

## **Stepper Start**

### *Introduction*

Where students, silver-hair, scripture,  
and start-ups come together.

Silver-topped Noah 'Gramps' Pierson learns how to mentor teens, especially troubled ones like Samson Tiffin, by fanning entrepreneurial flames inside most of today's teens. With the help of each other, burdens and baggage are turned into tools to become what starts out as an imaginary business.

Is it possible that God can make silver-haired seniors and students to be the perfect partnership to draw both generations into the Bible's joy overflowing? Without hesitation – YES!

by  
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doesn't make women better than men or worse. You can't say a fork is better than a spoon, they're each better at doing some things than others.”

“Now fellas, I'm suggesting that we should be asking God to show us a girl or lady that might be better at doing some things in our business, than we are. I'm thinking our business would be hindered by keeping it a 'men and boys' business. We'll be our best if we take lessons from how God does things, and also nature He's created all around us.

[ The eduventure continues in book 2 #214]

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a 'God-send', literally, in how they gave Gramps a mission for each day. When Sam's mom brought Noah into the kitchen table, Ben and Sam were already there, excitedly sharing ideas for their imaginary business.

Gramps got seated and Bonnie continued her laundry folding tasks in the spare bedroom. Gramps began their meeting by leading the teens in prayer asking for God's leading and unity, knowing Satan is always trying to destroy any Christians working together. Gramps always liked to include a little about salvation, in his prayers; especially since he knew that Sam was saved, but wasn't so sure about Ben.

Gramps began with, “Fellas, I want to share an idea, the Lord put in my heart a couple days ago. It has to do with our business, and how we can make it our best. It has something to do with Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden.” Sam thought, “Oh, no. Gramps is having a senile moment, where his mind is in another world, with this Garden of Eden thing.”

“Guys, I believe we ought to keep our eyes out for a girl to be a part of our business, and here's why. For a whole number of reasons, God partnered a woman with Adam to help take care of the Garden and other things. More than that, he gave Eve some special skills that Adam wasn't especially strong in. For instance, while men take a little more logical mechanical path at dealing with life's challenges, women use skills that scientists tell us are most prominent in the right half of the brain. So in the same way that our left and right halves of our brain compliment each other, so do men's skills and women's skills.”

Gramps continued, “I mean, God has 'wired' women to be more sensitive, to the feelings and visual queues from others. They are more proficient at doing highly repetitive tasks, and even better at multitasking than men are. And it's certainly no secret women are far better at communicating than we are. Now what I've said,

# Stepper Starter

## Minding Your Business

### Book 1 of 2

( Book 2 is #214 )

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Ben continued, “Look Sam. That phrase... er verse, is two-fisted; I'm thinking 'decently' would mean the AMOUNT or size or speed, or something like that. The 'in order' thing talks about the DIRECTION or sequence. Ya hit the ball and then run to FIRST base, not second.”

The two teens continued planning on the layout for the poster as Sam's mom came in the kitchen to get a toothpick for something. Without any words of interruption, she returned to her sewing project in the living room. She could hardly believe what she had just seen the teens in the kitchen doing. Through all the struggles Sam had been dealing with, since his parent's messy divorce last year, Sam seemed to be finding his right path.

Holding back tears, Sam's mom closed her eyes and could still see HER SON Sam pointing Ben's attention to the words in his open Bible. “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

God is up to something, whether it's with orange hair, pizza, posters, or Heaven's promises.

## **=10 Hunting Samantha**

**R**ight-Brain Recruiting' might be the title of some guidance Gramps began sharing with the teen boys, forming their imaginary business.

Silver-haired Gramps loved filling his often empty retirement days with thoughts and mentoring of the teen boys, Sam and his newly included Ben. Gramps was super grateful to God for leading the two teens with super challenges trying to reach the 'young adult' class of society. Even a first glance told you the boys were in stormy seas; Sam with his badly scarred face and Ben with his orange spiked hair and considerable facial jewelery.

While first impressions might suggest otherwise, the boys were

his friend Ben, gobbled far more than his share. If it's possible to inhale pizza, Ben is sure to come close. Both pizza-eating teens had very few friends. With his orange spiked hair, it was a little easier to tell that Ben, more than Sam, had some serious unanswered questions in his life. Ben had tried so many bizarre things to find meaning, purpose, peace, and love, it would scare an Army commando.

