

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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Stepper Start

Minding Your Business

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=11 Closet Secrets

I like to write stories,” silver-haired Gramps told his teen friends, Ben and Sam. “Since we've been talking about creating this imaginary business, and just starting to think about what we want to make or do, I made you each a copy of one of my many stories I've written over the years. Take it home and read it without any

interruptions... maybe even more than once. Boys, God has many tasks that He needs done for people who are serving Him, and just maybe, we might be a step ahead if we pretend our business was something to help Him and those He loves.”

“Now, most businesses are either selling a SERVICE or they're selling STUFF – you know, parts or pictures, or other things that can have a part number on them, and maybe even a picture in a catalog. Well, anyhow, read the story, pray about what God wants our business to be about, and we'll share our ideas next time.” The story Gramps gave the boys, is as follows.

Thirteen-year-old Alia quickly thought of all the things she might have said as she followed the animal doctor back to her office. Seeing the worried look on Alia's face, Doc Neese invited her to sit down. “Now, there is nothing wrong, so don't look so worried,” she began. “Actually, I wanted to talk to you about the laptop computer you've brought in with you. I noticed that in the waiting room you were doing something on your laptop, but it didn't seem to be a game.”



Alia breathed a sigh of relief. “Well, for my initiation into my neighborhood’s computer club, I have to come up with a good use for a computer that doesn’t have anything to do with entertainment. What I like to do most of all is to make special lists called databases that you can do neat things with.”

Doc saw the serious attitude with which Alia described some of the simple things for which she had made lists, but she didn’t mention anything that would help her pass her club initiation. Alia had hardly finished sharing her problem with the initiation project, when Doctor Neese rose to her feet from behind a desk that was piled high with books and papers. She went over to a large closet, slid open the doors, and said to Alia, “I’ve got a project for your initiation that I think you would enjoy doing.” She pointed to several large stacks of papers, all neatly tied up with strings. Alia looked puzzled.

“Beg your pardon, ma’am, but what does cleaning out this closet have to do with my computer project?” The soft-spoken animal doctor explained to Alia that the stacks of papers were actually records of the medicine, that she had given to animals brought in for treatment over the last two years. The problem was, the little animal clinic had to make every bit of money count. The biggest waste was buying too much of a certain kind of medicine, and then having to throw some of it away because it was too old to be used any longer. “Alia, it would be a big help and money saver if you would create a database list of all the medicines that were actually used,” she said. Doc added, “It will be very important for you to include when, and for which kind of animal patient.”

After getting permission from her parents, and praying about the project, Alia began the following Saturday. Doctor Neese was impressed by her mature approach in that she didn’t even bring her laptop computer. Between patients, Alia told the doctor that

good databases require good planning, even before touching the keyboard.

By the next Saturday, the office clerk had gone through every one of the old closet records and had written a number on each one. Alia wouldn't even have to type in names and addresses. Doc made the project even easier by giving Alia a numbered list of all the medications she had used on her animal patients.

Alia saw how pleased Doctor Neese was, as her chaotic medicine inventory started to take shape. And she also noticed the growing satisfaction within herself as she continued to work on such an important project, which went well beyond the initiation requirements.

Alia thought about the key ingredients she had used.

1. Pray for God's leading in the project
2. Preparation even before she touched the computer.
3. Permission from her parents.
4. Praising the Lord for His goodness.

(End of Noah's story he sent home with Ben and Sam.)

[~]

=12 Sunspots 'n Mannie

Sunspots. It must be tons of sunspots or something. Mannie's odd feelings began about the time she was brushing her hair and getting on her school clothes in a rush. It felt like some sort of gigantic magnet in the clouds that kept grabbing her mind when she wasn't already stretching it to the limits, starting her school day. It was her fault she hadn't told her dad at supper last night that her bike chain had broken, so now she'd have to walk over to Jacob's and catch a ride to school with them. "Oh well... life goes on", the 15 year old thought.

So, book bag over the left shoulder, breakfast bar and juice cup in one hand, a kiss for mom and a 'see ya!' to a preteen brother, and out the door she went. With a bit of a quick step, she munched on the breakfast bar when that sunspot magnet, or whatever, pulled at her thoughts. It was really annoying, not knowing why the pulling. She had a Biology test second period and would need every bit of brainpower, getting the chromosome definitions and other stuff answered right.

