to keep from moving over to Dede, sweeping her up in a super hug and mending her dress right there in the middle of the dining room. I ask you, does it take a real smarty to figure which mending is most important; a sock that should have been thrown out, or the dress of a precious 8 yr old proud of what little she does have?

But then the shocker came. Granny realized something almost as obscure as Ernie's saying. It was the ribbons. Both girls had ribbons in their hair. Ernie would have loved them. That wasn't the shocker. Only with longer examination did Lucy realize the ribbon in Emilee's hair was the same ribbon she had in her hair weeks before. But what shocked the silver-haired lady was that Emilee's ribbon was much shorter. The clincher was that the ribbon in Dede's hair had come from Emilee's ribbon.

Granny could do nothing else but grab her handkerchief and blow her nose. Her heart shouted the question, "How do you teach a nine year old that sharing and loving also require sacrifice. Emilee teaches with powder blue hair ribbons."

The Last of the Cookies

The two young ladies were seated at the dining room table with the precious cookie jar (part time bean pot) at its center. Granny was filling three cups with milk, hearing Emilee give Dede strict instructions on how to treat a cookie jar. "Number 1, you don't look in the top, you just reach in and take out the first thing you touch. Number 2, you eat all of what you take. Number 3, no crumbs on the table or on your face." Dede had to learn right off; sloppy is not what you get around the cookie jar.

For the next twenty minutes or so, the girls listened to cooking techniques learned in a log cabin with no electricity or running water. The girls savored the descriptions of nights of howling winds outside contrasted with inside shadows dancing on the hand-hewn log walls. Granny told the girls there is absolutely no TV program or movie to fire up the imagination better than sitting close to your sweetie and staring at the hypnotizing flames slowly reducing to coals. The pot comes out and in no time the little one room cabin is filled with popcorn smells just waiting for a little melted butter.

On that Wednesday there was no idea in any of the three minds that there would be no more cookies in that jar in front of them for some time to come. Nor did they realize that contents far more delightful would fill the pot. And it wouldn't be popcorn either.

Story Telling – Big Time

Granny stepped out on the porch as the girls were beginning this Saturday's watering and flower talking. She called to them, "When you two finishing the watering and cover the rain barrel, I have something I want to read to you!" Well, that's all it took to put the girls in high gear getting their chores done. Cookie Jar Granny could read a story or tell a tale to set your ear drums a prancing. It must have been those many years at the library with the children listening to her stories.

One of her favorites was about Weird Harold who didn't do too well at sort-of keeping his eye on the ball, if you get what I mean. It seems the three boys were building a super sized sling shot between two trees with the help of several bicycle inner tubes connected together. When Donny cut the rope to see how much power it had, Harold was standing in the wrong place. If it wasn't for the haystack being straight ahead, Harold would still be circling the moon.

And Granny was no slouch at spinning a yarn either. You could even mention one of her recipes like her green tomato pudding or the red-tater marmalade and she'd spin you a corker on the fly. But today it was Ernie's turn.

With the silver-haired lady sitting on the front porch swing, the two girls both snuggled up close to her and never uttered a peep. She began, "Before I read the story, I want to tell you both that I've been watching you. No not for faults, but just noticing you two are a bit different from each other. You talk just a little different, look different, and get perked up about slightly different things. I can appreciate each of you by comparing you both."

Lucy continued, "You put me to mind of one of Ernie's favorite stories he loved to tell about when he was close to your age. I'd heard it so many times, I wrote it down, on one of my slow days at the library. Well here it is." The girls tried to snuggle up closer to not miss one word or syllable.

Itching to be Beautiful

WITH DEEP RUMBLING NOISES THAT MADE US KEEP SILENT, THE BIG HEAVY DOOR SLID OPEN as we held our breath. We'd been in this world, all its own, only once before. Our memories of then would last more than a lifetime. Two of my 8-year-old classmates and I, almost reverently walked into the woodshop toward our seats for this spectacle. Mr. Grayson wore enough silver hair for two grandfathers and a contagious smile that quickly smoothed life's roughness, whatever the age.