With the pizza gone, Sam began telling Ben some of the exciting things, his silver-haired friend, Gramps (that's Noah Pierson) had been teaching him. In spite of Ben's orange hair and facial jewelry, he listened closely to all that Sam was saying. Looking into Ben's eyes, you could almost see his brain wheels turning. It was almost like feeding little bits of gasoline into an old car that was trying to come to life, as the lessons of preparation, others are watching, and decently and in order were being shared.

### Ben's Bomb Was Dropped!

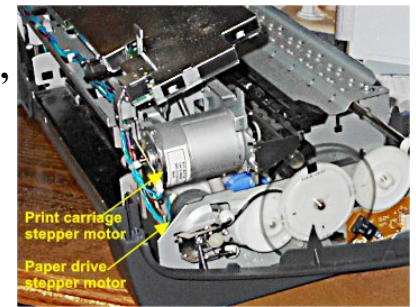
Mr. Orange Hair (that's Ben) dropped his bomb with the question, "Ok, Sam. So what's your poster going to be about? Startin' this imaginary business, what poster do you think ought to shout to everyone?" In his heart, Sam was pretty sure that Ben was not saved. Ben had told Sam once before, he was sure he wasn't saved. He wanted Ben to talk to Noah as they discussed salvation. The poster in Sam's heart, warned of Ben's need to be saved and sure.

Sam decided to make a different poster for now – but he didn't know what. Ben's finger traced a pattern in the tablecloth and said, "Why don't you make your poster about the 'decently and in order thing'? It sounds pretty important to me – especially in this startup phase." BOOOM!! The bomb was dropped, with no turning back. Ben's brain wheels had no intention of keeping this 'business' imaginary.

## =1 The Funny Motor

**G**od's up to something! No, I mean it – God's up to something. And I know I'm never going to find out what it is, and be a part of it, until I get off of what I'm down on.

How many times I've said that to myself, only half believing it. This makes me think He's an 'all-the-way' God. Either you are all in, or all out, of trusting Him.



My name's Noah Pierson. As I sit at the end of the table of a storage room watching teens take apart old computers and sort out their parts, I just feel like something is missing in my service to Him. This 'missing out' part of my attitude makes me wonder if some unconfessed sin has led God to put me on the bench, with other chronic spectators. I don't want to be there. Though my vision is not that great, it's easy to see the emptiness in the eyes of the teens busy with screwdrivers and other tools.

My thoughts are broken occasionally by Bob, the white-haired leader of the project, speaking to everyone in the room. The project is to create teaching kits to be sent to missionaries in Mexico and elsewhere. Bob held up a computer part and asked everyone in the room to lay down their tools and pay close attention.

He began, "I want you all to meet Mr. Funny Motor." Bob had a wonderful way of bringing lessons down to earth in a way that me and my white hair could understand, and even share with others. I think Bob could take about any part of an old computer system and make a story; a parable out of it. The teen boys and girls listening, loved him for it. You could tell his lessons were all from the heart, because he'd always make each of us feel

more important than any thing in the computer, or anything the computer does.

In his other hand, he held up the fan motor that keeps the computer insides cool. He continued, “This fan motor we all see lots of them all around us. These fan motors get turned on, and they spin continuously, until you switch them off. There's nothing strange about them. But I want to teach you about Mr. Funny Motor.”

Holding up the funny motor, the lesson went forward. “This guy; this funny motor is almost never seen. He always seems to be back in the shadows or squeezed in some little spot where no one cares to look. When in reality, he should actually be getting the spotlight of our attention. Without this guy we wouldn't be able to print things with our computers, store our files on disks and drives, and a thousand other things beyond our thoughts. The list of their uses can be found on the Internet, so I'll not take time here.”

“Our funny motor here, acts like it has the jitters. It doesn't spin all the way around and keep it up, like the fan motor here. Because of the way the funny motor is made, it has to get it's electricity from a computer, that sends it pulses of electricity. Something like sending Morse code pulses along a wire. Well, this motor is able to count the number of pulses and then knows how much to turn. It may need to turn a few degrees, or half a revolution or lots of revolutions. But it always knows exactly when to stop and maybe even go back in the other direction.” This 'funny motor' that seems like a nervous person; sort of jittery, is actually called a 'Stepper Motor'. Say it with me will you? Stepper Motor. Ok. Great. All sorts of grinding machines that are run by computers, are big users of stepper motors. They make airplane wing parts, gasoline motor parts for cars and tons of other things that make our lives more productive and safer.”

stop. What was the rule and warning, that was important?”

