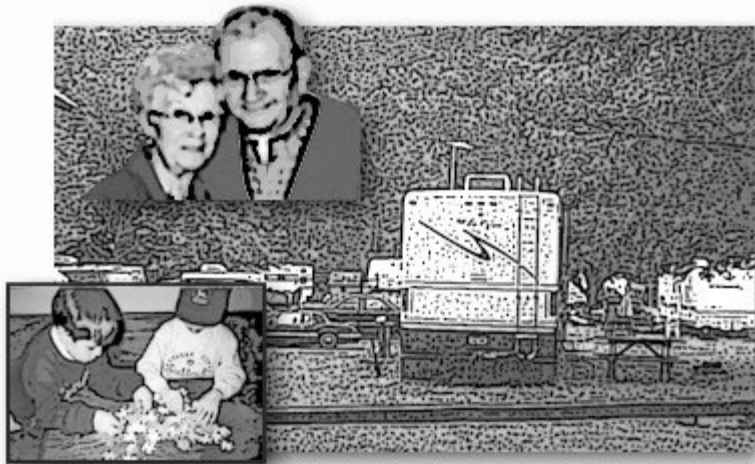


The Magic Website And Peanut Butter Keyboard



Building Relationships
Using Tech Trash

By James Curtis

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Introduction

*Wow! Look what I found!
And you won't believe
where I found it!*

THE MAGIC WEBSITE AND PEANUT BUTTER KEYBOARD is a book of discovery. It is written to, and about, senior citizens and children. Each group finds in each other unused talents, tools, and opportunity to build up the other. We'll think of this as building bridges of communication.

These chapters use non-technical computer metaphors for real life activities that show God's magnificent provision for sharing His love and resources to the whole range of ages. Most of the chapters are ended with a small sidebar story located in the appendix.

The Still Waters Recreational Vehicle Campground becomes the setting for the kind of recycling that pleases God and surprises most. The discoveries are predicted in the Peanut Butter verse:

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

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Bridge Building

The need of some age groups is not being met.

Chapter 2 Left Over or Left out

God has no retirement plan for us.

Chapter 3 Almost Magic

Tools for friendship are simple, inexpensive, and all around us.

Chapter 4 New Life from Ol' 39

Our love for God and His children will flourish beyond the grave.

Chapter 5 The day the Bomb Fell

Good directions demand attention.

Chapter 6 Programming with Cardboard

Getting things in the right order is everyone's task.

Chapter 7 Shaving Cream Web Pages

Preparation is paramount in any process.

Chapter 8 God's Peanut Butter

We must expect great things of God.

Chapter 9 Computer Missions Fair

Everyone can be involved.

Chapter 10 Your Website Mark On Missions

Missions mean action.

Appendix: Sidebar Stories for Most Chapters.

Chapter 1

Bridge Building

It was almost creepy.

EACH PERSON ENTERED THE ROOM with all the caution one would use traveling a jungle path where wild animals found their meals. The podium stood at the front of the room with the large sign “Building Bridges” behind it. That added to the confusion because none of the attendees had the strength or presence of mind to build anything stronger than a shrewd move in a bridge card game. What was so strange was that all the walls were covered with countless pictures of bridges. Over here was a picture of the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge. On that wall over there was a picture of the St. Petersburg Bay Bridge. But that did not even scratch the surface.

One whole wall was filled with different styles of just covered bridges. There were examples of the King Post, Multiple King Post, Queen Post, Burr, Town Lattice, Howe, and Haupt. The wall even showed a picture of the longest covered bridge in America. The state of New Hampshire brags it is theirs at 460 feet long. Another wall showed pictures of footbridges made of rope, vines, cables and the list goes on.

All the attendees were members of the Super Sixties Silver Haired set. Marty and his wife both walked into the room and took their seats near the podium. He smiled at

Grace just a bit as he saw so many people taking their seats with a look that said, “I think I’m in the wrong room.” But everyone that knew the couple had seen compelling examples of their innovation and dedication. There was little else to do now than to sit tight and expect to be blessed.

Marty stepped to the podium and quickly moved through the typical meeting opening. “Thank you all for coming. As you can see, this presentation is all about bridge building. By the way, did you notice the picture of the jar of peanut butter back there next to the light switch? I’ll tell you shortly why peanut butter is so important in building some bridges.

We want to tell you about some bridges that are desperately needed today. And as remarkable as it may seem, our silver-haired generation is probably the most qualified to build them.” Marty held up both hands in a gesture that asked the audience to give him a minute to explain such a profound statement. “Now... I know many of you shun any contact with computers or anything associated with them.” He cracked a needed smile. “Well, even though I’ve worked with them for many years, I still feel some of them are out to get me too.”

Each Group Needs a Bridge To Be Built

He gave a slow nod of his head as he continued. “Grace and I want to show you how important - and simple - it is to build bridges of communication between computers and people of every age group. I repeat, ‘bridges of communication between computers and people of every age group.’”

Grace joined him at the microphone and said, “You and I have seen our preschool grandchildren sit in front of a computer and play games with enthusiasm. Just like many of you, it even bugs me to have them show me how to do

something on the computer that I do not know how to do. Now let's be honest. Each of us relishes the role of being a grand parent. These moments in this busy world are becoming fewer and farther between. There are other bridge relationships that are disappearing too."

She looked at Marty beside her and said, "Marty let's show some other important bridges that need to be built." Her husband pointed at each group on a poster list as Grace began.

- "Number One - We silver haired SENIORS are being squeezed out of the mainstream of missions because of the increasing dependence on computers. The reality of it, though, is that God wants us to see the fantastic opportunity to use technology in our own way. He wants us to trust Him to teach us how." Marty explained the next group.
- "Number Two is PASTORS. Pastors have made critical tools of technology essential in church administration. But they have not found how to bring its potential to the pulpit and anchor its needed guidelines to scripture.
- Number Three is TEACHERS. They train students in memorizing I Tim 3:16,17 and see their explosive appetite for computers. But they do not have the tools to build the bridge linking the two."
- "Marty, the PARENTS of today, that's number four, see technology as another form of 'the new math.' They do not know where it came from, nor do they know where it is going to take the minds of their loved ones."
- Grace continued, "Then we have STUDENTS. They picture technology as murky water that never

quenches their thirst. At best for them it is a battery powered security blanket to hide under. Their hope is that it will drown out the haunting questions like, ‘Doesn’t anyone want to love and understand me? Where is this muddy river taking me?’”

- Marty continued, “Grace, the sixth and final one is the UNEMPLOYED group. A bridge that desperately needs to be built is the one for those job hunters. They say, ‘How am I supposed to honor God’s Word and provide for my family when technology took my job? Is God using the Escape Key to punish me?’” He then took the poster list with him as he sat down.

Still standing at the podium, Grace made solid eye contact with members of the audience as she began to speak. “Marty and I did some bridge building during this summer’s vacation at Still Waters RV Campground. We want to tell you some about it and how that jar of peanut butter fits in,” as she gestured toward the related picture by the light switch. As she began speaking her eyes seemed to be looking through the wall and seeing Marty seated at a quiet picnic table.

Chapter 2

Left Over or Left Out?

“Is this how it happens?

Is this how things come to an end?

Is this silver hair of mine a sign to God to shelve me?”

MARTY SLID HIS HAND OVER the old picnic table surface. The tabletop had splotches of green mold, evidence of its rotting condition. The rotting table made him think that he, like the shoved-aside table, may have outlived his usefulness as a bridge builder or anything else worthwhile.

So many times Marty examined his life to see where his Christian testimony had faltered to the point that God was shelving him. He was even so unsettled about the whole matter; he had promised Grace he would not bring his laptop computer with him on this camping trip. To him, that was the ultimate sacrifice he could make.

The upside-down cattails displayed a perfect reflection of the real thing in the still pond before him. The serene calm of the pond next to the campground did little to pacify Marty’s anxiety within. “Am I like this table? Used up? Worn out? After 25 years of computer programming, does God mean for me to be shoved aside?”

As the morning sun was just starting to peek over the trees, a mallard started swimming from the right side of Marty’s view to his left. As his eyes began to follow the duck’s

progress, he saw two smaller ducks and another adult duck all crossing the pond, single file. In a melancholy way Marty mumbled to himself, “God sure has his ducks in a row. I really wish I knew how to line up mine.”

Marty was brought up thinking that every boss, including God Himself, wanted his people busy. Words come to mind like, “We are to redeem the time,” or, “There is no place for sluggards or slackers.” He was fully convinced about the requirement that the Lord finding him busy when He returns in the clouds and not daydreaming at upside-down nature in a pond reflection.

Giant Killer - Left Out or Used Up

If God had favorite people, we’d agree that David would be near the top of the list. As a lowly shepherd boy he distinguished himself by destroying a lion and a bear with his bare hands. But we most often think of David as killing the giant soldier. That soldier, Goliath, had struck fear in the hearts of the whole army of Israel.

Even more than that, King Saul continually tried to kill David for no reason other than that David was getting far more praise from the people than Saul did. In all this, you’d think David never got discouraged or had thoughts like Marty is having. If you agree with this, you’d better read David’s Psalm 71. We will see here that David is far more human, less heroic, and more like us than you would first think. Verse 9 reads like this:

Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.

Have you ever had feelings like that?

The old Bible word, “hoar” simply means gray. So let’s turn to Isaiah 46:4 and read:

And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

There is so much in this verse that must not be skipped over.

- *And even to your old age I am he;* God says that you and I will grow old and weak but He never will.
- *even to hoar hairs will I carry you:* He does not leave us midstream.
- *I have made,* I am the reason you are here.
- *I will bear* I will lift you up.
- *even I will carry* More than to lift you out of, I will treasure you as my burden of love.
- *will deliver you* I will present you to a place out of harm’s way.

David wants to accomplish something before (as it were) God puts him on the shelf. Let’s go back to David’s “silver-haired song” - Ps. 71:18.

Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

He had enough confidence in God’s ability to help him show THIS GENERATION that he added a blockbuster: “to everyone that is to come.” Maybe we need to start with

“everyone that is to come” into our family, or class, or department.

God’s Inspired Word makes very clear His incredible provision for the silver-haired set.

The Setting of God’s Workshop

So, let’s get back to Grace and Marty at the Still Waters RV Campgrounds.

Marty took a spoonful of peanut butter from the cupboard jar to hold him till dinnertime. It was then that he first saw the verse that Grace had taped on the squeaky cupboard door for her own reminder. It said,

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

Marty passed off its meaning as applying to others, but not to him. With a shrug of the shoulders, he walked to his pity-party picnic table, the one with the green mold.