Before she got over to Jacob's to hitch a ride to school, she noticed the new house being built. It now had its windows and doors, and was all ready for a roof. What caught Mannie's eye, and brought her to a stop, were the leftovers in the front yard. Over here was a stack of 30 or so boards the builders didn't need to nail up the house walls. And nearby was a pile of leftover chunks of boards that had been sawed off to make things fit.

Her eyes and full attention fixed on the two piles of leftovers, almost asking if they had the answer to these sunspot magnet feelings. No answer. "I gotta scoot. I'll miss my ride and then I'll really be in trouble," she thought.

The rest of the school day went reasonably well, but then the sunspot thing came up at the supper table. In between bites, Mannie told her mom and dad about those sunspot magnet feelings and the leftover piles thoughts that were really beginning to bug her. The meal was about finished, when her mom tapped the edge of her brother's plate and said, "Eat your broccoli now or I'll put your leftovers in the refrigerator and you can eat them cold tomorrow." His comments clearly indicated he didn't like either option.

Jack, (that's Mannie's dad) said, "hey, those broccoli leftovers remind me of some famous leftovers in the Bible. I think it'd be a great idea for you two youngins to take a look at them, in your

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personal Bible time, tonight. See if you can find them in Mark chapter 8.” Mannie thought only a nerdy brother like mine would ask, “Dad! You mean the Bible talks about leftover broccoli?” She thought, “How can God say He loves us, and at the same time give us younger brothers?”

Mannie's cell phone was put to sleep, and her homework done. Her Bible was opened up to the broccoli leftovers – I mean the Mark 8 leftovers. She slowly read the two verses where Jesus quizzed His disciples about the catering of the 5000+ and the 4000+. No, there were no sunspot magnets around while she read about these leftovers of fish and bread.

Wanting so desperately to get to the bottom of all this leftover business, Mannie closed her eyes and tried to envision Jesus quizzing her, along with the disciples. In spite of the other powerful facts, Jesus kept asking His pupils about the leftovers... how much was left? Did anyone go hungry? Was Jesus putting special emphasis on leftovers or some of His gifts to us, we don't give enough attention to? Hmmmmmm.

Then the other thing Mannie noticed, was the two test questions were worded almost the same. Food, fed, and then fragments(leftovers). And the same sequence again. In an exciting way, she thought, “Hey! That's just like a little database! God knows I love to make lists of stuff, in my computer and then sort them different ways and make a neat report about them. Wow! God gave us a computer manual that starts out, 'In the beginning, God'.”

Now if that wasn't enough about leftovers, God had saved the best for last. At breakfast the next morning, Mannie was telling her mom about the Mark 8 leftover database. Her mom put jam on the last slice of toast and said, “When I visit at the nursing home, I see many people who seem to be forgotten by their families, church, and our community. I wonder if there is such a

thing as leftover people – ones I've chosen to neglect?"

Dear God, draw my heart to leftover people that your Son Jesus gave His life on the Cross to save.

[~]

=13 Don't Want Any!

Anyone blind in one eye can see He don't want any!" Sam continued with, "Ben and I have been asking God for almost a whole month, if He has a girl that can help us with our business, even though it's only imaginary." While Sam's teen orange-haired friend nodded in agreement, Noah piped up with, "Whoa now! Let's not be too hasty here. Maybe we need to make sure we're lined up with God's schedule, and not our own. Sure as I'm 70 with my silver hair falling out, we need not get pushy when it comes to God doing His work."

"It really seems to me His scheduling was OK when He created all this world around us, and gave us the sun, moon, and stars for timekeeping and directions. I know it's not the best thing you teens want to hear, but the boat-builder with my name, spent 120 years working without any power tools or much of any help. Worse than that, everyone was laughing and mocking him all the while," Noah reminded the boys.

It's That 'Doors Thing'

Gramps told the teen boys, "Fellas, it's definitely time we talk about the 'Doors Thing.' Suppose you picture yourself in a hallway, that leads to many rooms. You pretty well know you are welcome into the rooms that have their doors open. On the other hand, closed doors signal us to 'stay out'. It's a no-brainer way of

guiding someone into places they can or should go, or not – at least for the time being, anyhow. Easy concept – ya with me on this?”

The lesson for the teens continued with, “That guiding by using open doors is exactly how Jesus leads those who love Him, each day. We begin each day wanting to know His will for that day, and even which to do first. Well, we start out by looking for the door He has open to us. One open door is labeled 'Praise Jesus Room', another is 'Scripture Meals Served Here', another open door is 'Dump Your Burdens Here', and 'Your Harvest Assignments Are Here', etc.”