“Actually, God had Mr. Luke write it down so we could easily learn and share it. Sam, open your Bible there, to Luke chapter 14, starting at verse 28.” After reading the verse and the next one, the silver-topped mentor went on to explain that counting the cost was a crucial step in PREPARATION to building a tower (or even a business). The rule here was to make sure you had everything needed to start the project, which might be boards, nails, or attitudes and rules.

Now, the warning was that if good preparation was neglected, the project probably wouldn't be finished. If the project wasn't finished, all those watching would be ashamed of the fella. Gramps used a different color marker and wrote next to the tower, “PREPARATION is crucial”. Just below that, was the simple words, “PEOPLE ARE WATCHING.” Whether we want to, or not – each of us are teachers in everything we do. And we'll never know all those who are watching us. We need to always be doing our best – as unto the Lord. Another helpful verse is “Let all things be done decently and in order.” 1Corinthians 14:40.

The two at the table continued talking about other preparation steps that should be remembered. Sam said a warm thankful closing prayer to God, and to Gramps, as the 'business' meeting came to a close.

Do you suppose that Jesus 'counted the cost' as plans were put in place for Him to shed His innocent blood on the Cross, for the sin of man?

## 9 Ben's Bomb

**S**pace Station astronaut food doesn't place pizza and pop at the top of the menu, but it should, thought Sam. Sam almost choked, trying to get his share of the pizza before

“As we start putting together our imaginary business, you and I both know Satan is going to throw a monkey-wrench into our plans one way or another. I figured we should start right out using Poster Power.” The teen scratched his head and thought, “Oh no. He's started one of those senile moments that all old folks like Gramps are supposed to get.” The confused look on Sam's face easily told Noah what was going on, in Sam's mind.

“Sam. Try to think of a poster as your own private grandpa. The poster hanging on your bedroom wall is a constant reminder of important things - that Satan does NOT want you to remember. Maybe think of a poster as an important note that shouts.” Noah paused a moment, as he laid a shopping bag on the table in front of them. He began emptying its contents as he spoke, “Before you think I've flipped out, let me do the poster this week and you can do the one for next week.”

The teen almost heard the launch count down in his heart as Gramps continued his explanation in a happy expectant tone. Gramps positioned a poster panel on the table and withdrew a green marker to begin the poster. Sam watched every move, like he might have to do the same thing in front of one of his few friends.

What first appeared on the poster was a large tower with many of those criss-cross beams that gives strength in stormy times. It's not hard to think that each of us need our own supply of criss-cross beams in our own hearts for each stormy moment that Satan sends. After the simple tower was finished, Noah (I mean Gramps) spoke. “Now my poster today is about a fella that wanted to build a tower. This fella was given a rule to go by, that included a warning. Now, Sam. The rule and warning this fella got, was important to him and it's super important to us, as we build our imaginary business. Ya with me?” If Sam was any more interested, he'd forget to breathe. “Yeah, Gramps. Don't

Bob wrapped up his parable about stepper motors with, “I have to tell you. I try very hard to be a stepper motor controlled by God's direction and love for me. Stepper motors are crucial in getting printer cartridges, drills and all sorts of things in the position they need to be in. As God's stepper motor, I want to make sure I'm in the position He wants me to be in, as I try to encourage all you teens in His matchless love for each of you. Part of that right position is to always keep myself in His shadow and promote Him to always be in the spotlight of the lives and vision of others.”

“Just like that poster on that wall over there reminds us as we're working around old computers, be cautious of the sharp edges of the metal computer parts. And also don't put your hands around your face until the parts have been disinfected and you've washed your hands. Ok... back to the fun.”

I had gotten permission from Bob to borrow one of the stepper motors for a couple days. For almost a whole week, I looked at that 'funny motor' and wished God would show me how I could be fully connected to His leading and help myself and others to get on God's path to pleasing Him. Each day, I'd spend part of my Bible reading time searching for the scripture code that would help me to find my 'place' in discovering what God is up to.

## **=2 The Willness Battle**

**I**t was a tough battle that promised not to end any time soon. When God called Noah's wife, Nenee, home to glory, the battle became even harder to survive. Nenee had lung problems the last 23 of her 71 years. Noah could still picture himself slipping the wedding ring on her finger in the little log cabin church, as the circuit-riding preacher, in a few moments, pronounced them husband and wife, almost half a century ago.