After sitting only a few minutes, he carefully rotated his position on the rickety picnic table to view the RV campgrounds behind him. Its 63 tent and full-hookup sites were filling up rapidly. Every shape and size of tent imaginable could be seen. One tent even had a steel shelf outside it with a window air conditioner sitting on the shelf and its output vent taped to the tent window.

In between many of the sites were high performance speedboats parked like racehorses being groomed for the starting gate. Each monster motor with large gleaming propeller looked ready to blast toward the finish line.

Every few days a big “pull-through” recreational vehicle rig would arrive with a car in tow. The Class-A rigs seemed to be larger than any passenger bus you had ever seen. Almost every one had beautiful hand painted scenes on the sides or back. Most of the big pull-throughs would be there one or two nights and then move on toward their chosen horizon.

Several times Marty’s imagination took him on a quick ride with one of these big rigs to discover all the exciting things just over the next rise. But each time his imaginary ride was brought back to reality with a young bike rider or running child crossing his field of view. Marty never seemed to escape the same useless feeling the picnic table reminded him of. Occasionally Grace’s peanut butter verse would remind him that the One in the driver’s seat, the One in ultimate control, is God Himself.

Grace dried the last spoon while Marty was putting the last of the dishes in their custom designed storage space of their medium-sized camper. The two retirees set out for their evening stroll around the park. Their crusade was to find other silver-haired couples they could visit with. There was so much the two needed to learn about of the shortcuts and techniques to RV camping. But so far they were not having much success in finding any other couples they could learn from.

Time Trials

For a senior citizen, time is a bit of a taskmaster in more ways than one. On the one hand, the aches and pains are constant reminders that time for trodding this earth is nearing its end. Seniors say, “I gotta get this done before...” But then on the other hand, it seems that the days (and nights) now have too many hours in them. They leave a

thought of “what have I forgotten to do that is supposed to fill up this time?”

More than once I have started a list of the words we use that deal with time. You know, words like now, next, tomorrow, same time, soon, or minute. The list becomes staggering in a moment (see?) In the previous sentence, even the word “becomes” is a time relative word. We begin to wonder if time is supposed to be our tool or taskmaster.

But the crucial lesson to learn is that God does not use the same kind of watch we do, or any at all, if that’s His choice. In Genesis 1:14 He created time when He created the stars, moons, and planets. He created the dimension of time for our needs not His. Further, He shows us He can change them (and time) whenever He wants. He proved that when He stopped time a whole day for His army to gain the victory (Joshua 10:12). He even backed up time in answer to the prayer of just one man (II Kings 20:11).

There is a time word that just pains me. The word is “wait.” I know full well that idleness is a waste. It is also a welcome to Satan’s deeds. But waiting on God’s timing on His schedule is a bone deep discipline that grounds us in what our goals are to be here on this earth.

Time trials are a part of a day for those monster speedboats, for Marty and his seniors friends, and also for a little girl named Nenee we are to learn about in the next chapter.

[A sidebar story for this chapter “No Good To Nobody.” (refer to the appendix)]

Chapter 3

Almost Magic

Friendship opportunities are all around us.

GRACE WAS NOT SURE HOW it all came together, except it started during Marty's afternoon siestas. She would make a list of things to purchase at the campground store. Most often she used a small tablet that fit easily in her pocket and wrote with a small colored ink marker. These are the markers so popular with children and their coloring projects.

While Marty was working very hard at his snoring project for the afternoon, Grace made her trip to the campgrounds store. She passed a picnic table with a little girl sitting there with a hopeless composure strong enough to grab your heart. Grace paused in her walking long enough to say, "Hi. My name is Grace, what's yours?"

A pathetic, "Nenee" was the reply, while the little girl's finger tested the spacing between two tabletop boards.

As Grace continued toward the store she saw in the corner of her eye a pair of child's crutches leaning against the camper behind Nenee. Grace wiped her eye more than once, thinking of little Nenee. After all, this is a campground for exercise, laughter, little giggles, and fun-screams from the pool.

Grace only got a couple things on her list because there was an SOS distress signal shouting in her heart and ears. There were at least five different routes from the store back to

their RV and Marty's siesta. But Grace's feet would only take her down the one that passed... Nenee. The little girl was still sitting there, as she was when Grace introduced herself fifteen minutes before.

Friendship Crosses Generation Gaps

Grace and Marty had been searching for a silver-haired couple to befriend there at the campground. She decided to settle for one precious little redhead for right now. Her steps ceased at a spot in front of Nenee's table. She had a strange feeling it was some kind of an honor to be there. With her best grandmotherly smile, she took the tablet and ink marker out of her pocket and laid them on the picnic table between herself and Nenee. She sat down.

The white-haired lady used the marker to draw a simple house with a chimney, smoke, door, and window. She slid the tablet and marker in front of the little girl. "I'll bet you're better at making a tree than I am. Can you draw a tree beside the house?" With some hesitation, the girl drew a tree in its proper place. But then she added a smiley face sun that almost lit up the tablet picture.

Nenee laid down the marker, looked up at Grace with the beginning of a smile. "You really need a yellow marker. Suns always look better when they are colored yellow." A wink of agreement from the older lady and the drawings continued, at least until Grace had used all the pages in her tablet including the one on which she had her list.

Friendships Young And Old In Scripture

Grace began a little story for Nenee.

“Long long ago there was a little boy with an unusual name... Mephibosheth.” Grace and the little girl got the giggles trying to pronounce his name right. She continued anyhow.

“When Mephibosheth was about five-years-old his babysitter was holding him as she so often did. At that moment something scared her and she dropped the little boy. When he hit the ground he injured both feet and was never able to walk normally. I’m sure Mephibosheth many times hurt inside because he could not run and play games like all the other children. There might even have been moments he thought God was mean or angry with him by making him handicapped.”

Grace lightly touched little Nenee’s arm to emphasize what she was about to say. “Just the opposite is true. God loves every child more than we can describe. He even has assigned a guardian angel to watch over each of them, including Mephibosheth and little Nenee.” Grace would later show Nenee the verse in Matthew 18:10, that says,

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Grace’s story went on.

“One of the wonderful things that Mephibosheth was to learn about God is that He never forgets our needs, not even for an instant. One day the king summoned Mephibosheth to the palace. The king gave to Mephibosheth a fine home, land, animals, and servants to care for them. And more than that, the king told the young man on crutches standing

before him, that he was to eat all the meals he wanted to, here in the palace.”

As Grace continued, she rubbed her hands together as if to say the best is yet to come. She said, “Nenee. Can you guess why the king did this? It’s because of who Mephibosheth’s daddy was. His daddy’s name was Jonathan. And Jonathan had done many great kindnesses to the king. That’s the king that gave Mephibosheth all those wonderful things.”

“Nenee, I bet you’ve heard of the king that Jonathan helped so much. The king’s name was David. He was the famous one that killed the giant with a sling and a stone. You see, Nenee. We must always believe that God never makes a mistake, He never forgets us, and He always has a wonderful reason for everything He does.”

The pair laughed together when Grace picked up her store sack and saw the butter had melted through the bottom. It was almost magic how paper and markers could bring people together.

Friendships Blossom And Spread

The next day Grace made a trip to the store to purchase another stick of butter. Now you and I know she went past Nenee’s camper. But you won’t believe what Grace saw. Little Nenee was sitting in her usual position and a new tablet and marker were in front of her. As Grace moved closer and warmly greeted the little redhead with pigtails, she noticed that on the tablet page was drawn a little girl with curly hair and a big smile. They both drew a few more pictures over the next couple days. And then Grace was shocked again.

Instead of Nenee sitting by herself, there was a boy about a year her junior seated next to her. Both of them had a tablet and marker in front of them.

Mighty and wonderful things happen when you take time to care about others and their needs. Maybe the best part is that only simple things are needed like crayons, and compassion.

The Friendship Process

True friendships are win-win relationships. We are strengthening others while they return joy to us. The process is pretty straight-forward in maybe four steps.

1. **Be clear** in our mind of the wonderful relationship we have with the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. **Remind** ourselves of the talents He has blessed us with, no matter if they're big or small.
3. **Trust** His provision of things needed.
4. **Watch** for opportunities to be a friend in His name. They can happen anywhere, anytime. It's best to watch with your heart.

We'll see in the next chapter that age actually enriches some friendship tools.

[Refer to the sidebar story HYMN CAKE about another little girl, in the appendix.]

Chapter 4

New Life From Ol' 39

No one could have guessed it would happen, but it did!

“OUCH!” MARTY EXCLAIMED as he banged his shin while stepping up into his RV. Running almost the full distance from the campsite office had left him puffing. Grace gave him the once over to see if there were any more injuries that would qualify for a Purple Heart. To her pleasure there were none found.

Excitement And Opportunities Accepted Go Together

She got him to calm down a bit and catch his breath. “It’s Ol’ 39! That’s what the big deal is.” He was making no sense as to what a 39 was. If this didn’t start making some logic soon she was going to put a cold washrag on his forehead.

He took another long, deep breath and continued, “Grace, you’ve been really getting me excited about this coloring contest with the children. Well, I went to Ben Nape the camp manager today and told him about it. I wanted to borrow a big sheet of plywood that we could use as a bulletin board for the contest winners.”

“Well, he said he didn’t have any plywood or boards for stakes. Just before I left the office he asked why we couldn’t

use Ol' 39.” One more statement like that and Grace was going after that cold washrag. Her puzzled expression said so.

For emphasis in his coming explanation Marty held up his open hands in front of him and tried to detail the reason for his excitement. After a deep breath, “Ol' 39 is the number of an old camper with high wide sides that had made no success in obtaining a new owner for quite some time. Ben said he'd use the tractor to move 39 up to a unique spot that everyone entering the campground would certainly see.”

“Ben said that the idea really appealed to him and he'd like to be one of the judges but that someone else would have to paint the 'Still Waters RV Campgrounds Magic Coloring Contest' sign.”

Actually though, I don't think he would have offered, if he knew about little Freddy's bombshell to be dropped. We will learn about the bombshell later.

Friendships Beyond The Grave

But then, the next afternoon Ben excitedly knocked on Grace and Marty's door. When Marty opened the door, Ben asked, “Marty, can you put your shoes on and come with me? You just gotta come see this.” As the two men walked toward the old RV on location #39 Ben started his explanation.

“Levi Hepps was the sole owner of Ol' 39 because he had never married. His heart attack two years ago took him home to be with his Lord. He had no living relatives that I know of.” As they got closer to the strange old camper Ben continued, “Before I hitched up the tractor to move Levi's camper to the spot for the coloring contest display, I took a flash light and looked in the windows to see if anything would fall and get broken in the short move. I saw something so strange you just have to see.”