Sometimes he didn't speak to us for several minutes. It was like he was letting the woodshop do it for him. Our young impressionable eyes would feast on all that was around us. We loved each precious visit. In this workshop world there was no horror, hatred, or hurt, especially for little boys.

In the center of the room was a powerful table saw. So well cared for, you couldn't guess how old it really was. In a far corner was a band saw. There were no cobwebs or grime around it either. We saw tools for making wood circular, square, smooth, or strong. But during these memorable visits we would learn the most powerful tools are sometimes the broom, cleaning rag, or well-ordered shelves.

We three sat still and quiet on our box seats. This was the last place on earth for horseplay. "Gramps" was the name Mr. Grayson loved for us to call him. With no children of his own, he saw in each of us something that stirred his friendship.

Gramps would occasionally turn from his work and press his smile into each of our eyes. Still without lip-words, he would pick up a small insignificant piece of wood off the floor and bring it over to us. Right in front of us he would slowly move his fingers over the wood. You could imagine the wood was telling Gramps its story. His first words "Look carefully at this piece of wood. Really think about what you see."

Each of us, in turn, inspected the wood with the intensity of a clever detective. When later questioned, my buddies told Gramps how little, dirty, rough, and worthless it was. As I waited my turn to answer, my eyes investigated the ceiling braces of the shop and the countless little crevices holding pieces of wood not much larger than the one we held. Before we left that incredible workshop world that day, we were asked to examine a few more pieces of wood, contrasting from all the others.

Gramps taught us some of the differences of woods. Some were hard, wear long, but are brittle. Others were soft enough to carve your initials with a fingernail. Some pieces had an aroma that would brighten a day just carried in a pocket like a pencil. Other woods with wavy patterns of light and dark grain set your mind to seeing a sunset in wood. He showed us how to measure long ago time and weather, with wood. We learned from him that boards that are straight and true make the strongest of projects.

Ernie would finish his Itching story with:

“How many times, in the half century since those woodshop days, I’ve longed to open that door to wood, wishes, and wonder? Like a breath of fresh air I’d step out of today’s rough unwanted circumstances. Only there could my mind taste the possibilities that might lie before me.

Some farmers plant seeds to grow food. Other farmers plant trees for wood to become homes and heat. Gramps was a farmer with wood. He planted seeds of wood in my soul just itching to become something beautiful. He grew deep roots of my life.

What kind of workshop has God given you? They come in all sizes and flavors you know. Some workshops to fashion dreams of hope contain a washing machine, or a sink, a computer, telephone, back yard fence, or even a baby crib. It really doesn’t take silver hair to make a farmer’s seed planter. All that’s really needed is to open your workshop door to your neighbor. God will produce the growth. And He does invite you to do the watering.”

Granny folded the story and put it in one of her deep apron pockets. Both girls sat almost motionless as though each were still in a workshop of their own, looking around for something or someone just itching to become something beautiful. Maybe you start with a ribbon, a torn dress, or even a not-all-together family. I hear cookie jars work wonders too.

Cookie Jar Healing

Crouched near the rain barrel Monday afternoon, Granny spied her two young friends walking up the driveway. “Well look at the long faces on you two.” The silver-haired lady dipped the rag in the rain water and wiped the last of the garden dirt off a pumpkin so ugly even the hogs would pass up.

“Seeing how this is just Monday and both your long faces, it appears we need to declare a Punkin Day for ourselves.” Neither girl knew what a Punkin Day was – but it didn’t matter. The girls had long before; learned Granny could heal a troubled spirit like warm creamy cocoa on a bad winter’s day.

The girls finally came right out and asked Granny why she’d fool with such an ugly pumpkin. Cookie Jar Granny said, “You tell me how your day went and then I’ll teach you about Punkin Day.”