Noah couldn't count the number of times he used the back door of their little home, because Nenee was in her front porch 'office', counseling girls and young women. Her technique never changed – it didn't need to. Nenee sat in one home-made rocking chair with her well-worn Bible open on her lap, at the ready. The hurting one was in a similar rocker as both faced the fresh smelling forest, just a few yards away.

Any counseling professional today would be plum proud of those front porch moments – putting worlds back on track with God's directed mentoring. Today, some of her efforts would be labeled 'wellness training'. But in those front porch moments, one rocker spoke to the other what Nenee called 'willness training'.

To start with, she always preferred being called 'Granny' by others. It sort of put a homey partnering to the moments together. As she began with someone new, she'd engage the hurting one by talking about the forest; in front of them. It was God's forest that He made, and He made it for us. That forest had soft sweet-smelling parts over here and harsh brutal things over there. God's forest included flowers, berries, birds, bears, and briars. Granny was always strong on her student seeing that it all fit together, and stayed that way. God was in control when He made that forest, and He still is.

The Willness lessons made it clear, that in some respect, each of us has a forest within us and our daily activities too. We've been designed by the same One that created that birds 'n bears forest. And He wants us to work at putting our inside-outside forest in His capable control too. Without being pushy, Granny would hold her ragged Bible over to have her student read comforting promises written just for them. One of Nenee's lessons dealt with God's schedule of things in His creation and our timing of our selfish agendas that needed to be fashioned toward His. As the Willness lessons began to be understood, it was like opening a

## **=8 Poster Power Business**

Noah was really pumped (excited) on Thursday, as he walked up to Sam Tiffin's front door. There was no doubt this partnership-in-the-making, was absolutely the best of any so-called 'win-win' situations. Though Sam was a new Christian, he desperately needed an older buddy as something of a 'grandpa' to share his teenage feelings and be introduced to some of the potential that God puts in all of us. On the other hand, Noah Pierson needed to be needed, every day, in fact. His precious Nenee had been called home to Glory two years ago and left the house and Noah's daytime hours mighty empty. Silver-haired Noah was already seeing little happenings that told him that God was definitely up to something. That something was starting to show itself as a partnership between Noah, God, and the teenager – Sam Tiffin.

Sam escorted Noah (who preferred to be called 'Gramps') in to the kitchen and both sat at the table. As Gramps voiced the closing 'amen' to his prayer for them, Sam's mom, Bonnie, set two frosty glasses of Sun-iced-tea in front of the pair. She looked toward Gramps and said, “Thanks for coming over, Gramps. We both like it when you visit. I'll leave both you men to talk over business, while I give some buttons their proper home on a blouse. If you need anything, just holler.” She headed for her sewing basket softly humming a happy tune, like she also thought God was up to something wonderful.

Gramps was ready to start the next phase of his 'leading-from-behind' process. “Sam, the last time we talked, we decided it'd be fun to create an imaginary business. You remember?” The enthusiastic reply was, “You gotta be kidding! My mind has been going a mile a minute! I've been getting so many ideas, I had to start making notes.” Noah noticed the scarred scalded face now lit up like a rocket about to jump into orbit - blazing a path to exciting discoveries for this teen and his precious silver-haired friend.



Noah continued, “Sam, I don't know how many times mom would point her finger in my face and exclaim, 'Noah. We named you after a famous boat builder that spent a long time building something that had never been done before. People laughed at him, but because he was committed to doing his best at what God wanted him to do, many people and animals were saved. And what's more, we're still reading about him today. So son, make us proud, and make God happy.’”

After a few moments of quiet, Sam said, “Gramps, I'm just so afraid that kids and people will make fun of me, 'cuz of my burned face. So I just stay home and wish this was all just a bad dream.”

In an instant, Noah slapped both his legs and exclaimed, “Sam! I know what! Let's dream. I have a fairly good imagination, and I'll bet you do too.” Turning in his seat for better eye contact with the teen, Noah said, “Let's make a dream. Here's what we'll do. We are going to dream up a business. We'll pretend we're going to start up a business. You know, we've gotta think what we'll sell and how we'll make it and how much it will cost and all that stuff. Wouldn't that be cool?! It doesn't cost us anything to dream, does it, Sam?”