“I bet you two teens can think of some labels on the doors Jesus has closed and latched. I got an idea. While we're waiting on God's direction and provision for stuff we'd like for our business, let's make a list with three columns. In the first column we'll put the labels of doors that God has open for all those that love Him. In the middle column we'll put door labels that might be open to you, Sam, but not to Ben, or vice versa. In the right column we'll put door labels that will never be open to anyone who loves and wants to serve Jesus.”

Noah said, “Before we have prayer and you two head for home, I want to tell you about a door that has ears... you know, these things on the side of our head. Well, this door is so important to teens, the Bible tells us about it.” The boys looked closely as Noah turned his open Bible to John 10, starting at verse 9. There was the description of THE door, the one and only door that is always open to each and every person, who seeks peace, hope, protection, and provision. Read the description yourself, and then share it often with a friend.

[~]

=14 Loose Screws

It was a wreck that a junk yard would probably turn down. The two teens, Sam and Ben kept looking out the back window to see if any fenders had fallen off Noah's old wreck of a pickup truck. Silver-haired Noah had invited the boys to help fix some doors over at the little country church. Noah loved doing things with the boys, especially since his beloved Nenee went home to Glory last year.

But Noah cherished every moment with the teens. God had built a fire for teens in the old man, and these two bouncing in the seat with him were his teachers, full of valuable lessons about growing up teenager, in this stress-filled world.

The teens followed Noah around the little church and checked each door to see if each one closed and latched OK. Many were found to need attention; some kind of adjusting or oiling. Ben called out to Noah, from another room with, "Hey Gramps! This door here needs some work on its hinges! It looks like it has a couple screws loose!" Sam responded rather loudly, "...Some screws loose? Ben, if you keep wearing that orange hair people are going to think you've got some screws loose!" Sam made sure to say it with a bit of a chuckle in his tone.

What silver-haired Noah heard next, couldn't have hurt any more than if he was shot with a gun. Ben explained, "Sam, I don't like this orange hair. I think it makes me look like a clown and pushes grownups to distrust me, even be afraid of me. But Sammy, it gets me noticed. This is the only way I know to get any attention – any at all, good or bad. I guess I'm a little like this door hinge. Yeah, there are some parts of me that need tightened up a bit, but I just wish I could find someone that cared more about me than to just throw some lubricating oil at me... telling me what stupid decisions I make... that's all."

Ben continued, “I'll tell you something else. Most of the guys I've been around get tattoos that are pretty expensive. They take several hours of pain that can be about a 6 on a scale of 10. They like the pain because it continues on, for days after it's done. If you got color, you have to go back again later and get the fading colors touched up again. Mostly they don't care about the picture, they go after the pain. See, Sam, they want the pain because it hides the greater pain inside their head and heart. That inside pain keeps screaming in their mind that no one cares, that they're not worth dirt – and never will be. The tattoo pain hides all that for a little while, just like a person getting drunk or doped up.”

In his own heart, Noah heard a door of opportunity open. The door had been labeled, 'Help Wanted'. A red marker had changed the door label to read, 'Hope Wanted'.

With a bit of a quiver in his voice, Noah said, “Hey guys. I'm off to bring back some subs and cokes for us. I'll be back in about 30 minutes. Oh. I'll get some chips too. Watch out for each other till I get back.”

The Surprise Those 30 Minutes Held -

“Hey Ben! Come take a look at this!” was Sam's shout to his friend, in the little church. “Ben, I was going to check another door as I walked past this bulletin board. I want you to look at this report listing the names of church friends in the nursing homes, and their birthdays all arranged in calendar order, grouped by month. I think that looks pretty neat.” Now both teens would agree that Ben doesn't always come up with great ideas, even when he's trying to, but he threw out the idea anyhow. “Sam, I wonder if this Mannie in their teen department would like to try out some of her computering in our business. It wouldn't hurt to ask, would it?”

Isn't it incredible how God opens doors of opportunity, in places
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you didn't think there was even a wall?

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=15 Brainstorming

Imagination launch... that's really what it was. Silver-haired Gramps (aka Noah Pierson) had his aching right leg propped up on a nearby kitchen chair. The two teens, Sam and 'orange hair' Ben were seated at the same table. Sam was examining the small cobwebs in the kitchen ceiling corner, while Ben traced the pattern on the tablecloth. The gears in the three heads were grinding away, trying to think of a product for their business, that was still imaginary.