Dede almost shed tears telling Granny about the teasing she got at the shopping mall, because of her torn dress and ragged flip flop. Granny didn’t try to comfort Dede with words, right off. But she told the girls this was a good time for a Punkin Day.

Holding up the ugly pumpkin she asked the girls, “Isn’t he a beauty?” Emilee and Dede looked at each other thinking Granny was having one of those mental moments that only old folks have. Lucy Handler (that’s Granny) decided she’d wait for another day to state that no one can properly use a cookie jar without previously having a Punkin Day.

She did start with, “One fun thing about a Punkin Day is you can start and stop it whenever you want. Punkin Day is not one of those stuffy sun-up to sun-down things.”

Emilee covered the rain barrel and caught up to the other two heading for the front porch swing. The three sat on the swing with Granny in the middle. Each girl hooked an arm through one of Granny’s like she could lead them through stormy waters or something.

“One of the important things you do on Punkin Day is to learn and think about folks worse off than you.” With a bit of a chuckle, “You might think of that ugly pumpkin as being not as well off as you or me. Girls – how would you like me to tell you about Gramps and the Bus Station Lady?” They both gave Granny a yah-yah-yah smile. Then returned their gaze to that ugly pumpkin – on this... this Punkin Day.”

A Little Hopeless

Gramps sat all alone in the old condemned building staring at all the walls and corners, with a troubled heart. He had so many times, thought of tearing down the old structure. His heart told him the old building was no more needed than he and his gray hair were.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the door open just a bit with a slow mysterious creak. In a moment a clump of long dirty hair began to appear. Next 2 dark brown eyes of a little preschooler cautiously peered around the door, spied Gramps and disappeared. A few minutes later the little girl peered in again. Without a word, she shyly entered the old building with her back against the wall, opposite Gramps.

Her dirty face, ripped clothes, and matted hair easily stereotyped her as a castaway in anyone’s book. The old gentleman and the little ragamuffin carefully watched the other wondering who would move first. Not really knowing why, Gramps slid out of the old rickety chair and sat on the floor Indian fashion, as best as his stiff joints would allow. He slowly picked up a short piece of string lying nearby and started winding it around his fingers like weaving a rug. The little lady watched with increasing interest.

Gramps started tying a little knot in one end of the string and she moved next to him to get a closer look. In tender tones, Gramps said, “They call me Gramps. What’s your name?” “Hopeless” came the matter of fact answer. “No. No. I mean what is your name?” he asked while risking a touch on her shoulder. “Mama says I’m hopeless. The lady that sleeps behind the bus station says I’m hopeless. Well, I guess I’m Hopeless. Mr. Gramps, is Hopeless my name or a disease I got?”

Out came a big bandanna from the well worn bib overalls just in time to catch the first tears on the old gentleman’s face. In careful movements the little girl laid her head against Gramp’s leg and let out a long deep sigh. The weary pained fingers took the bandanna and wiped some of the dirt off the face of little Hopeless.

The old building was so quiet he could hear the restful breathing of a little one searching for someone to care. The stare of the old gentleman returned to the walls and corners of the old building whose future of purpose seemed hopeless. Maybe the name of the building should be Hopeless too.

The old gentleman’s knee was killing him, but what a way to go... sharing restful moments with someone that hurts too. He didn’t dare move a muscle.

Maybe an hour later, little Hopeless woke up but was in no hurry to leave the calm caring corner of the condemned building. Occasionally the neighborhood computer club brought junk pieces of computers to the old building that had no electricity. They tried to discover things about a computer’s insides. Gramps found an old keyboard. The keycaps were removed, sitting in a pile nearby.

He worked quickly hoping that little Hopeless didn’t wander off. Seating himself on the floor near Hopeless, he spread out the letter keycaps and started lining up the alphabet. His heart raced

with the thrill of teaching the little ragamuffin, with her messy hair and dark brown eyes starved for signs of unconditional love.