It was like a siren went off, in Sam Tiffin's head. For the very first time his eyes seemed to have a sparkle in them. In some way, it seemed his scarred face didn't make any difference anymore. The teenager wanted to hug Noah, I mean 'Gramps', but wasn't sure if it was the right thing to do. The silver-haired senior settled that in short order. His arms had ached a long time for someone to hug, and this was the perfect time. Noah wanted so much for his departed wife to know about the friendship just made, on Sam's front porch.

I think she did. Don't you?

solid path; a lane letting in the light of truth and hope into those inside-outside forests we all carry around.

Today, Noah ached to have his precious Granny rocking on that front porch and they both share more Willness lessons and their promises. These rather empty days without her, would sometimes flash images of Him sitting in Nenee's rocker and sharing those Willness lessons with teens hungry for a path of light through their forest flooded with confusion and stress.

Noah wanted to get some branches and try to fashion one of those long-ago rocking chairs, flooded with prayers asking God to take him off his spectator bench and share with others the Willness lessons that reform our wills and ways into God's all-knowing ways of love, hope, and purpose.

### =3 Splinter Story

**E**verybody hates splinters... everybody everywhere. Whenever I get a splinter or thorn in me, it's always in the part of my thumb or finger that continually irritates; it painfully nags me until I take action on it. Well, if there was ever such a thing as a 'splinter story', it had to be the one Bob Button told the teens and their work group, busy scrapping all the discarded computer parts, that would become missionary teaching kits, someday headed for Mexico and beyond.

Driving home after today's teen workshop, Noah Pierson tried to fit together the story that Bob had told. Noah couldn't think of much else. That story was becoming a mental splinter; a 'splinter story' that was to make big changes in Noah's life. Lessons from the story would nag Noah until something was done. The story went something like this:

[Beginning of Bob's story]

His teeth were chattering so bad; Marty couldn't remember when it'd been worse. No. It wasn't cold and he wasn't scared. It was the railroad tracks. He said, "Todd. I'm never going to let you take this train tracks shortcut again while I'm riding on your handlebars." When Todd doubled back under the train trestle and down the embankment, Marty thought he was a gonner for sure.

Surprise #1 came when the two boys rounded the last curve and spied the house. Nate and his mom lived in a house that was little more than a shack in a really remote part of the county. They certainly had no telephone and there was no evidence they had electricity either. The questions in Marty and Todd's minds were really piling up. But the important thing was that their youth pastor asked that they visit Nate and invite him to the Computer Missions Club next Thursday.

The first impressions by the boys were that Nate would be better off not to be bothered about all this computing stuff since it sure looked like Nate would never have a computer - let alone use it in missions and for church. But little did the pair realize the exciting revelation God had in store for them today - that was to be surprise #2.

Marty's grandfather would caution both the boys, in a situation like this to, "Don't judge a book by its cover." Or he might also say, "First impressions are most important, but not always correct."

Only a couple raps on the rickety screen door and Nate was greeting the boys with very few words. The three teens sat on the front steps as Marty and Todd told a little bit about themselves. Nate didn't talk much but listened with great interest. Todd started to tell some about the Computer Missions Club at church with a lot of enthusiasm. Nate reached out and picked up a piece of scrap paper lying on his front porch, not far

replied, "Sure, Mrs. Tiffin. I'll help if I can."

Mrs. Tiffin spoke, "Mr. Pierson, for the next couple days after you were here, Sammy's spirits were riding high. He didn't stare at the floor nearly as much as he used to. When his dad left after the divorce two years ago... well... he just needs an older wiser buddy to spend some time with and keep the right perspective on things today. Now, I'm sure you're pretty busy these days, but if you could see your way clear to come over and visit with him again, I'd be plum grateful." Noah's heart wanted to yell out, "I CAN BE THERE IN 20 MINUTES!" But instead, he replied in a friendly tone, "I could come day after tomorrow, after supper, if that's ok with you. I'd prefer calling you that day, before I come, just to confirm. And Mrs. Tiffin, I'd really like it if you and Sam would call me Noah or Gramps, instead of Mr. Pierson." "Well, Gramps, I'm sure Sammy will be thrilled. We'll expect a call from you day after tomorrow. Have a good day. Goodby."