The two men and a flashlight peered into several of the windows that had missing curtains. On almost every spot on the walls were pictures of children. The pictures were not family photographs but those cut out of magazines and catalogs. There were a few Bible verses taped in among the pictures. It was obvious that Levi loved to be surrounded by children, even if they were not his own. Ben said, "I guess I should have expected this. Levi was always telling me little Bible stories that showed how important children are to God's creation."

Back in his RV, Marty was explaining all this to his wife Grace. She said, "Isn't it fascinating that Levi's love for God and His children has arranged the children to be doing exciting things right outside his old camper? It's like a testimony to the endurance of the love of God and His little ones, that carries on, no matter what."

Grace added, "Marty, I'm going to ask Blanch and Lilly if they'd help me wash Ol' 39 after you men get it set in its new place. Marty's wife had such a casual style of making a statement from which any preacher worth half his salt could build a whole sermon. Today she said, "I just love taking things that appear useless and of no value and putting them back into service." Marty thought a moment or two about feeling so useless a few days ago while sitting at that old picnic table.

Old Scripture Is More Than An Old Friend

One day as Blanch, Grace, and Lilly were cleaning up the old camper that everyone was calling "Ol' 39," Blanch said something unusual. She said, "Isn't it quite a coincidence the camper's number is 39?" Lilly asked, "So what?"

Blanch replied, "Well I just keep thinking of the Bible's Old Testament. Now before you both think I've flipped,

remember there are 39 books in the Old Testament. But there's more." Blanch's explanation made the others curious enough to stop cleaning and give her their 'What else?' stare. In her soft grandmotherly tone, Blanch said, "I just see a lot of similarity between Ol' 39 (the camper) and the Old Testament's 39 books." At that point Grace was ready to put a cold washrag on Blanch's head till she started making sense.

A deeper feeling of compassion entered Blanch's tone as she explained. "Ol' 39 just sat there for so long as though it had outlived its usefulness. I think that's how most Christians think about the 39 books of the Old Testament. But a closer inspection reveals that the Old Testament has a great deal to offer seniors and children today, especially in this computer age. The love and leading is there for anyone who cares enough to open the door."

Exciting discoveries and blessings are ready for you whether you are searching through an old camper, or better yet, searching through the Old Testament.

It's Hard To Keep A Good Thing Quiet.

Each day, one or two more children showed up with a tablet and marker. Each day Grace and Marty would guide the children in a few of the coloring contest's rules. You know, rules such as— stay in the lines, do not push down too hard, snap the caps back on, and the biggie was —share the different colors so that everyone benefits.

Grace gave the younger ones pictures to color. They could add extra little things to the pictures too. The older ones could draw whatever they liked. To add motivation and make the whole contest a little more contemporary, Marty told the children he would put the five best ones on a website for all the world to see. At first this made Ben Nape, the camp's owner, just a little uneasy but then the idea that the

world could see gave him even more interest in the whole contest.

“Old” doesn’t always mean decrepit, worn out, “one foot in the grave,” or senile. More often than not, it means seasoned, time-tested, increasing in value, or referring to our heritage. God’s Word, and especially the Old Testament, is the best example. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ made many, many references to Old Testament verses.

When Satan was tempting Jesus (as recorded in Matthew 4), Our Lord quoted time-tested verses from the Old Testament. When Satan is tempting you, do you know some old verses with which to fight off his evil efforts?

The next two days the children all worked hard on their ink marker drawings. Each one was kept secret until Saturday’s contest judging. That was the day the bomb fell.

[Refer to the sidebar story POT BELLIED STOVE in the appendix.]

Chapter 5

The Day The Bomb Fell

The pulse quickens in the Drop Zone area.

THE LOUDSPEAKER IN THE RV CAMP announced the coloring contest would be held today at 4 p.m. The announcement was repeated a couple more times during the day. The little crew of retired ladies had done a fine job scrubbing up Ol' 39. They even added some colorful streamers and bows to the area. Many more of the retirees in the Still Waters RV Campground were asking each other for more info about the contest. It was as if the pulse rate of the camp was pumping up a few points.

Ben, the owner, had not seen anything like this in many years; and he did not even know about the bomb that was about to be dropped. Shortly after lunch, folks started showing up at Ol' 39 and brought their lawn chairs to sit on. The children were all mingling around the picnic tables keeping their colored pictures held close. It was like each one was a classified secret document the enemy would steal in a second.

Little Freddy (he's the one with the "bomb") did not really understand all the secrecy but decided he had better act like all the other contestants. One thing for sure, he wanted to be the very last one to show his picture, so they would not laugh at him too much. Ben was not sure if it was the right thing to do, but right when the contest judging was ready to

start, he played a tape recording over the PA speakers. It was one of those songs you would expect a marching band to play.

Grace and Marty were tickled to see how the children and the seniors were mingling so well. They figured this must be some kind of “grandparents’ training camp.”

Ben, his wife, and one other couple were the judges and were introduced to the whole audience that was seated in their lawn chairs. Everyone applauded them. Marty reminded the whole group that the top five winners would get their pictures scanned and posted on the Internet. Plus there would be a few modest prizes. Then after the contest, everyone would get some cake and ice cream, furnished by the Still Waters Campground store.

The ten or so contestants were each introduced and given an opportunity to say just a bit about themselves. There was hearty applause after each contestant showed his or her picture, which made little Freddy even more nervous. The judges were very careful to praise the contestants for their efforts, which included following the rules.

The pictures included a variety of things, mostly around the campgrounds. They included animals, the pool and diving board, an odd shaped tent, and the owl. The owl was four feet tall, sculpted from a telephone pole to look wise enough to be one of the contest judges.

Saving The Blast For Last

Though the bomb was about to drop, little Freddy did not want to show his picture because it was not anything like all the others that had been taped on the side of Ol’ 39 camper. When the judges taped his picture up along side all the other pictures Freddy felt almost ashamed. He decided his entry was more of a dud and not worthy to be applauded.

But all the people clapped for him because he had tried so hard.

The reason it was a real bombshell had to do with what his picture was. It did not have any animals, pool stuff, or people. He was not good enough to draw things like that. It was a map. It was no more than a simple map of the lanes and roads inside the Still Waters RV Campground. Freddy did not win any of the top five prizes. And he did not think that he should have. But he was a champion at eating cake and ice cream.

That night, Ben could not sleep worth a nickel. He kept rolling and tossing with his mind continually on Freddy's map. It was like someone had dropped a bomb right next to the campground. Ben felt there was a big hole there. There was something missing. Some folks might describe Freddy's revelation with a light bulb or some kind of vision. But we will see here the effects are far more powerful.

The Blast After Effects

The next morning, Ben walked past the Ol' 39 camper and looked at all the pictures on its side. His eyes became riveted to Freddy's map, and Ben decided that was where the bomb was dropped. There was where the hole was. He walked over to Grace and Marty's camper and knocked on the door. Marty came to the door and saw Ben had something to discuss. Marty put his ball cap on and followed Ben over to a nearby picnic table.

Ben told his friend he really liked the children being given directions and rules on how to color well. Life has tons of directions on how to be our best at things and please God too. He explained to Marty that Freddy had dropped a bomb in making a picture that was really directions. They were directions that would help new campers to not be lost. Ben

asked Marty if he would please post Freddy's map on the Internet with the other five winners.

He suggested to Grace and Marty that the children use a state map to copy from. Then they should use Freddy's map as a starting point and show the surrounding highways to get to the campground. Ben's eyes really started to twinkle as he told Marty of his ideas for the children. He needed them to give clear directions to the whole world on how to get to the Still Waters RV Campground.

That night as Marty pulled his bed sheet up over his shoulder he watched the lightning bugs outside his camper window. Like warships sending blinking signals to each other, the little insects seemed to be telling each other that exciting days lay ahead. No time to have a gloomy spirit. He closed his eyes and pictured in his mind, Grace's peanut butter verse,

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

Little People Can Make Big Effects

A couple of days later Grace was having tea with Blanch and Lilly. The ladies that had done such a bang up job in beautifying Ol' 39 were talking over the events of the past few days. Lilly expressed the warm inner feeling she got thinking about the children and how important they were in all the exciting things that had happened.

Blanch rubbed her chin thoughtfully and said, "I remember a little girl that sort-of saved the life of an army general by giving him directions." Grace and Lilly stared at Blanch with their "you want to explain yourself?" look. She

told the ladies, “The whole story is written down in the Bible starting in 2 Kings 5:1.”

“Naaman was a mighty man of valor and captain of the army. But he was also a leper. The little slave girl, who is never named, gave directions to her mistress about the man of God who could cure Naaman’s disease. The whole story is almost too exciting to tell.”

Blanch really bugged the ladies by finishing with, “You’ll just have to read for yourself how the leprosy was passed to a deceitful servant.”

Lilly jumped in with, “And don’t forget: ‘The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.’ in Isaiah 11:6. ‘Course this is talking about our wonderful future with Jesus leading us.”

What Lessons Do We Learn From Life?

The next morning Marty finished his daily Bible reading and prayer. Much of the RV campground had not awakened yet. It gave him more quiet time to think over much of what had happened the day before.

What were some of his lessons learned? Can you list them?

- God likes to use old stuff, i.e. moldy picnic tables, rusty campers, and retired people.
- God has His ducks in a row and will show you how to do the same, if you ask.
- God’s steadfast love even reaches beyond the grave. Levi’s prayers and passion.
- Children are hungry to be taught and tendered.

- God leads the humble in mighty ways. Freddy's bombshell was a good example.
- Rules and directions are so important.
Can you name some learned at the camp?
- Color your best. Others will notice.
- Butter melts on warm days.

God's Word reminds us to expect great gifts from Him. The peanut butter verse says so.

[A sidebar story for this chapter "FRIENDSHIP BEYOND WORDS." (refer to the appendix)]

Chapter 6

Programming With Cardboard

GRACE WAS BUYING A QUART OF MILK at the camp store when two children came in. They were making a big fuss with Jake at the cash register. Both children were jumping up and down, saying, “Can we have an old cardboard box? Can we? We need just one box. Will you give us one, mister? Oh, we need a box so bad!” Jake having to answer the phone, ringing off the wall, interrupted all this.

Grace walked up to them, “Land sakes, children, why do you need a cardboard box so bad? Is something wrong?” “No mam,” said one. “We’re going to make a computer,” came from the other.

After Jake hung up the phone the jumping began again. He went back to the storage room and found two medium-sized boxes and brought them to the children. Well why not? If the children can build a computer with one, just imagine what they could do with two?