The orange colored sun that forced its rays through the dirty cracked windows was moving low in the sky. With upturned eyes that would melt the heart of any football player, she asked, “Mr. Gramps. If I promise to bring them back tomorrow, can I borrow your computer keys?” The reply, “Sure. No problem.” His heart said, “I’ll give you my heart too, if you ask.” They hugged and each went their own way.

The next afternoon, Gramps was sitting on the rickety chair and little Hopeless came in and gave him the kind of hug that grandpas love the world over. She didn’t have the computer keys with her, so Gramps reminded her of yesterday’s promise to return them. She pointed toward the door she had come in. “The bus station lady is here.” A middle aged lady with about the same appearance as little Hopeless, cautiously came through the door. In her hand was a discarded bread wrapper with the keycaps inside. She walked up to Gramps and asked, “Will you teach me, mister?”

(end of story)

Granny ended the Little Hopeless story with, “Now on Punkin Day you have to have REAL pumpkin cookies – not ol’ store-bought. You make them yourself.” Both girls rubbed their hands together and mumbled, “Boy this Punkin Day is going to be exciting.”

As the three went into the kitchen, things were made ready for cookie cookin’. The two preteens learned how to scoop out that ugly pumpkin and make yummy cookies. In a short time the aroma fired up the taste buds of anyone in the house. While the cookies were finishing their baking, Lucy had the girls cut some pieces of wax paper and place a rubber band by each paper.

Out came the magic markers and some soft plastic wrap which made the girls question what this had to do with Punkin Day. The girls worked hard at drawing a smiley face on that ugly pumpkin shell. They found the plastic wrap was to line the inside of the shell.

The next step on this Punkin Day was to sample a few of the cookies and then put a couple in each of the papers and secure with the rubber band. The packaged cookies were then carefully placed inside that once ugly pumpkin and the lid put in place. The three stared at the finished pumpkin on this fun Punkin Day.

Lucy told the girls, “The very best part of Punkin Day is to share your cookie jar, I mean, pumpkin with others who don’t look too pretty or even act ugly. Girls... I am absolutely sure some folks are sad because they need to declare a Punkin Day or even be a part of someone else’s.”

Dede knew right off who she needed to open her orange cookie jar to...

Well, You just knew it would happen soon.

Both girls came over to Granny’s on Tuesday with almost a shout, “We both love coming over here and learning fun things and we just couldn’t wait.” The girls didn’t say so, but their hearts were both super hungry for more of the attention they got from Granny – with or without her cookie jar and stories.

Not warning the girls ahead of time, Lucy, that’s Granny, had something quite different in the jar that had previously held cookies. Almost out of habit the girls took seats at the dining room table and gave curious looks at the cookie jar which displayed no hints of the surprises it now held.

The girls were each given a little glass of apple juice and a couple snack crackers as Granny slid the mysterious cookie jar closer to them with all the care someone would move a ticking bomb.

Granny added to the mystery by using both hands to remove the small lid. The last thing in the world, the girls would do, is move their stare off the top of the cookie jar. Dede was asked to reach in first and pull out the first thing her fingers touched.

More surprised than you can describe with words, Dede pulled a tin can out of the cookie jar. Both girls quickly noticed the can had a string connected to it. It was tied inside a hole of the flat end of the can. Cookie Jar Granny motioned to Emilee to reach in and pull out whatever was connected to the other end of the string. The string was rather long and a little thicker than kite string.

With both hands Emilee retrieved the string and finally pulled on the string as though she was pulling in a fighting fish. Out came another surprise. It was another tin can. The end of Emilee's string was tied in the hole of the second tin can in the same way as Dede's first can.

More puzzled than ever, both girls followed Granny's instructions to each take her tin can and spread apart as far as the string would allow. They were to gently pull on the tin cans to keep the string taut. And then put their mouths close to the open end of each's tin can.