Two days later, silver-haired Noah greeted Sam Tiffin on the teenager's front porch. This was fast becoming a 'win-win' friendship. The teenager with a scarred face looked forward to the silver-haired senior's visits very much. And the reverse was true also. Noah began his 'leading-from-behind' mentoring of the teen with, "Sam. I am very serious in saying I thank you for letting me come over and learn about teenagers from you. I mean it."

"See... two years ago my wife died and it's been pretty tough to find important things for me to do with my days." Noah looked toward Sam with a soft smile and said, "My mom raised me to be a doer not a watcher. She'd always tell me, 'don't worry about making a mistake. Just get out there and do your best while you're asking God for His help. Noah, don't you cheat God! He wants to join you in doing the things that He's best at. So don't cut Him out.'"

Still running his fingers over the pages, Noah Pierson realized that God was doing two major things in his life and Sam's.

(1) Number one was a polishing process, to make them more attuned to His will as they ran to His protective loving arms for comfort and direction. (2) The second was the comfort that Noah, and all of us would get as we saw God using scripture and those storms of doubt and distress, to minister to others. It was like others would listen to someone who, by God's hand, had 'been there – done that'. The challenges faced by one, becomes a way to gain access to the heart and hurts of another. It was like a 'pain-stained password', allowing me to become a partner with you in discovering God's purpose and power in serving Him with 'joy overflowing'.

Noah got up from the kitchen chair and walked out to the front porch and gently sat in his dear departed wife's rocker, she had soothed so many hearts in their stormy moments. He looked at the worn arm rests, and slowly moved his fingers across the arm rests just as he had been doing with the Bible pages, moments earlier. The light was beginning to show a special purpose in God taking his precious wife, Nenee home to glory. Heaven was making room in Noah's heart for other lives full of storms; like those of Sam and his long-ago boiling water accident. That light of understanding even showed some faint glimmers of other youth God had already been preparing for their terribly needed rocking chair moments on Noah's front porch.

## =7 Leading From Behind

A telephone call like no other. Noah's phone rang and was answered. "Is this Noah Pierson?", was the lady's question. "Yes, this is Noah Pierson." "Well great. I'm Bonnie Tiffin. You sat on our front porch talking with my son Sam a few days ago. He mentioned you and the kind things you had to say to him, and teens as a whole. Well, I have a favor to ask." There was a pause before Noah caught his breath and

from him. From his ragged shirt pocket he pulled out a broken off piece of a pencil and began doodling as the boys talked.

In no time at all Nate handed Marty the finished sketch he had done while listening to the boys. It was a simple drawing that included a cross, a computer, and a couple teenagers. They were arranged in a way you could almost make an emblem or a logo of it. Marty almost knocked Todd off the steps in his excitement over the sketch. As Nate saw the joy his creation had made, he took it back and above it wrote, "Computer Missions Club".

The hoots and excitement prompted Nate's mom to peer through the cracked front window. The three boys spent more time bouncing around ideas about using Nate's apparent art skills as a tiny business of creating much needed computer missions clipart.

Peddling back home took a slower pace amid real remorse in Marty and Todd's hearts. When it comes to drawing, they both certainly drew the wrong conclusions of Nate's home and abilities. Though they were both mighty grateful to God for bringing Nate into their friendship, their continuing thoughts brought examination of other lives that had crossed their path. Had they been too quick and 'cruel' in making hasty judgments of others? [End of Bob's story]

There are a number of lessons to learn from Bob's story. Noah touched on some of them in his mind. But the story was becoming a nagging 'splinter story' to Noah. He tried to put a face on Nate. A face; a teenage friend he hadn't met yet. Was this 'Nate' in the story, to be someone that Noah would search out? Did this future 'Nate' have an aching desire to be used of God, in the same way Noah begged Heaven for?

All this was to be answered a few days later, by the phone call, Noah would never never forget.

## =4 Noah And The Phone Call

**H**e didn't know why. It was just one of those things you're moved to start doing, hoping no one will ask you, "What's if for?" White-haired Noah had begun taking notes about Bob's lessons dealing with little computer parts and the simple-to-understand story parables he made with each one.

Noah sat at his kitchen table, finishing the last few sips of his morning coffee, still wishing his sweetheart was in the other chair always ready with short Bible promises that warmed the heart and soul more than the cup of coffee and muffin. He lightly fingered the edges of the pages of those lesson notes. It was almost more than he could do, to hold back from asking the empty chair what he was saving the lesson notes for. But he knew what he'd hear as Nene's voice would happily tell her husband, "Noah! Another Noah took 120 years to build a boat with no oars and no motor! Stick to God's timing... God's timing." It was her loving way of saying, "Prayer always makes patience less painful."