Gramps began with, "Well, guys. We've started out today's meeting with asking God to lead us, and I'm sure He will, as long as we don't get to pushing Him. I want to show you something." Gramps went to the silverware drawer and pulled out an odd looking plastic spoon. He said, "Very seldom is something invented just out of the blue, as we say. Lots of times something was discovered when a completely different kind of product was being looked for. This kind of hints at the fact that ideas have to be tried... then changed... and changed again. And coming up with something new, takes an attitude of not being afraid to fail. Courage is needed to get right back up and keep on trying, learning from each mistake."

Gramps continued with his lesson, "But most often, something new is discovered, by combining two existing things in a way that had never been thought of before. Now look at this goofy looking little plastic spoon. Yeah, I know you've seen them lots of times. This is a really handy rascal, especially to handicapped people that can't use forks AND spoons to eat. What some guy probably did, without any rocket science or anything technical, was laid a spoon along side a fork, and asked himself, 'how can I

combine the two?" I don't remember its funny name, but he simply took a spoon and put a few points on the end of it, that were just sharp enough to stab a piece of meat or cheese."

The kitchen got quiet again as those brain gears kicked into high range again. As though it was an expensive piece of china, Sam carefully took hold of the always open 'kitchen' Bible and slid it over in front of him. The fingers of his right hand moved across the page as though he was testing for bumps in the printed words. After a minute or two, Sam asked, "Gramps. S'pose we made some fun way for people to get into the Bible? I mean so they'd really want to keep coming back, and maybe even get their friends to join them. It would need to be fun for grownups and kids. Maybe make it some kind of a game."

Ben got a big grin and piped up with, "How about hangman? My younger brother and sister would play this game where you have to fill in the missing letters of a word. I don't know... I guess it's just a silly idea to connect hangman with the Bible. Oh well, I've never been smart enough to come up with really good ideas, I guess. Probably when God was handing out brains, I thought He said 'trains', and I didn't want any."

Gramps spoke up in a determined tone, "Hold on now Ben. Don't sell God short. He's given each of us a computer between our ears that scientists couldn't begin to build. Even if they came close, that computer wouldn't know anything about God and His deep abiding love for you and me, whether we're young or old. Hey... I was just thinking. When my Nenee was still alive, she would often spend a lot of time in what she called, her 'word book'. Her word book was full of nothing but wordsearch puzzles... you know. Each puzzle was just a bunch of random letters in rows and columns, that had key words hidden them."

"Fellas, I believe we need to close in prayer and let these ideas cook. God is certainly in no hurry with his blessings and

opportunities for us, so let's not get ahead of Him. Let's take a few days and chew on these ideas, and maybe some others. If it's OK with you two, we'll meet up here, next Saturday at the same time and do some more of this brainstorming of ideas for our business."

After the boys rode away on their bikes, Noah (I mean Gramps) returned to his open kitchen Bible and looked for the verse going through his mind, "*...for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*" Like a meal more nourishing than anything you could eat with silverware, Noah savored all the juicy words and thoughts, King David penned in Psalm 139. He reread slowly the words of verse 14 - "*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.*"

[~]

=16 No Gimme Prayers

Sam Tiffin's mom, Bonnie, ushered silver-haired Noah into the kitchen and take a seat. Sam and his orange-haired teen buddy, Ben were already seated. They had been talking about some ideas for a product that their imaginary business could produce and sell. Noah touched the shoulder of each boy, and with loving eye contact, told the boys how much he loved being accepted as their sort-of Gramps.

Sam did a great job with the opening prayer, thanking God for Gramps' friendship and caring so deeply for the boys. Bonnie, leaning against the kitchen doorway was silently praising God for the partnering of the three at her kitchen table. In her heart she almost begged God to keep Satan away from harming the unity that was clearly brightening her spirits and those of the three 'business' partners at the table.

Bonnie headed for her spare bedroom sewing basket as Gramps set a brown paper bag on the table in front of them. He began, "Fellas, any time you want to make this old man hear a happy tune in my heart, all you gotta do is make a prayer from your heart that I can hear. I can remember so many dark dreary days in my life, that my precious Nenee and I would hold hands over a Bible and hear the other go before the Lord in prayer. And not a one of them was a 'Gimme Prayer', either.