Things just were not happening too sensibly at times, Grace thought to herself as she started back to her RV and to the sound of more of Marty’s siesta snoring. She visualized the children excited about needing a box to make a computer. “The children are going to make a computer, and my husband is a retired computer programmer,” ran through her mind more than once. She looked up from the path and

noticed all the colored pictures taped to the side of Ol' 39 were gone too. She wondered where they all went.

This time it was Henrietta Willins who knocked on Grace and Marty's camper door. "Hi Henri. What's cookin'?" greeted Grace.

"Grace, do you have any more tape? My granddaughter and the kids need more. They have some strange notion that they can make a computer and program it with tape. I tell you, the things today's kids think of to do. It sure swamps my mind."

"Henrietta, I have this half a roll. You'll have to get more at the store," countered Grace.

With a bit of help from a couple of teenagers at the Still Waters RV Campground and tons of secrecy the project was completed. The sign on the store front door and a couple of announcements over the public address speakers led the adults and their lawn chairs to the same location near the Ol' 39 camper. The program began just after sunset with a cardboard box sitting on an old moldy picnic table. Part of the front of the box was cut out with a picture in its place.

Running A Computer Is Kid Stuff

Above the cutout were the words, "MICKEY SOFT." Little Freddy came from behind the camper wearing a grownup man's hat that almost covered his eyes. What was causing him the most problem was the itchy piece of black yarn that was taped on his upper lip to evidence the needed maturity. Freddy turned the crank, and the two paper towel holders did their work. The one roller pulled the long train of taped pictures off the other roll to where the first picture was. It looked like a menu screen you would see on a touch screen computer monitor.

Freddy's left trigger finger touched the red dot as his other hand turned the crank to the next picture. Marty giggled at Grace while calling her attention to the touch screen technology via ink markers and paper. More than once, Freddy chided Nancy for not holding the flashlight still in the back of the computer. But she had a lot to do. Between petting the campground cat and swatting a visiting mosquito, she did not have much time for backlighting the monitor.

The pictures were the ones that were entered in the coloring contest. How's that for recycling? Each of the pictures was separated with a "screen" of text that referred to the next picture. The audience was going spastic over the creativity of the children. Even the peanut butter and jelly got them all clapping. One of the screens of text got imprinted with some of the contents of Bobby's goober sandwich. Oh well. At least it was not a computer fatal error.

Between the laughter and the applause you got a feeling that the children gave some real thought to which pictures should follow particular ones. The text screens were helpful too. History says that computers have been programmed with punched cards, switching cables, matrix boards, and software programs beyond count. But leave it to children to create a computer program with sticky tape.

With lots of applause from the adults, the children all went and sat with their parents in the lawn chair audience. Marty moved to the front and faced everyone.

Doing Things In Order

"We've just seen wonderful evidence that our youth know how to assemble things like the cardboard computer and its presentation. Did you know the precious word of God gives us more than one example of youth doing very important things? And doing them in order."

“I’ll tell you about the boys and girls that built a real city. In fact, it is the most loved city of the whole nation of Israel. The city is named Jerusalem. The enemy had burned down the city, and they remained in the area to make sure it stayed that way. But that was not in God’s plan. He chose a very important man in the king’s palace. The man loved God so much he wanted to put actions to his love. His name was Nehemiah.”

“All the things that happened in the true story were so exciting that Nehemiah wrote a book about it. It’s in the Old Testament, Ol’ 39. The story includes workers that carried their weapons in one hand while they worked. It even describes the emergency alarm system they set up. See if you can learn what enemy warning system they used.”

“Nehemiah’s eye witness account says in Nehemiah 3:12,”

And next unto them repaired Shallum the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.

“Boys and girls are very important in God’s plans, and it doesn’t matter if they are young or older. What is important is that they are dependable and will always ask God for His leading.”

“The whole chapter describes many workers on the walls around the city. But what is also described is WHERE each of them was working. Most projects are very important and may even help save lives depending on how well they were done. All the people working on the wall of defense around Jerusalem worked in the place of order on the wall. Many of the verses start out with, ‘*and next unto him...*’ this gives us the location and the order or sequence of the workers.”

“But we should learn here, why the construction of the wall was so orderly. It is because of Nehemiah’s beginning steps of the project found in the beginning of his book. The following lists the major ones:”

1. “He learns of the terrible condition of the city.
2. This causes him to stop everything else he was doing.
3. He prayed and fasted that his heart would be made pure so God could lead him to do the right things, in the right order.
4. In his prayer, he confesses that he and his house are sinners and not following God as best they could.
5. He then quotes God’s words of promise to his ancestors.”

“We see that God certainly helped Nehemiah get his ‘ducks in a row,’ I mean get his workers in a row.”

Marty took special pains to remind the children and the adults in the audience that making decisions and their order, based on God’s words, is terribly important. In the New Testament, the same principle is stated in a more simple form,

Let all things be done decently and in order.

1 Corinthians 14:40.

Be An Inventor

Many children are inventors and have the imaginations to make their inventions happen. An invention is almost always just the blending of two or more ideas or some objects. The joy in inventing something is seeing something you have created, delight and teach others. Just like cardboard Mickey Soft computers.

In the chapters and their sidebar stories, we have seen so far, several things created with flour, cardboard, scrap computer paper, and old bulletins. Other things were junk campers, a computer with a missing key, spare time, markers, and people who care about others.

The Master Creator took the dust of the earth and made man. He made mankind to have a relationship with Himself. He wants us all to know how powerful He is. But He wants especially for us to know His matchless tenderness and compassion for all who walk this earth.

He wants us to know the joy of sharing His love with others and how to use things around us to do it. Be an inventor. Be a creator of relationships that span generations using all the simple tools around us. Just don't wait till tomorrow.

[A sidebar story for this chapter CARDBOARD AIRPLANES.
(refer to the appendix)]

Chapter 7

Shaving Cream Web Pages

Paper web page design lessons from scripture.

DESIGNING A WEBSITE can sometimes be a very messy process. In this case it was sure would be. The spray can of shaving cream was extra large and would never serve its manufactured purpose.

Ben, the campground's owner kept thinking about the map that little Freddy had drawn. It was a map of the gravel streets in the Still Waters RV Campground. Ben didn't know much about websites, but he was pretty sure his campgrounds needed one. He and Marty decided they would see how well the children and their imaginations could create one.

Marty's experience told him the most important part of the process was not typing in the computer commands to make the web pages appear. And it was not the strange way to make the computer screen jump from one page to another by just clicking on a word. He knew full well, the most critical step was the preparation. Marty told Ben the Bible even talks about that.

"What? Marty, are you telling me there are Bible verses that talk about web pages?" With a smile Marty said, "Well certainly the Bible does not mention web pages, tanks, aliens, or anything like that. Often times scripture simply gives us the principle to be learned and maybe an illustration to help explain it." Ben looked puzzled.

Marty continued, “There is a very important principle of designing web pages that comes from an illustration that Jesus taught his followers about building communication systems. This communication system was a tower in the middle of their property that was used to send messages to the next tower and also watch for thieves. The reference is in Luke chapter 14. It says:”

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

“Actually, Ben, there are two very important computing principles in this portion of God’s Word. The first is that people are watching us and how we do things – our testimony. There are people just waiting to make fun of us when we’ve not been doing our best.” Ben rubbed his chin with a thoughtful look.

Marty added, “The second computing principle taught here is just as important as the first. It’s preparation. It’s making a plan for our project. The illustration Jesus gave us said the builder should have planned on all the materials he would have to use; he needed to count the cost. Someone once told me, ‘The most important part of computing is what is done before you touch the keyboard.’ After all these years of computing I believe it more than ever.”

A critical part of that preparation, especially in this day and age is called, Computer Grace.

Computer Grace

Your mouth is watering big time as you sit down to the dinner table. The smells of all your favorite foods give promise of really good things about to be enjoyed. Your mind can hardly squeeze in reminders of proper table manners. A way off in the distance racing through your mind are thoughts of what happens when you eat too much of this or not enough of that. Your eyes tell the hands to pick up the spoon over here and the fork over there and dive in.

But then... reality grabs control of you. You admonish yourself with, "Hey! Wait a minute. I need to thank God for all this tasty food, the work that went into preparing it, and a wonderfully designed body to enjoy it. Then I also must ask God to lead me in using its energy to glorify Him."

Table grace has become an important prelude to our meals. It is a systematic reminder to us and to the rest of our family of our gratitude for God's provision. We practice table grace because Jesus Christ did. He taught His followers this crucial beginning to every meal. Take a moment to review the reasons why you practice table grace.

Now. For the very same reasons, and more, we **MUST** practice Computer Grace.

All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.

The above scripture in the Gospel of John 1:3, (and others) makes it very clear that technology comes from God and we are to use it to honor Him as we carry out the Great Commission. And then, II Tim 3:16,17 tell us that the best How-To manual is scripture itself.

Our computer grace prayer to God would include:

- Praise to Him for His Goodness and Who He is.
- Thanksgiving for His gifts of technology and talents to use them.
- Asking for His leading in not wasting our keyboard time and His provisions.
- Determination to tithe part of our keyboard time to evangelism and our local church.
- Affirm our focus and determination to see the project through.
- Request His blessing on the results of our work.

The Keyboard Bible

Another point of preparation is a Keyboard Bible. Your computer will never work better than when you keep a keyboard Bible open next to the keyboard. They make a dynamic duo!

A keyboard Bible is critical equipment in invading computerland.

- Even though your computer may have installed an electronic Bible with all of its search features, a keyboard Bible is still required for security and research. This keyboard Bible is just your favorite Bible. It is always open and always within inches of your computer keyboard. Its purpose is crucial each and every time you sit down in front of the monitor.
- The nearby Bible is a reminder that God's Word is chock full of principles for efficient computing. It stimulates creative thinking and planning in ways only its Author can.
- It is a sentinel or supervisor to guard against computing sessions that are wasteful, lustful, or

dishonoring to God in several other ways. Note: Remember the builders of the walls in Nehemiah 4? They worked with their sword by their side. You should too. Yours is the sword of God's Word.

- It is a reminder at the end of your project to ask the Creator of computing, to use and bless your efforts and certainly it reminds us to give Him the glory in our computing.

Ben's wink at Marty said the lesson hit home.

Contest Creation

The two men decided they would have a contest with the campground children to help them begin the website project on the right foot. That's where the tall spray can of shaving cream came in. The ten or so children who wanted to help, were divided into two teams, the red and the blue teams.

Each team needed to come up with the most web page ideas that would be important. The team that listed the most would be the winner and would use that big shaving cream spray can to cover Ben, the campground owner, from head to foot. Each page idea listed would need a one or two word title.