The cup and saucer were placed in the sink just as the telephone rang. In fairness to older folks like Noah, the phone should have flashed a warning, "Be warned! This phone call is going to change your life, like you can't imagine... God is at work, and you're in the middle."

The phone caller said, "Hey Noah! How ya doin' man?! This is Bob Button. You probably recognize my voice. I've got a question for ya. Have ya got a minute?" Noah's heart wanted to blurt out, 'Ya, I got a whole day full of unused minutes, and I don't like it.' Instead, Noah said, "Bob – for you, I've always got time. What's up?"

"Noah, thanks for that. Well, I got a call about an hour ago from Ben. That's the teen with the orange hair and super baggy pants. He asked a favor of me, and I've just spent the last hour in prayer

were sort of a written thank you to God, for a stormy moment that verse had helped him through.

It just seemed that everywhere Noah went and things he heard, he'd strive to make a note or two about it. Some were deeply heartfelt notes with tearful memories. One Bible notation he'd made asked, "Why has this happened to me?" As his eyes slowly traced the note over a couple more times, it seemed like he could hear the question in Sam's humble tone, "What have I done wrong, to make God mad enough to burn me like this?" And a further question, "Is there something I can do to really say I'm sorry God, I won't do it again?"

Maybe in different words, these questions are like the ones asked by every generation, "Why does God let bad things happen to good people?"

In some of Noah's deepest moments, he still asked that question of God. Noah decided the best way to begin answering the question is to help Sam 'listen' to the lesson Jesus taught about the parenting skills of His Heavenly Father... in the last 10 verses of Matthew chapter 6.

### **Then the light came on.**

As he sat at the kitchen table, lightly sliding his fingertips over some pages of his open Bible, Noah's mind scanned over the lives of well-known characters in its pages. The characters that came to mind were ones that struggled with burdens, or what folks today call 'baggage'. In fact, most characters in scripture, each had their own hurdles, that God, 'for HIS reasons', allowed into their lives. Noah had settled long ago, that God was not sadistic by putting pain on people, for His own personal pleasure. The Romans did enough of that in Bible times, as a sport, themselves.

told. It really strikes home with me when people will look on my insides, and not just my face. The other thing is that Ben had told me about the Funny Motor Story that Bob had told at the workshop. I was just thinking that until you get another name, it might be neat to call the group Teen Steppers.”

Sam opened up with his thoughts to silver-haired Noah. “You talk about a stepper motor making little steps in its rotation, and then you said these little jerky funny motors are super important in helping printers and grinding machines to step across a sheet of paper or other stuff. Well... these steps we're sitting on, we could be like 'teen steppers', making our way up these steps in service for God. You'd have to be real careful, though. If you don't say that in the right way, my generation might think you gotta work your way up to get to Heaven. And Noah, I'm certain none of us could do that. Jesus done it all for us!”

Noah stood up while asking, “Sam. I've gotta take off. This visit we've just had, has meant so much to me. If I call first, would I be able to come over next Tuesday, after supper? I need some more of your great ideas.

The silver-haired man did a teen hand-shake with Sam by sort-of bumping fists. Noah drove about 3 blocks and then pulled over to a parking area. He pulled out a pencil and used an old envelope that was on the car seat to write on. Noah excitedly scribbled down, the things he just learned from Sam. Right under the notes he wrote: “God's up to something!”

## **=6 What'd I Do Wrong?**

**N**oah Pierson sat alone in his favorite easy chair. At least he thought he was alone. Today, about this time every day, the silver-haired widower picked up his well-worn Bible. Not knowing exactly what scripture God wanted him to feed on today, he fanned through the yellowing pages, with their notes he'd put there. Some notes were great sermon tips, others

about it, before I called you. Ben told me about a special friend of his, about his same age. Now Ben is pretty sure his friend Sam is saved. Sam's given name is Samson Tiffin.” Bob continued, “Well anyway, Ben said his friend Sam was not very good getting around groups. Ben didn't give all the details about the boiling water scalding that disfigured Sam's face.”