They were cautioned to not touch the end of the can that held the string, but to hold it only at its round sides. "Phones are fun to play and pretend with. Especially ones you've made yourself," explained the silver-haired lady. She further explained that these were much like the pretend phones she and her friends enjoyed so many years ago. Occasionally walking from one girl to the other, Lucy taught the girls some of phone rules that are quite important even today.

Some of them were:

- Keep the string taut.
- Don't let anything touch or interfere with the string.
- Only one person talk at a time.
- Use words that won't dishonor God.
- Shouting is not good manners.
- Don't talk for long times.
- The Bible says not to tell lies or be busybodies.
- It's fun to teach others about talking on phones.

Granny showed the girls how to create their own tin can phones, with just a bit of adult help. Their expressions told you they were both thinking of other friends they could have 'telephony fun' with.

Lucy would be quick and direct to tell you that all the lessons that come out of the cookie jar should be shared with others, including how to safely create some of the objects for the stories.

Always review 2Tim 2:2.

It couldn't have been more than two days later while Granny was tying up the tomato vines when she heard Emilee's and Dede's excited greeting from behind her. Granny wasn't sure if the girls ever realized the excitement they were bringing to this gardener's life.

Her excitement jumped to the next level as she turned around and saw four girls, not two. The two new girls were also around 8 or 9. Barbara, the pretty African American girl was holding the tin can telephone. The second girl talked with a more timid tone in saying, "My name's Candy." She drew Granny's gaze to her cane then with a tender smile hiding a painful past, she added, "They call me Candy Cane."

It was a good thing Granny's hands were still covered with the gardening grime or each of the girls would have received one of Lucy's (that's Granny) Blue Ribbon Hugs. The silver-haired gardener laid her tools on the trellis bench and led the girls in the door, single file like ducks in a

row. Each girl glanced in Candy Cane's direction to make sure the steps and screen door hadn't caused a problem.

Barbara put the tin can telephone on the floor not far from Dawg, who was trying to get started on another afternoon nap. (Now do you remember that Dawg is the name of the cat?) Well anyhow the girls all sat at the table staring at all the dining room decorations and furniture as Granny washed off the garden grime.

As a small cup of juice and stick pretzel was placed in front of each girl, Granny asked Emilee to give God thanks. All hands were folded and eyes closed. No sooner was Emilee's "Amen" heard than the flood gates of excited chatter began relating the tin can telephone encounters at school let loose.

Candy Cane was invited to reach in the cookie jar after all the "necessary" rules were stated. All eyes were riveted to the cookie jar extraction, listening for any hint as to what the fingers first touched. "It feels like a paper clip,,, noooo... it's something more." came the words from Candy that brought back her smile that Granny wished she could make bone deep and permanent.

Candy slowly pulled her find out of the jar. It looked something like a cell phone, but it was made with cardboard and a paper clip. Before the girls could voice their questions to Lucy, she began, "I want you girls to pass around this cardboard cell phone while I tell you about Little Judy and the Hymn Cake. You know, hymn is the name of most songs we sing at church and to the Lord Jesus. So this is a 'church-song' story with a special lesson we need to learn right off.

Little Judy and the Hymn Cake

Little Judy could hardly keep up with the small group of other children from the church nearby. The determination in their step reminded you of a group of soldiers on a mission. The children had come on their mercy mission to the nursing home several times before and the residents loved each and every visit. Most of the children brought small trinkets that could easily be held by some of the residents.

But today was just a bit different in the gifts they had brought. Judy's older brother Ben had printed the words to several very old hymns he knew the nursing home residents loved and loved to sing. Ben had used his computer program to print the words extra large so those with poor vision could even read the words.

Tina came up with a wonderful idea when she had Ben print an extra copy of each of the hymns. She immediately took her copies of the hymns to the kitchen, and got a mixing bowl out of the cupboard. Little Judy was always interested in learning new things that are done in the kitchen. But in all her seven years she'd never seen a recipe that used hymns. This she had to witness for herself.