For starters, Marty gave a couple of examples. A DIRECTIONS page would show a picture of little Freddy's bombshell, I mean, map. A RULES page would list things like (1) pets are only allowed on a leash, and (2) fires are allowed only in the fire rings. The next couple of days showed the children working hard for their team to think of the most web pages.

Saturday at 10 am, Grace and Henrietta made a big pitcher of lemonade, a bowl of pretzels, and sugarless hard candy. They were placed on the picnic tables beside Ol' 39.

While Ben and Marty began the contest to see which team would have the biggest list, a couple of curious teenagers wandered by, observing the activity.

You're the Green Team

Pretend you are on a Green team competing against the Red and Blue teams. Can you make a list of the important web pages that Ben would want for his Still Waters website? Try a few. Your list should have a one or two word title for each page and a brief description of that page's contents.

A good way to start your list is to make a list of key words you would think are important to you if you were considering camping at Still Waters. They might be time, directions, rules, size of lots and cost, methods of payment, facilities, activities, contact information, nearby events and landmarks, and campground photos.

One seemingly disinterested teen watching the contest suggested there be a page that explained some of the history of the campground and why it is called, Still Waters.

When you've finished your lists and begin drawing your web pages on paper, the following rules should be helpful:

- Be very clear in your mind what the purpose of that page is.
- Draw your web page in pencil first.
- Keep the words and sentences short and simple.
- Try to keep your page as short as the computer screen.
- They can be colorful but not look like a circus.
- Words should not be all in capital letters. (In email this means shouting)
- Do not bother about page menus, hyperlinks and fancy displays.

- Be sure to check the spelling and make sure the numbers are correct.
- Add SIMPLE pictures only after the website is nearly finished.

The list above is basic. It refers to web page design on PAPER. In a later chapter that deals with ONLINE web pages more depth is given to principles to be applied.

The Still Waters Secret

The whole contest planning came to a screeching halt for a moment as everyone looked at Ben Nape, the owner. Their eyes all said, “So what’s the answer? Where did the name Still Waters originate?”

A gentle smile came on Ben’s face as he slowly began to speak. “Before I owned this campground I was going crazy trying to keep my previous business going. I was working from sun up to sun down to make it all happen. My wife and I were both stressed out from the continual struggle. We didn’t get along with each other very well either.

One day I heard a radio sermon that said that God never wants us to work like that. The real truth is that He wants so very much to help us. The radio minister said the first step out of the stress is to see that the Bible has a great deal of direction on the matter. It was then that I learned a psalm you have probably heard before. It is also where I chose the name for this campground.”

Ben continued speaking looking up as though he were reading the words off the clouds:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

Marty got a lump in his throat as he remembered his troubled thoughts a few days ago, as he stared at the upside down cattails in the morning's still waters of the lake. He thought it really sounded as if Ben had gotten his "ducks in a row."

It was messy. It was messy. It was messy. When the winning team finished covering Ben with the shaving cream, he looked like some snowman that needed a carrot nose and a broom in hand.

Never Forget The Children

An honorable mention award was given to Judy for suggesting there be a web page that would have some kind of games or quizzes for young children. Ben's wife said she didn't know much about email, but if the children wanted to learn more about the still waters and the other goodies that were in the psalm, she'd be glad to answer them.

Marty shook his head in amazement that all this fun and inspiration had started with paper, markers, retired folks, and bored children. His mind went once more to Grace's peanut butter verse,

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

His mind also spoke Jake's comment, "If the children can build a computer with one box, just imagine what they could do with two?" Marty's heart said to him, "Go find another box."

Chapter 8

God's Peanut Butter

The Peanut Butter Comes Alive

GRACE KNEW IT WOULD HAPPEN. She didn't know where, when, or how, but she was sure of it. How could you tell? It was by the Still Waters scrapbook she had. Almost from the day before the coloring contest got into high gear, it started.

She had been taking pictures of all the events. She even included a title page that had that verse on it. It was the verse she had posted on the camper cabinet door that covered Marty's peanut butter jar. She had a silly feeling she should title the scrapbook "God's Peanut Butter." Grace and her friend Henri (Henrietta) worked very hard to include a clear description with each of the many photos in the scrapbook.

God must give silver haired folks a special knack and appetite for taking pictures of children and their exuberance. It's exciting to see how cameras, paper, markers, and peanut butter verses can bridge generations.

Four days later Grace and Marty had packed up their RV camper and were back home. The recorder on their telephone was beeping with a message to be heard. Marty was bringing in another armload of clothes as Grace played the recorded phone message for both to hear.

The message was from Beulah Watts reminding them about next Friday's Super Sixties Retirees program. The last part of the message heard Beulah say it was Grace and

Marty's turn to head up the program. The message had hardly ended when they faced each other with big grins, pointed at each other, and in unison exclaimed, "Peanut Butter!"

It was just as if the peanut butter verse had come to life. It started out as words on a piece of paper that Grace was working on memorizing. It also was a sort of flag or sign that Marty would see each time he reached for the peanut butter. It was more than the peanut butter spoonful Marty would eat to give him a boost of energy until mealtime. Ultimately, it became a prophecy of things to happen to him and his wife that were unimaginable.

The things that happened were far and above boredom breakers. You could see a fire had been kindled in Marty who at first felt discouraged and useless. The fire that had started was not the kind that is started with matches and extinguished with water. It was a fire that God puts within and must be shared with others. And the recorded message gave them just the ones to share all their exciting times they had at the Still Waters RV Campground.

The church had an old opaque projector in the storeroom that still worked. It was perfect for Grace and Marty to project the photos and colored pictures onto an overhead screen for the whole retirees' group to see. Marty had somehow wound up with the cardboard computer the children had made. It made a real hit with the seniors group and most of them tested it out after the presentation, punch, peanuts, and finger cakes.

Now That Would Have Been The End Of It, Except...

Pastor Donovan had slipped into the back of the auditorium about half way through Grace and Marty's presentation and left before the punch was passed.

Later, when Grace and Marty returned from shopping, the telephone recorder played them a message from their pastor. It said, "Marty, can you and Grace meet with the Special Missions Committee, this coming Thursday night, around seven?" In a lighter tone pastor's message continued, "We want you to teach us about peanut butter."

Thursday night Grace and Marty sat in and watched the committee do all their usual meeting stuff. Then pastor opened the new topic with a shocker statement; "I've wanted to do this for a long time. We're going to take the computer out of the church office."

Well, Deedra was present. She's the church secretary. In a fearful way she asked, "But where are you going to move me?" Everyone who heard her got the distinct impression that Deedra could not be without her computer.

Now that the pastor had everyone's undivided attention he held up his hands in a stop gesture. "First of all set your minds at ease the church computer stays right where it is." Deedra started breathing again. He told them, "Now listen carefully. This is an issue very close to my heart." The room suddenly became so quiet you could have heard a pin drop.

He went on, "Just a minute ago we all demonstrated how important technology is, in the administration of our church. You know, membership lists, bulletins, correspondence, email, making posters, and presentations. But that's just the tip of the iceberg of how God wants us to implement the use of these computer tools."

"Our young people are taught in school, even in the first grade, to use computers. By high school our teens are REQUIRED to use them. I want our church to teach our children and adults how to use computers to glorify God." And with a smile, he added, "and that means cardboard computers too."

He walked to the large marker board and said, “I believe there are two clear paths we should take.” He wrote them on the marker board reciting them as he wrote. They were:

- To show the principles in God’s Word that will help us to use our computers more productively.
- To use computers as metaphors in teaching God’s love and the need for salvation, that is, in evangelism.

Pastor repeated them with great emphasis. He faced the group, “Now folks, Grace and Marty have already proved how wonderfully the silver-haired set can be involved in this ministry. I want our planning to include this powerful resource. Hmmm. Maybe this short story BOXES AND BURDENS will help with our path number two. You might even call it a contemporary parable.”

Boxes and Burdens

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

The teenager was not all that clear about what church planters were. She was, however, emphatically clear about her desire to serve the Lord as a missionary – a front-line missionary.

As she was being escorted into the office of Miss Debra Minni, Tina’s heart felt as though it was about to explode with excitement. The office walls around her shouted the importance of missions. And here she sat, after so much prayer and preparation for this visit.

Following the introductions, Miss Minni began hearing the 14-year-old’s testimony and her burden to use her

computing skills for missions. Tina's Christian father often said that she wanted to scatter the gospel with her keyboard. As Tina polished off a cup of cocoa, Debra furtively glanced at her watch and wondered how she'd ever complete her agenda for the day.

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

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

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

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

As Debra continued to watch from her office window, she saw the 14-year-old lead the children in learning a rather loud rendition of John 3:16. Then each child was shown how to sit in front of the pretend computer, “type” and remove the invisible paper from the cardboard box printer. This spiritually motivated class, in beginning computer technology, was far beyond margin settings, font size, grammar and punctuation.

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

Today the missionary columnist was to learn about front-line Keyboard Missionaries. (End of Pastor’s story.)

Chapter 9

The Computer Missions Fair

He had never planned anything like this. Where is all this going?

PASTOR HAD SEEN THAT FOR SEVERAL WEEKS the children at church were all clustering around the senior citizens far more than usual. The children were hanging decorations for the first-ever computer missions fair with the help of the silver-haired set. He sensed the senior folks were more excited and involved than ever.

Large colorful signs on the walls greeted those who entered the church. They asked:

- Does my church need a website?
- Do websites actually work?
- What are websites without computers?

In smaller letters below each question were the answers:

- Yes, but not for the reasons you might think.
- Not any better than a big yellow church bus without work.
- The all-important planning stage of computer projects does not use computers. Websites and yellow church buses require far more work in a variety of ways than most people first imagine. Even the goals for both

must be prayed over and continually reevaluated. These commitments are doable when the processes and harvest are understood.

One of the hallway displays showed the actual cardboard computer the campgrounds had constructed. You won't believe it, but someone created a cardboard laptop computer from a pizza box! The words on its screen said, "If my people which are called..."

In one of the Sunday school rooms one of the silver-haired ladies was dressed to look a bit older than she really was. On the wall behind her was a large sign that proclaimed, "Granny Sims Email Riveter!" On the table in front of her were some take home short stories about Granny and others. Here is one:

Granny Sims – Email Riveter

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 did understand that her email machine was not a whole computer but just the part needed for email. 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 would give it a try. For fear she'd press the wrong button and it would shock her, she would type messages with two wooden pencils. Well, at least you have to give Granny credit for trying.

Talker had not told her to, but Granny decided she would only use it on Thursdays. She figured no sense in wearing the thing out before the garden was up. All day Thursdays she would sit in front of the fool thing and wait

for it to do something. 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 are not 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 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. (End of story.)