Noah spoke into the phone, “I'm listening, Bob. Is there some way I can help?” In a pleased tone, Bob said, “Noah. I'm glad you said that, because that's why I'm calling. I want you to ask God about this, but I'd like for you to call me day after tomorrow and let me know if you can help. OK?” “Now Bob. I don't need any two days to talk this out with God. I've already been pleading with Him to let me help with the teens. I'm sure that Sam is part of His answer. Um, Bob. Can I call you tomorrow and see what plans you have for me to hook up with Samson... I mean Sam? Right now I'm ready to prance around my kitchen, like a kid unwrapping his most favorite present. I'll call you about 3 tomorrow. Is that OK?” Confirmation was made and the phone call ended.

Noah did a minute or two clapping and prancing around the kitchen. But he knew what he must do next. He knelt down at his dear-departed wife's rocker on the front porch and thanked the Lord for meeting his need for service by bringing a needy teen into his life. Almost like stepping into Nenee's ministry with teens, Noah seated himself in her 'teen-helpin' front porch rocker and stared at the forest nearby.

In his mind, he envisioned a teen named 'Sam' was lost and distressed in that woods, and God was splitting a clear path through that forest for Noah to follow by faith. His expectant heart asked if this was the way God's people felt as they saw the Red Sea open up for them to follow God's will to His uncountable promises? Noah assured himself there would be hungry bears and briers along the way. But that's nothing when a

teen's life of hopelessness and out-cries for someone to care, can be heard, and led home to the love and safety of God's open arms.

## =5 Noah Meets Samson

Silver-haired Noah Pierson knocked at the front door of Samson Tiffin's house. A lady answered the door with some caution. Noah introduced himself as a friend of Samson's teenage friend, Ben. Noah said he'd like to just sit on the porch steps and meet Samson.

Sam's mom spoke loudly over her shoulder, "Sam. The man Ben called you about, is here and he'd like to say hello! Come on down and meet him!" Noah wore his baseball cap hoping it would give a warmer first impression. As Sam stepped past his mom going out the door, she asked, "Fellas. I just made a fresh batch of sun iced tea. Can I pour a glass for each of you?" Noah answered with a cordial 'please'. Sam didn't make eye contact with Noah much at all. His iced tea reply was, "yeah, I guess..."

Sam and Noah both sat on the concrete steps getting the full force of the July high-noon sun. Noah's heart told his mind, 'listen to God's leading. Don't mess this up.' The scars on Sam's face didn't disturb Noah but might discourage any of Sam's dating prospects.

Before the iced tea arrived, Sam began with, "Ben told me he asked you to come over. And that's OK, so long as you don't drown me with a bunch of DOs and DON'Ts." Noah's reply was, "Works for me. Actually, I'm here to LEARN, not TEACH or DICTATE. When my wife died last year, there seemed to be so much I needed to learn about others, and their challenges. Nenee would sit on our front porch and just open her heart to teen girls and remind them of God's love and provision."

"We live right next to a big woods and I sure miss taking quiet walks with her among all those tall refreshing trees. Sam, I wanna ask you, 'have you ever loved someone so much, you could talk to them without using words?' God has given us so many ways to show our compassion and love to others, sometimes just by a warm look, or a gentle touch or hug. What do you think, Sam?"

The iced tea arrived, and welcomed by teen and man. After a few long refreshing sips, Noah spoke. "Sam, I was serious when I said, I came here to learn; learn about you teens and the incredible challenges you all face. By the way, I'd appreciate it if you'd have eye contact with me, often. I can see that a hot-water accident has given you some challenges that other teens and I don't have to deal with. But you know what? I firmly believe God is going to show both of us, that you've got some really great reasons to hold your head high and be proud of the many good gifts God has already given you."

Noah continued with, "Sam, I'm trying to help Bob Button and some other adults at the teens workshop that your friend Ben is really enjoying. I'm guessing Ben has already told you a bit about the workshop. While we work on our iced tea, can I tell you about the jitter-bike ride story that Bob told us? It's a cool story that sure spoke to my heart, and maybe it will yours too."

Sam's finger traced a crack in the steps as he listened with interest to the Jitter-Bike Story the white-haired man was retelling to the young teen next to him. When the story was finished, more sips from sweating glasses of iced tea. Noah remained silent, giving the teen time to digest the story.

"Is it OK if I call you Noah?" came a timid question from Sam. The reply was, "Sure, Sam. Anything you want. I want to be your friend; your ongoing friend. Call me anything you like." Sam said, "Well, I was just wondering. I liked the story you just