Since Tina has a wonderful talent for recruiting anyone anywhere, Judy was given an apron and a big wooden spoon to go with the mixing bowl. Tina carefully got a cup of flour from the flour bin and poured it in the bowl. Little Judy became more confused than ever.

Some water was added to the flour and directions were given to mix water and flour until all the lumps were gone. While the seven year old stirred dutifully, she would glance at the stack of hymn sheets and ask herself, "Am I making a hymn cake?"

All questions were answered when Judy's mixture became the paste that glued the hymn sheets to thin cardboard like that found in store bought shirts, and on the back of paper tablets. Tina recruited her brother Ben to cut the "hymn boards" into varied shape pieces and the result being hymn puzzles for the nursing home residents.

So now you understand the reason for the great pride in little Judy's step as she followed the other kids into the nursing home.

After all the gifts and puzzles were distributed Judy walked over to old Mrs. Beemer. Without saying anything Judy pulled out one of the computer hymn sheets Ben had thrown away at home.

Mrs. Beemer saw the misspelled words and the reasons Ben had trashed the page, but then she noticed at the bottom of the page a row of X's and O's ending with a heart surely drawn by a little girl. Old Mrs. Beemer pointed at the X's and O's and then pointed at little Judy. Judy countered with pointing at her own chest and shaking her head yes.

Across the room the rest of the kids couldn't figure out why an old sheet of computer paper would cause an 83 year old lady and a seven year old lady to hug real big."

Cookie Jar Granny paused in closing her story by saying, "It's so much fun to make things. And then use them to share with others. But the most fun is being able to create something you've put a lot of thought and care into, so that you can use it to show love toward others – maybe even someone that others don't pay too much attention to. Little Judy found a friend and real joy by taking something out of the trash and stirring in X's and O's love and giving to others who are maybe not having a good day."

Sally Cell Phone

With about the same excitement as a Punkin Day, Emilee, Dede, Barbara, and Candy Cane were shown by Granny how to cut pictures of cell phones from newspapers and magazines and then paste them on small pieces of cardboard. The cardboard would be folded in half like most cell phones and a paper clip became an antenna. A picture of small batteries were glued on the back.

Since there wasn't time to make their own flour and water glue (paste), some store-bought glue was used.

Granny told the girls, "Congratulations girls. You've each just made a valuable Sally Cell Phone. Let me illustrate why they're valuable even though you've made them from cardboard and newspapers.



Cell Phone Batteries

Lucy (that's Granny) picked up a Sally Cell Phone and pointed at the batteries on the back side. "What are the batteries for?" she asked the girls. Some of her other questions were:

- What happens when they run down?
- How/when do you charge them up?
- Have you seen the charge indicator?

She told the girls:

- Batteries, when replaced, must be the right size and shape or they don't fit the opening designed for them.
- They must be recharged in the right way with great attention. It can't be rushed.
- The charge indicator must be given attention at least every day

With good eye contact Granny then told the girls God has given each of us a charge indicator. But it's better than an electronic cell phone one. Our charge indicator is our actions and attitudes each day. If our spiritual batteries are low and need to be recharged, we can tell by our getting:

- Angry,
- afraid,
- have thoughts not pleasing to God,
- we're not respectful to others
- what other ways can you think of?

Other lessons with Sally Cell Phones are included at the end of this book.

The Cell Phone Giveaways

A few days later the girls returned to Cookie Jar Granny's house hopefully to learn another Sally Cell Phone lesson they'd be able to share.

But there was a problem...

After all were seated at the dining room table and the girls had finished their apple juice and pretzel, Granny noticed something was wrong – something was missing. Sitting in the front of Emilee, Dede, and Candy Cane were their cell phones – but not in front of Barbara the pr4etty African-American 8 year old.

The other girls listened as Barbara explained to Granny why she didn't have hers.