In another room at the Computer Missions Fair, old Mr. Deets was seated on a bench with very interested boys and girls looking at the insides of an old junk computer. Now something you need to know that even shocked the pastor. Old Deets had always scorned children. It was like he was allergic to them. But the scene clearly showed an old gentleman full of arthritis having the time of his life, feeling important again.

Each passerby could hear Deets showing the children all the large and small parts in a computer. He simply said that every one of these big and small parts is depended upon to do its part in making the computer work. "Does it make any difference what color the parts are?" he asked the children. All the children shook their heads no and spoke the same. "Children are sort of like computer parts to God," he said. "God wants big and small children of every color to be used in His plans of love."

As pastor turned the corner into the north hallway, the scene before him about blew his socks off. HIS WIFE, with a gray-haired wig on, was sitting near the front of a computer. Tommy and his seeing-eye dog Rascal were in front of the keyboard. Tommy had on a pair of earphones that spoke the words into his ears that were near the mouse cursor on the

screen. Though totally blind, he was reading to the pastor's wife.

The small poster near the scene made it clear that technology makes it even easier for everyone to be involved in spreading the good news of salvation. No one should be left out, and no one is a leftover, even if a person is blind.

Marty had to set up his scene in the custodian's closet because all the other rooms were used. He was seated in front of an old computer that didn't even have a keyboard. He wore a cap somewhat like the famous detective Sherlock Holmes wore. He held a large magnifying glass close to the screen as though he was trying to pick a splinter out of the screen.

The closet light was turned out and so Marty was doing his inspection with a flashlight. One of the hallway posters next to his scene said, "HELP WANTED!" in big bold letters. Another poster said in smaller letters, "The Silver-Haired Site Sleuths need you." On the other side of the closet door another poster explained that the very same determined efforts of seniors in genealogy research are needed to find wholesome sites for the church youth and adults.

Marty would occasionally interrupt his inspection to hand his observers a little blurb about how the newbies would be used. It had something to do with providing Sunday school teachers and youth leaders with websites pertinent to up-coming lessons and projects. Those that didn't have or didn't like computers could become liaisons between the teachers and the sleuths. Everybody is important. Everybody is included.

Website Worth

At the end of the tour of all the Computer Missions Fair scenes, everyone gathered in the auditorium. There were a

few testimonies from the visitors of all the new things they had learned. Little Betty stood up and blurted out, "I brought in a computer mouse!" The mother of the little 5-year-old blushed a bit but was proud just the same that her little one was taking an active part in missions. Her father wanted to sneak out of the service and see if he still had a mouse on his computer at home.

Harry (some folks referred to him as "hang-back Harry") walked to the microphone and began reading a report he had prepared.

"Website presence on the Internet is seen (and heard) by almost every country on the earth, aboard military ships, submarines, and in space. There are large numbers of individuals who have no computer or Internet at home, but use the one at their library, business, or school."

"Quadriplegics surf the net using "head mice" that sense the movement of the person's head and sends the signals to the computer. The totally blind use screen readers that convert screen text into audible speech and send it to the user's earphone as Tommy and Rascal demonstrated. The information available on the Internet seems to know no bounds. It's accessible almost for free at any time."

"We must be careful that our efforts don't just entertain or amaze. Whether our website is for our own testimony or for that of our church, the rules are much the same. Every God-honoring website must include content from each of the three main categories. Those categories are Billboarding, School, and Evangelism. Gwen Richards will tell us about Website Billboarding." He took his seat as Gwen approached the microphone.

Billboarding Is Just The Start

Gwen began reading from her small index cards. “The minor content of a website should be what I call ‘billboarding.’ This would include details about the church’s salvation message, schedule of services, staff, structure, and certainly a map of location. This makes it easier for visitors to know a bit about you even before they pull into the parking lot. These details will remain much the same from month to month. Please notice I referred to this as MINOR content.”

“Sad to say, most church websites stop here, when this is just scratching the surface. All too often though, very poor first impressions of a church are made by the disrepair of websites. There are some rather straightforward similarities between a website and a healthy church.” Gwen continued her presentation as Toni uncovered each topic on the overhead projector transparency.

- The scriptures must be the backbone of the website content and format.
- The website must edify the role of, and be answerable to, the local church.
- Church websites must have a church-approved leader called a Webmaster.
- Church websites have a strong ministry by and for all ages.
- Church websites seek to understand the needs of its users.
- Church websites train to those needs with simplicity.
- Church websites evangelize according to the Great Commission without compromise.

School Is In, Or Should Be

Gwen took her seat and to everyone's surprise, Grandpa Johnson took rickety steps up to the microphone. He must have thought the mike was a snake from appearances, but he moved closer at pastor's urging.

He smiled just a bit at all the expectant eyes watching him and spoke. "Well, I ain't lettin' these youngins have all the fun! To head off on the right foot I'm gonna read from Ephesians chapter 4 starting at verse 12. If you got your Bible, get it open and check me out."

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: so says Ephesians 4:12-15

"My part is about Website School. That was one of the purposes Harry told us a website had to have. Or have you forgotten already?" Pastor covered his face with his hand and felt the dignity of the pulpit had just plunged through the basement.

Grandpa Johnson continued, "One of the major uses of a website must be to train other churches, missionaries, and remote people. We must provide lessons and learning tools that can be used to educate and build up others. A website is a perfect place to provide truths in small packages that might

include diagrams, pictures, maps, etc. A good place to start is to make small lessons from our church's statement of faith."

"One big responsibility of the church website is to teach children and parents the pitfalls and provisions of computing. The website school should provide Bible principles and truths to be used by others who haven't got a Bible. This might include games that teach Bible principles."

"God has given us these computer gadgets as a powerful tool to help carry out the Great Commission. We can use the strong natural attraction of computers to provide exciting ways to learn and share the Gospel of Salvation. We can tailor the presentation in a variety of ways as we've seen in the rooms of this Computer Missions Fair."

"By the way Pastor, I'm lookin' forward to the next one of these Mission Fairs. I sure hope you ain't gonna make us wait a whole year for the next one." The pastor quickly helped Grandpa away from the microphone and down the platform steps before Grandpa committed the church to preventing World War III, or worse.

Pastor returned to the microphone with a bit of a strained sparkle in his eye. You were not sure if he was just glad to have survived Grandpa's speech or amazed at the enthusiasm over the Computer Missions Fair. His sweeping gaze covered most of the onlookers as he took sort of a mental breath.

"You all have blessed my heart beyond description. If I were counted as one of the visitors you've included, I could not have wanted to be any other place today. What excites me is the variety of talent and people used at the fair. Why, thanks to Marty, I even saw the custodian closet come alive." With a grin he said, "That was never taught in seminary."

Evangelism as Website Talent Tithers

“A church website is an inexpensive place to apply talents and burdens for the lost. God has richly blessed every church and individual with talent(s) to be developed and used for the Master. I call this talent tithing, whether it pertains to playing the piano, creating a database of light bulbs for the trustees, or detailing the plans for a Jell-O battle or a super sixties project.”

“One of the virtues that has disappeared in our youth is creativity. Their games on the court, stadium, or computer screen push them to be competitive, but not creative. Little do they realize this is just the opposite of what their future employers will look for in them. Their games should deal more with problem solving.”

“Now then,” he continued, “one month from today; Grace and Marty are going to give a presentation that will shed a great deal of light on what ‘Ol 39’ is. You and I will want to be here to also learn what God’s Peanut Butter verse is.” He displayed a half puzzled and half amused look on his face.

The Scene Without Words

After the proceedings in the auditorium and closing prayer, everyone began moving toward their cars to go home. The scene on most everyone’s mind was the one that had no words but just preschool giggles and grandma grins. Beulah was an older lady from the other side of the tracks, so to speak. Her clothes were worse than most people’s throwaways. Her income certainly didn’t allow for store-bought perfumes and other luxuries. She thought this caused her to have to worship in a pew by herself each Sunday. Her helper at the computer fair had been a little preschooler that

did more of her share of disrupting fine-tuned church services.

Beulah and her little helper sat in front of two adjacent sides cut from a cardboard box. A broken computer cable was stretched like a clothesline from one side to the other. Taped at one end of the cable was an older lady clipart picture cut from some church bulletin. A little girl picture was taped to the other end of the cable. The shunned older lady stuck a piece of tape to the back of a cut out heart. Tippiie the preschooler taped it to the middle of the cable and both giggled as though they were away from the world of prejudice.

On the cardboard background was a clipart picture of Jesus that the two had taped hearts all around. Neither Tippiie nor Beulah could read or write. So you had to imagine the sign above their scene that said, "Links of Love Like the Lord." To top it all off, Beulah didn't know what a website was. She figured it was some kind of covering over people's eyes that prevented them from seeing others like God sees them.

[A sidebar story for this chapter is COMPUTER CAMP. (refer to the appendix)]

Chapter 10

Your Website Mark on Missions

WHAT HAPPENED THAT INCREDIBLE SUNDAY about two weeks after the Computer Missions Fair, no one could have imagined. At the right time in the service the pastor had all the small children come to the front and be seated. But then, instead of giving his usual “sermon in a sack” for them, three-second graders came up and stood next to the podium. Two of the trio held an old junk computer keyboard between them. It was downright ugly, with several keys missing and dirty enough to stay away from. It was easy to see it was worn out. It had seen its better days, or had it?

The third of the trio stepped up to a microphone and began this explanation, “Do you think this keyboard is a beautiful one? Probably not. Most people can call things ugly pretty fast. But if you really want to, you can turn something ugly and useless into something very beautiful. My pals here will show you how with a fun little contest.”

The second grader holding the left side of the ugly keyboard pointed to the key with the “W” on it. She said, “This is the ‘W’ key. It could stand for the whipping that Jesus willingly took before He died on the cross for me.”

The right side helper pointed to the “O” key. He said, “This is the ‘O’ key. It could stand for Jesus is the Only way of Salvation.

The left side competitor randomly picked another key and taught the children and the audience, “This key I picked is the ‘A’ key. It could remind me that Jesus Always loves me. Even when I make dad and mom sad.”

By then there were two or three of the children seated in the audience waving their hands to be picked, saying things like, “I wanna do one! Oh pick me! I wanna do one!” Little Dede just could not take the chance of not being picked. So she jumped up and pointed to the “L” key. “I know what the ‘L’ key looks like. And I also know Jesus Loves me.” She turned around and pointed at the audience with the same little finger. With all the determination a little 5-year-old could muster, she said, “And He’s making me a house with Him in Heaven.”

