

Face-Look Entries by Gramps Curtis

“Smile or I’ll Scream!!” These were the words Jay would so often whisper to himself as he’d see the look on the adult faces around him; at home and church. And it wasn’t getting any better, either. Maybe they don’t smile ‘cuz of me?

Only being 12 yrs old, Jay preferred the nickname Jay. When his mom would call to him, “Johnny Jeemers! You come here this instant!”, he knew some unpleasant moments were about to enter his day.

With his grades in English class still teetering just above terrible, he expected occasional unpleasant moments from both of his parents who loved him above what he deserved. But he just couldn’t get excited about hooking up predicates with participles. He wondered if space station astronauts cared about participles as they worked on the Hubble Telescope. Maybe he could ask one someday.

If my smile would make them smile.

Jay couldn’t spell the word ‘contagious’ but his mom often told him that smiling is contagious; it often spreads in a way that not even that word can describe. The problem was, there always seemed to be another English test just a few weeks away... and that SURE is nothing to smile about!

Jay didn’t know whether he heard his church youth leader mention it or someone else, but Jay thought he’d take a try at starting a “Joy Journal”. Each evening just before starting that day’s homework, he’d write the date and a couple sentences about something that was joyful that day. But even in his journal he felt he was still stumbling over his participles, or punctuation, or whatever. Who would ever have imagined a fella would get gloomy over a Joy Journal?

“I know what! I’ll make my own hyrogliptics!” That was another word he couldn’t spell. He was sure astronauts likely didn’t need that word either. But he really felt committed to Jay’s Joy Journal that would help him to smile more and hopefully his smiles would make those around him smile more. Jay had a really good feeling every time he found himself wanting to teach others, and then following through.

Right near each day’s date Jay would make a couple little cartoon pictures that reminded him of what had put joy in his day. Now he doesn’t know exactly how it happened, but his ten yo sister Trudy, one day saw Jay drawing some pictures in his Joy Journal and thought it was really neat. Jay noticed how Trudy got several giggles as she tried to decipher her brother’s cartoon notes. He snickered within himself, “I got Trudy to smile big... and without participles, too!”

Some days later, Trudy was looking over Jay’s shoulder as he cartooned in his Joy Journal. She spied an unfilled day entry, pointed to it, and briskly exclaimed, “Ah-Ha! Satan gotcha that day, huh?”

With homework pretty much done, he got ready for bed, which certainly included prayer to God for His protection and provision. With covers all in place, Jay stared at the ceiling. He could visualize a whole group of people all pointing at him and shouting over and over, “Satan gotcha that day, huh?!”

Determined to end the nagging voices, he got up, turned on his desk lamp and stared at the empty Joy Journal date. The events of that day were very clear. That was the day of the English test. How could anyone find joy in an English test? That’d be like trying to fix a space telescope with a pitch fork. There’s just no way.

Precious moments ticked away as Jay tried to think of something that proved Satan hadn’t ‘gotcha’ on this difficult test day. His eyes then noticed a picture his English teacher had given him just before the test. It was a picture of Betnell, a little Indian boy about Jay’s same age. The teacher explained Betnell’s picture showed him with all that he had; just a torn shirt and shorts. Just before the English test, Jay learned that Betnell had no bed, no refrigerator stuffed with goodies, or a loving mom and dad.

Betnell was pointing in the picture. It was explained that he was pointing toward about the only building in his village the bombs had not destroyed. On cold nights he slept in the corner of his uncle's tent, but usually in the alley behind. His village now had only one building that had electric, and ironically, Internet, and a computer that still worked even though a corner of the case had been blown away.

Jay's mind kept thinking that Betnell would have good reason at the end of EVERY day to say, "Ah-Ha! Satan gotcha today, huh?" Jay thought Betnell would be the last person to ever have a Joy Journal in his life. These thoughts moved Jay to begin filling in the missing joy cartoon with a picture of his home and stick figure family. He managed to squeeze in a simple schoolhouse in the date also.

Face Look Joy Journal

Some days later, Johnny Jeemers, "that is, Jay Jay" heard his older brother Danny talk about some Face Look program where people could put simple little movies on the Internet for others to see. Still thinking of Betnell, Jay began making his Joy Journal cartoon entries as though the cartoons were appearing on a computer monitor.

In an English class period dedicated to show and tell, Jay held up a poster board on which he had enlarged a few of his Joy Journal entries that occasionally included Betnell. After his little presentation, all his classmates clapped and really sounded excited. They were rather intrigued with the Face-Look idea of his cartoons.

And no one would have imagined that the presentation even brought a warm smile on the face of the toughest English teacher that ever lived; but it did. That was perfect proof that smiles and joy are contagious, even in the toughest circumstances.

The Strange Stairs

Since Jay Jay most often looked at faces, he learned a strange rule about the church stairs. As near as he could figure, it's fine to smile down in the youth department, but when you go up those stairs to where all the adults are, smiles are forbidden... sort of. Pastor would have all the grown ups sing Victory In Jesus and happy songs, and even preach about having a happy look... especially since we are Christians. But the adults seldom do. Jay imagined lassoing all of them and bringing them down to the smiling youth classes.

The voice inside his heart said to remember his Joy Journal presentation and the joy it brought to his English class. Because he had put so much work in his Joy poster, he thought his church youth class would enjoy it. They did. His youth teacher started rubbing his chin and making a few notes.

The next Friday, Mrs. Jeemer got a call from Jay's pastor with an idea that Jay's mom quickly agreed to. With explanations and preparations made, Jay was invited to share his Joy Journal with the whole church during Sunday evening's testimony time. It was all he could do to hold back the tears learning about spreading joy from an Indian boy named Betnell.

When his presentation and poster demonstration was finished, there were a few minutes of total silence among all the adults. You could almost guess most of them were thinking about how many days in their week could be labeled, "Ah-Ha! Satan gotcha that day, huh?"

A couple of the teens were already thinking how they could create a real Face-Look Joy Journal on the Internet that would teach others how to focus more on God's blessings in their lives. It might even reach as far as a little boy with a beginning smile to go with his shirt and shorts.

You can certainly create a Heaven-blessed Joy Journal of your own, to share with others... No particples needed. Start right now!