"No Granny. I certainly wouldn't throw it away or let it get damaged. But I showed it to my friend Marsha and her eyes lit up like a piece of cake was set in front of her. Well, Marsha asked me if she could borrow it for church next Sunday for show and tell. See Granny, when Marsha told me her Sunday School didn't have any books to study from I just had to send my Sally Cell Phone with her. Besides, I can make another one."

It wasn't two minutes before Emilee and Dede excitedly told Barbara they'd help her make another one.

But then came the bombshell...

Candy Cane told the girls "Hey! Wait a minute! I know someone I'd like to share my Sally CDP with. I'm tellin' ya gang – we'd better make several extras."

As the girls enthusiastically discussed others they could make phones for, Granny went to the back bedroom and set on the edge of the bed.

She blew her nose to hold back the tears and asked, "God what have you done? Have you turned a piece of cardboard, newspaper, and paperclip into a missionary – a missionary's tool? God have you lit a fire for missions in the hearts of some young ladies that overshadowed challenges of their own?"

Still seated on the bed her eyes rested on a photograph of her beloved Ernie. "Oh Ernie, I hope you're seeing from heaven's window how cardboard, and cookie jar has brought Christ to the midst of the girls and made me so alive."

Almost like a voice speaking in Granny's ear, she heard a tender heaven-sent voice saying, "Cookie Jar Granny, just as sure as these nail prints are here in my hands, Ernie and I both rejoice n you sewing seeds of hope and happiness in my name." In Ernie's tone, Lucy's heart heard, **"...and don't forget to water!"**

End.

Appendix

Others Lessons For Sally Cell Phones

Making a Connection

“Can ya hear me now?” is a well known question in a cell phone commercial. Just like remote controls for TV’s etc, you can easily be in a “bad place” where communication is not good. Cell Phones don’t work well inside metal buildings or if the cell tower is too far away. Some times the tower is too busy with so many others trying to communicate with the tower and their friends beyond.

This communication with the tower is so often a problem that a gauge is on the front of the phone. It looks like an upside-down coat hanger with some little dots above it. The more dots – the better the communication is.

I wonder how many dots Joseph would have seen when his brothers threw him down a well because of their jealousy of him? Do you suppose Jonah would have had any dots on a cell phone when he was in the belly of the whale?

The Bible is just bursting with examples of God hearing the cry for help from people like you and I. We should thank God every day that He hears us when we call out to Him. Even if we’ve gotten a long ways away from loving Him, He still hears our prayer to forgive our sinful ways and lead us to live closer to Him.

(end)

Calendar

If Sally Cell Phone was a real person with a real heart, she’d be very proud of having a calendar to keep track of important things that are planned for. As times and dates are entered for ball games, birthdays, and all sorts of events are plugged into the calendar. Sally looks forward to someday soon being able to enter the date and time that her owner invites Jesus Christ into her heart and becomes saved. WOW! What a time and date to remember! There’s no other date more important to Sally Cell Phone’s owner that the date of her spiritual birthday.

The other time and date Sally wished she could enter in, is a reminder that Jesus is coming back to gather all those that have been saved by His blood, taking them to Heaven for Eternity.

Does the calendar in your cell phone and your actions prove you know the Savior is coming back VERY soon?

Terrible Timing

Sally Cell Phone’s owner knew she only had 3 more minutes left before her cell phone time for this month would be used up.

While driving down an icy wintry road, a car was seen down in a deep ditch. The driver was standing beside the car with her cell phone held high in one hand. Knowing Sally’s owner was watching, the driver pointed at her own cell phone while shaking her head “no.” Evidentially the driver’s cell phone time had been completely used up. Sally’s owner also saw a couple small children sticking their heads out of the wrecked car.

Sally’s owner quickly called the police knowing her time was about to run out too.