The second grader with the microphone ended with, “See? Anytime we use something to tell others that Jesus loves them, it’s beautiful in God’s eyes. We got this junk keyboard out of Hanson’s trash. Thank you pastor for letting us talk.” The pastor rose to his feet and went over to the trio and gave each a quick hug of appreciation as they went back with the other children.

[Note: That Sunday evening the children played a gooey version of the keyboard contest, using peanut butter. The details are in the appendix so you can have your own.]

As the announcements were finishing, the children at the front of the sanctuary went back with their parents. Many of them got down on their knees using the seats next to their parents for desks. Out came the coloring books and markers.

The pastor moved to the microphone with a piece of paper in his hand. He paused and looked over the church folks and then began. “Two weeks ago we had our first Computer Missions Fair. I know you’ll agree with me it was a

rousing success. You probably noticed Grace taking pictures of all the scenes and posters. With the trustees' approval, we had the pictures put on the website for the world to see.

“Before we have another song and the offering, I want to read to you an email printout I received a few days ago.

“Dear Pastor,

I am the director of a poor orphanage here in a very small village in Haiti. We have no electricity or telephone except in the village office when the generator is started. We were treated to viewing just a bit of the Internet some days ago. As you Americans say, we were really ‘turned on’ by viewing your website. We would like to have our own Computer Missions Fair with cardboard boxes, etc. Unfortunately, we have barely enough funds to buy food, let alone crayons and markers. Do you know who can help us?”

The pastor returned to his seat and indicated that the service agenda was to resume with a song and then the offering.

As the offering plate was passed there was a gasp and hand-over-the-mouth of most of those that saw them. Sitting up front, the pastor wasn't able to determine what the surprise was about, as the plate was passed. He didn't know there were three of them, a blue one, a green one, and a red one.

Marty and Grace did not discover what they were until the plate was passed to them, but there they were. They had little teeth marks in them, to be sure. They were magic ink markers on their way to Haiti, sent as prized possessions from little hands with big hearts for missions.

It is important to remember that this journey (and yours) begins by reading, rehearsing, and relying on Grace and Marty's peanut butter verse.

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

Appendix

Sidebar Stories for Most Chapters

No Good to Nobody (for Chapter 2)

The clock was winding down fast with no solution in sight!

THAT WAS TRUE at least in Pastor Debbins' mind. He had committed with great pride, to scheduling his church, with its new addition, to be the location for the fall Pastors' Seminar. This also required him to provide the program for the event. That's all well and good, BUT PASTOR DEBBINS COULDN'T THINK OF A GOOD THEME!! A cloudy idea having to do with a symphony orchestra kept swimming around in his head but nothing on which to build.

That new addition Pastor Debbins liked to show off featured several things that evidenced the good planning by the church building committee. One was a wheelchair ramp making the services of love and forgiveness through the shed Blood of Jesus Christ, accessible to everyone. One such ramp-user was Ricky Jepps. How Ricky ached inside. No, not from his birth defects caused from his mother taking Thalidomide. Ricky ached from feeling like a burden, but more importantly, the sickening continual attitude of being *no good to nobody*.

It was like rubbing salt in an open wound every time Ricky would hear the Pastor say, "...people should be involved... make this your church...there's something here for everyone to do." Rick would silently add, "Yep! Except if you're in a wheelchair with arms and legs that don't fit any store-bought shirts and pants."

Now Ricky was good at one thing, for sure. He was a good listener. Thank God the Thalidomide had not affected his hearing. Actually, for a 13-year-old he had a fairly good memory. You'll agree Rick's range of games and entertainment was quite narrow. Probably his favorite was sitting in front of his computer, and without looking at the screen, seeing how many of the church member's names he could type. This was a good game 'cause it used up a lot of time, something Ricky had hours of. The progress was very slow, you know, with his defects and all.

Unlike yours and mine, his computer keyboard had the "S" key missing and a monitor that said, "POWER TOOLS ON SALE" even when the thing wasn't turned on. But he couldn't complain. The hardware store said the thing was just junk, *no good to nobody*, and asked Ricky's father if Ricky would want to fool with it. That was a 'God-send' since the family's finances were more than drained by medicine and hospital bills.

Ricky was getting pretty good with his list. One time he even started adding a couple of words after each name that reminded him in what that person excelled. How Ricky wished he could have added his name to the list with some appropriate words as to his abilities. But see, *no good to nobody* equals a blank space

What happened just before the Pastor's Seminar isn't clear, even now. But the results are still spoken of by the pastors who attended. They said it was the most purposeful seminar they had attended in years.

The seminar program progressed through all the expected introductory things; then Pastor Debbins walked to the podium. He was clearly not in a comfortable state of mind. You got the feeling there was a mental war going on inside. His war was probably between wanting to burst out

with a bone-deep smile of joy or reach for his handkerchief to hide the tears, which were about to show.

Sure his message touched on the new addition. But not so much on the wood and plaster, but on the people, their willingness, and their God-given talents. Boy... It's a good thing Ricky wasn't there to hear all this. Pastor likened the whole process to a symphony of different instruments. His text concentrated on the last portion of I Corinthians 12:18. "*as it hath pleased him.*"

In giving a little background into the choice for the seminar theme, Pastor Debbins related, "I found a crumpled piece of paper on the floor near one of the Sunday school rooms. Opening it up I found the following list." Pastor walked to the overhead projector and switched it on.

After a final focusing everyone saw the list that he had found. He further stated emphatically, "God, Who makes no mistakes, provided that list; a list that became the answer to the theme needed for the seminar." Now the fruit of that seminar of several years ago is still seen today in planning church seminars. I guess no one will ever figure out why the list Pastor Debbins showed on the overhead didn't have any S's in it. Whoever created the list evidently had no "S" key on their computer. I wonder whom?
(End of story.)

Continue on to chapter 3.

Hymn Cake (from Chapter 3)

LITTLE JUDY COULD HARDLY KEEP UP with the small group of other children coming 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 Lanny had printed the words to several very old hymns he knew the nursing home residents loved to sing. Lanny 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 Lanny 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 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. Judy became more confused than ever.

Some water was added to the flour and directions were given to little Judy to mix water and flour until all the lumps were gone. While the 7-year-old stirred dutifully, she would

glance at the hymn sheets and ask herself, “Am I making a hymn cake?”

All her 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 Lanny to cut the “hymn boards” into varied shapes and the result became 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 Lanny had discarded at home. Mrs. Beemer saw the misspelled words and the reasons Lanny had trashed the page.

But then Mrs. B. 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 a 83-year-old lady and a 7-year-old lady to hug real big. (End of story).

Continue on to chapter 4.

The Pot Bellied Stove (from Chapter 4)

IN AN ALMOST HYPNOTIZING WAY, the little windows would randomly flicker with the soft light behind them. The stately old pot bellied stove sat in the middle of grandpa's living room. Its glow from the many 2" by 2" windows gave flickering glimpses of old pictures and antiques on the wall shelves. I learned from Grandpa when I was very young the strange little windows were made of material called mica.

The cast iron stove didn't care if you asked it to share the beginning of your day to drive out the morning chill or warm your weary bones at the end of a busy day. Its message understood by young and old was always welcomed, "Spend time close to me, and we'll see the wonders of God together."

As a grandpa myself, I enjoy so much reading God's precious word each day, whether it's to take away the chill of the day's uncertainty, or comfort this carcass after a long day's labor. One thing I have learned so often, is that I enjoy glimpses of God's wondrous written word in spoonfuls not found in sermons I've heard.

Micah is also the name of an Old Testament book that many fast living folks just tuck in the corner. They figure its contents are only for chastising Israel for their backsliding many years ago.

Now Micah's printed words of contentment blessed my bones as I read,

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. (5:2)

Well, reading in Micah, about God's plans for my Savior and King to come, would have been enough to put MY stamp of approval on Micah. But yesterday evening another little window of truth about my God came in a small phrase as the book closes. The phrase of warmth is, "...*he delighteth in mercy.*"

Long ago, I'd learned that Grace is God giving us gifts. That is, He gives us things we do not deserve, things we have not earned. In contrast, God's mercy is somewhat like the courtroom judge not giving the full sentence the offender deserved. Over and over I read in the Old Testament of God's disappointment and then judgment against His nation of Israel He loves so dearly.

All throughout the pages I also read of God's desire to restore Israel to its place of honor in the eyes of the world. He desires to show her mercy. But that isn't what the phrase in chapter seven says. It says, "he delighteth." Joy comes to God in bestowing mercy. He loves to show mercy to us AND I believe it warms His heart to see little windows of mercy we reflect toward those around us.

Tell me friend, do you see the mercy that delights God in the Shed Blood of His Son for you? Can you be a little mica window of comfort to someone around you that's cold, confused, and hurting? Take them to the messenger from Bethlehem. (End of story.)
Continue on to chapter 5.

Friendships Beyond Words (from Chapter 5)

No one knows when it started, or for that matter, where it'll end.

JEFFERY HEMP, ONE OF OUR SUNDAY EVENING USHERS first noticed it. Not quick to prejudge someone else's little one, he felt it his duty to monitor the situation.

It was Denny again. Now, Denny's not a problem in the strictest sense of the word. But then he isn't quite like most of the other 7-year-olds in church. And mind you, it's not that folks show up on church workday dressed just like Denny when he's got his Sunday best on either.

Every single Sunday evening, it happens just like setting your watch. While all the other children are scooting up and down the halls full of life and laughter, Denny quietly moves down one pew and then up the next. Every Sunday he covers the whole church. And you won't discover at first glance he's gathering used bulletins either. The only other clue to the case Jeffery has learned is that Denny takes them home. And doesn't bring them back.

If you asked the Fenton family, this month's custodians, they'd chuckle and mumble something about it being a help to them. Jeffery had not thought much more about it for the next three months or so.

And Then It Happened!

Any usher would remember what happened that Wednesday, March the 14th with the detail required of a defense lawyer.

Beulah Benning, our Missions Committee chair person excused herself out of their meeting taking that beat-up lunch bag with her, heading for the pastor's study. Beulah wiped

her nose once more as she handed Pastor the bag inviting him to see the startling contents of the bag that Denny had carried his lunch in all week.

In all of his 23 years as a pastor, proclaiming the good news of Christ's Blood payment for our sins, he'd never seen this before. A description does not come easily. First attempt would be they were small scrapbooks, probably the size of the church bulletins. Each one was held together with discolored string tied in a knot no boy scout ever saw. It appeared to be a clumsy stack of nine sitting on Pastor's desk.

Careful inspection indicated that each of the nine was unique in content. Denny's paste-up capability would bring a smile from any newspaper typesetter, but all would agree a lot of tedious work was evidenced by this little 7-year-old.