As the police, wrecker and emergency trucks arrived, Sally’s owner prayed to the Lord to use her cell phone time more wisely. She wanted to always be ready to give aid and comfort to

those around her. That prayer included a thank you to Jesus Christ for giving us cell phones and that our actions would show our thankfulness. Sally cell phone was glad she was designed with timers inside her that helps her owner be a good steward of her time.

Text Messages Satan Hates

Text messages are great for sending information to others that may be working in a noisy place and wouldn't be able to hear on Sally Cell Phone's little speaker. God has given us cell phones for all sorts of important uses and special needs of people.

Barry is one of many folks that are deaf but still thanks God for being able to send text messages from wherever he is. Barry's parents are missionaries and he just loves to send encouraging text messages like Bible proverbs to other missionaries. He often reminds them that God speaks so tenderly directly to our hearts but is fantastic at text messaging. His text messaging is found in the Bible.

Can you text message a friend with some of God's encouraging truths and promises?

Camera

Our cell phone takes a picture of what we're looking at. Shapes and colors go into the camera besides our words. The pictures we take reveal where we are and maybe who we're with. The camera's pictures can say things that human words cannot.

But more importantly, if others used their camera to take a picture of us, what would they see? They'd see how we respect our own body. Clean clothes, sufficient and orderly.

Sin and Satan uses disorderliness in appearance as an indicator of who we identify with... sort of a human "birds of a feather".

Our appearance says an awful lot to others even before we open our mouth.

Microphone

Planting seeds and watching them sprout, grow, and bare fruit or other resources are a wonder and joy to even the preschooler. It's the fun of seeing just a little effort and care become so valuable – certainly with God's help.

A cell phone microphone and our tongue are much the same way – maybe even more so. Our hearts and tongue decide what goes into the microphone and who it gets sent to. If we've said something that is a lie or tale baring, there is no way to dig it back out of the microphone. We must weigh what we're going to say before we say it.

God has given us cell phones to principally obey the middle (and smallest) chapter in the Bible. Psalms 117 says we are to praise Him and also build up fellow Christians.

Speaker

Cell phone speakers are super tiny and sometimes hard to understand.

Our phones would be pretty much useless if this tiny speaker didn't do its job right. The big problem with this tiny phone feature is that it doesn't care what it says in our ear. The speaker has no conscience, morals, or character. So it's our job as users to decide who we're going to connect to and for how long, among other things.

Maybe we can think of the cell phone speaker as a magic marker. This magic marker is writing on our brain whatever we choose. Kind of like a dry erase marker board. It's super important that we visualize that our ears as being PERMANENT markers. Whatever our cp speaker and ears write on our brain is most certainly PERMANENT, whether we think so at the time or not. So what do we listen to? How much should we let the cell phone speaker write on our brain? God's word clearly answers those questions for us every day. We need to study our operations manual (Bible) each day.
(End)

Phone Numbers

Look at the keypad on a cell phone. Imagine how many different phone numbers there are. It would be possible for there to be BILLIONS. A phone book for some cities is so big and heavy only a strong adult can lift it, let alone carry one around for when you needed it.

1. To find a person's number you have to know how to read and also
2. know how to use a phone book. Then you have to
3. know how to correctly spell a person's name.
4. You'll have to be fast enough to type all the correct keys in the right order.

WOW! Using a little cell phone is not all that easy, especially for some silver-haired folks, it can get more complicated too.

Now if there is any emergency or you are scared or hurt, you may not even be able to correctly dial your cell phone. During these special times when you most need to call for help, you can't depend on your phone, or at least being able to reliably use it.

I remember a fella that didn't have a cell phone with him, phone book, or even his reading glasses. He was in the water just seconds from drowning. He easily called for help by just shouting "Lord save me!" Aren't you glad that you and I and Peter too, can simply call instantly upon God's care at any moment without any cell phone or other stuff?

Now is always a good time to thank Him for always listening for our words to Him in praise or problems we know He can handle.
(end)

End of Cookie Jar Granny and the Sally Cell Phones