Well, anyone knows a book has to have a cover, or a title page, or something that says, "Start here." But the nine little books said it all. Each page had ragged-edged pictures big and small pasted with great care, placed with great love. Beulah wiped her nose for the umpteenth time assuring Pastor all the contents must have been cut out of church bulletins. Some pages contained a phrase or verse you know you've seen on a bulletin cover.

One page showed clipart graphic of a little boy with his hands folded in prayer and written with an orange crayon, the letters "ME" and an arrow linking the two.

The last piece to Jeffery's case was answered when Pastor pulled a used envelope out of the bag with directions written with that orange crayon,

"GIVE TO BEHT NUTON"

Pretty clear instructions, right? It's crystal clear, once you've seen the three books that have Denny's testimony in them. The lunch bag contents are to be sent to our missionary Beth Newton. Some pictures had been cut out of the programs used during the missions conference. And then

there was that orange crayon of love again. It simply spoke across oceans of difference and indifference. On a page an “I” appeared next to a big round heart. Next to them was a picture of a missionary holding a Bible. You were just sure some of the pictures had appeared in a Sunday School Class take-home paper.

The little 7-year-old had learned the crucial missions lesson that many adults have not learned yet. Missions are far more than languages, lands, and lives we do not quite understand. Missions are placing God’s heart for the lost and dying world inside our hearts. With great love, we use whatever resources and skills God has placed around us to tell others how important they are in God’s plans.

(End of story.)

Continue on to chapter 6.

Cardboard Airplanes (from Chapter 6)

“Quick - Bank Right! Tom! Bank right, before you slam into that mountain!”

DEAN MOVED THE JOYSTICK CONTROL in front of him desperately to the right. Then a slight pause. The two boys stared at each other for a couple seconds and then burst out laughing.

Their flight simulator consisted of a couple of stacked cardboard boxes with a rather large picture of an airplane on the side of the top box. Just below the picture were torn out pictures of gauges from an old welding catalog. This represented their instrument panel. They found their broken joystick in someone’s trashcan, but you know, “one man’s trash is another man’s treasure.”

The two boys lived in the part of town where folks didn’t have very much. But they were feeling richer every day since the computer club began. The Tech Trash Tutors Club met in the basement of an old “kid-lovin” church that really was a Godsend to these two boys and several others like them. The club taught the boys that broken computer parts have great value just like young people that don’t have the finest clothes or rich parents.

The next Thursday’s meeting of the Tech Trash Tutors Club showed all the boys how to carefully take that joystick apart and learn from the insides. The silver haired man everyone lovingly called “Gramps” explained just a little bit about the things they discovered inside. The keen interest of the boys led you to believe they were training for some space shuttle mission.

In very simple ways, Gramps used the joystick parts to remind the boys that all sizes and colors of parts are needed, and that each is important. Then Gramps turned the joystick

upright and said, “Now I’m going to show you the most important part of any joystick.” He said, “The most important part is not the hand control, or the firing button, or the power cord. It’s these calibration knobs. If the joystick isn’t calibrated to make the airplane or vehicle move straight, you’ve got nothing.”

“If our club were able to have a working computer I could show you several ways that it calibrates itself every time it’s turned on. You’ve seen the computers at school do this when they’re warming up and show a bunch of goofy sentences on the screen. They’re calibrating themselves at the speed of light.”

The eight boys saw Gramps walk over to a well-worn blackboard and write the words,

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.
Psalms 119:105.”

He read the words carefully to the boys more than once and explained that the Bible teaches us many principles about computers. But it especially tells us how much God loves boys and girls and has blessed them with great imagination and inspiration.

The club meeting ended with a simple game Gramps showed the members how to make and play with others in their neighborhood. It used each of the letters of the word GOSPEL. Details are on the next page.
(End of story.)

Continue on to chapter 7.

Gospel Message Acrostic

Copy this page and cut out the squares. On the non-printed side of each, write the large capital letter you see on the printed side. What wonderful flash cards they make. What a wonderful message they bring.

Or, Make two copies of this page and cut out the squares. Do not write anything on the non-printed side. Instead give them to your student to play the concentration game with their friends.

<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p style="text-align: center;">God loves you...</p> <p>No matter who you are, what you look like, where you live, what you've done, or how old you are.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Precious Blood of Jesus Christ</p> <p>He shed His Blood willingly on the Cross to pay for the sins we do.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Only way of salvation is through God's Only Son.</p> <p>Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation... learning of His wonderful Gift in the Bible</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Everlasting Life</p> <p>Becoming a child of His begins when we invite Him into our heart and lasts forever.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sin Doing things we know God doesn't like.</p> <p>I'm a sinner... you are a sinner, we are all born sinners, but God gave the Perfect Sacrifice.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">L</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Let Him in.</p>

Dear Lord Jesus, I know I'm a sinner and you're the only means of salvation. According to your promises in the Bible, come into my heart and save me forever. I want to be your child and please you.(End)

Computer Camp (from Chapter 9)

The moose peered over Nancy's shoulder as she struggled at typing.

THIS IS ONE OF THOSE SITUATIONS you almost had to be there to understand. If you looked really close at the moose head hanging on the lodge wall, you could never be sure which the moose was staring at, either the monstrous snake skin or the long banner with large black letters that spelled out "Christian Kidz 'Puter Camp" on the opposite wall.

All during the free time the previous two days, Nancy listened as most of her fellow campers excitedly talked about the CD ROM's this and the multi media that. On her first day at camp, Nancy had no idea what these things were or even if she needed them.

Today they began learning how to write letters using a simple word processor and print them out. As the camp computer teacher walked behind each of the eight machines Nancy's classmates were using this hour, the teacher noticed an odd thing never seen in any of the other classes.

It wasn't that each of the eight machines looked different; only three were color, two were Apple Macintoshes and the rest were IBM clones. And it wasn't that Nancy was probably the slowest in her class. But it was what she was typing – Sermon notes! But she was working very hard at typing what she thought were sermon notes; so nothing was said.

Friday was "show and tell" day. Everyone would have an opportunity to read what they'd typed and maybe explain their reasons for their efforts. What a struggle it was for the computer teacher to concentrate on the presentations of Nancy's classmates and not be preoccupied with what Nancy's presentation would reveal.

Nancy started with a grateful mention that she'd not have been able to come to camp if it hadn't been for an unknown person donating the funds to pay her way. But with words that would melt the heart of the toughest football player, Nancy told the little computer class how much she loved her pastor. See, he took the time to tell her over and over, how much Jesus loved little Nancy with all her imperfections and how Jesus shed His Blood for Nancy's sins and wanted to be invited into her heart.

Nancy wasn't good at doing any of the things her pastor needed done. After all, she was just a kid. But, somehow, some way she wanted to try to type his notes from past sermons. Even just a couple of sermons typed would show her pastor the burden of her tender heart.

During the remainder of the class, it was like a bee-hive broke loose in the room as the rest of the classmates began suggesting things they could do in their church using the things they'd learned at 'Puter Camp. Some of them were:

- Becky wanted to type out labels for pre-addressed missionary envelopes ready to be used from the rack in the church foyer.
- David admitted he'd need help in making a list of the birthdays of all the kids in his AWANA group, plus the children of the missionaries.
- Barney said he'd make a list of the books in the church library.
- Janie would type words to favorite hymns in big letters for the folks at the nursing home.

The computer instructor stared down at his pages of notes declaring the meanings of bits, bytes, and busses. But today he'd learned the real lesson about computers from a little 9-year-old girl and her love for her pastor.

(End of story.)

Continue on to chapter 10.

Peanut Butter Keyboard Contest (from Chapter 10)

Lessons to learn:

1. Become familiar with the attributes of Christ,
2. Give beauty to things by using them in Christ's name.
3. (Optionally) Events are more fun when we include super seniors.

Note: This can also be high action. This **preteen version** does not involve typing or even learning key locations. Have a camera handy to share excitement with others. Please refer to the liability releases in the front of this book.

Materials needed: 1 or 2 old keyboards, 1 jar of peanut butter, paper towels, and hugs. (Optionally) Make a trophy described later in this module.

One of the keyboards should have an ugly worthless appearance. The idea is to demonstrate that objects (and some people) may first appear to be ugly to us in some way. But when God is honored by those ugly things/people, they become very beautiful to God.

1. Remove the Q, X, and Z keys plus a few other non-letter keys.
2. Cut the cable off the keyboard.

You may wish to eliminate the Q, X, and Z keys from the Attributes ABC's list below.

Each of the attributes could be written larger, on a full sheet of typewriter paper and have a student or super senior recite/practice them.

Attributes of Christ ABC's List

- A- Always listening to us pray
- B- The Bible tells us of Him
- C- Nailed to the cross for me
- D- His death paid for my sins
- E- He gives us eternal life
- F- He forgives when we ask
- G- He is God
- H- His home is Heaven
- I- He wants inside our heart
- J- Jesus loves me most
- K- He is the King of Kings
- L- loves us like we are
- M- He's building us a mansion
- N- He never leaves us alone
- O- Only way of salvation
- P- Protects us from Satan
- Q- Never quits loving us
- R- He rose from the grave
- S- Saves us
- T- Tell others about Jesus
- U- Understands how we hurt
- V- We have victory through Him

For the MESSY Peanut Butter Keyboard Contest do the following:

1. Pop all the LETTER keys out of the keyboard. A tablespoon can help in doing this.
2. You'll want to separate out the Q, X, and Z keys to use in making the trophy.
3. Dab each key top in peanut butter so the letter cannot be read by the contestant.
4. Place them in a group.
5. Caution each contestant not to lick or eat the peanut butter - the keys are not sanitized.

Modify the following steps for what works for your group.

6. Cut paper towel sheets in half or quarters.
7. Give each contestant one piece of towel.
8. Have one contestant from each team choose a buttered key.
9. When the starter gives the signal, the two contestants race to point B and wipe off the peanut butter with the towel to reveal which letter they have.
10. As they race back to the starting point, they must think of that attribute of Christ. (or a suitable one that works with that key.)
11. As soon as they have told their answer to the judge, their next teammate may repeat the process.

Note: If your team sizes are rather large, you may need to re-butter some of the keys during the race to be reused.

Make a trophy about 18" high, using 1 or two peanut butter jars and the Q, X, and Z keys glued on top. Have a camera ready to take pictures of the winning team with the trophy. You could even "cream" the losing team

captain with a Peanut Butter Cream Pie. This should be done on the top of the head, not in the face.
(End of this process.)

(End of The Magic Website and Peanut Butter Keyboard)