Ben interrupted with, "Gramps. Hold on, a minute! What'd you say? A 'Gimme Prayer'? I never heard of one of those before. When do you say a Gimme Prayer?" "Well, Ben, hopefully never. See, lots of folks, young and old, think prayer is a 'Dear God – give me this or give me that.' You know what I'm saying, 'gimme this or gimme that.' To my way of thinking, prayer isn't putting in an order for something you need or want. That misses the whole point of prayer."

Gramps slowly moved his fingers over the pages of the open kitchen Bible, like he was smoothing them. He continued with, "Boys, this Bible tells us over and over, that God knows everything. He knows even better than we do, what we need and should have, and when. We want to be reminded of someone's love and trust by those we love. Well God is the same way. When we speak to Him, we should first tell Him how much we love Him. Almost the last thing in our prayer, we should tell Him our need, and that we'll trust His provisions according to HIS will not our own wishes. He proves over and over, He knows what we need most and when. The best example of that is His Son Jesus becoming our sacrifice for our sins on the Cross.
[~]

=17 The Jungle Path

Like it held something mysterious, Gramps began opening the paper bag he had brought with him, now sitting on the kitchen table. The eyes of both teen boys were glued to what was about to come out of the bag like Gramps was defusing a bomb or something else dangerous.

Noah Pierson (that's Gramps), placed something in front of Sam Tiffin that looked a little like a homemade blue ribbon award of some kind. He put a similar one in front of Ben (he's the one with the orange hair). Sam spoke first, with, "Thanks Gramps. I see it says 'The Winner's Circle' on the ribbon, but I don't understand what it's for." Ben said he didn't understand either.

Gramps picked up one of the unused poster boards and some markers, they'd used before. He returned to the table and popped the top off the blue marker. He began to explain, "Because of what both of you suggested, when we began brainstorming, I now welcome you both into God's Winner's Circle here on planet Earth. You may not remember, but here are some crucial points you both touched on, we should make a poster of... here goes."

"Sam, you suggested our business make something connected with the Bible. Here, I'll put that on the poster... 1. Bible Connected. And number 2 was that you thought our product should be something fun... and number 3 was that it would entice them to share it with friends, young and old.

Now, Ben. You did the biggie. You put the frosting on this cake of a product." "But Gramps, I didn't say nothin' about frosting, did I?" Silver-haired Noah explained with, "No... not exactly. But you said something very wise – and it wasn't about the trains 'n brains thing either. Ben, your goodie idea was to make a product that was a lot like something that people were already

familiar with, kids and older folks, alike. Remember mentioning the game named, Hangman? Well, I believe that's an idea that can make this product a real juicy one, that God will even like... because it's connected with His precious word, our Bible."

The notes were all added to the poster, and reviewed again, with each boy voicing more comments for them.

Gramps spoke in an almost spooky tone, with "Now I want you fellas to pretend you are about to start out on a path, not exactly like the one we're now on, making our imaginary company. I want you to sort of pretend you are on a path starting through a deep jungle, full of vines, trees, bushes, swamps, and trails that have no directions signs. OK?" The eyes of both teens got as big as golf balls.

"I always think of this jungle adventure whenever I read a verse in the biggest chapter of the whole Bible, Psalm 119. Verse 105 is simple and yet tells you how to get safely down any jungle path, or even through those teen-livin' years, that most often seem as dangerous and confusing as any jungle of snakes, tigers, spiders, and other stuff." Gramps rubbed his hands together in an excitable manner.

You can actually divide this verse up into 4 pieces. Here we go. "Lamp unto my feet" (1) shows me the condition of my shoes and feet. (2) That lamp also shows me if my feet are on the path, or what I need to change to get on the path. Now 'Light unto my path' does two things too. (3) it lights the path ahead to help me know where to travel and what path is right for me. (4) the light unto my path also helps me recognize dangers along the path. Remember guys. The Bible talks about Satan as being a roaring lion seeking who he can devour..." Pointing to each of the four fingers of his right hand, Gramps reviewed each of the 4 points, two more times.

“Before we close in prayer, fellas, look at the verse and tell me where this lamp and light come from.” The boys responded “Thy Word!” in unison so loudly, Bonnie poked herself with a pin clear back in the spare bedroom.

If you ask Him, God will tell you it's more than OK to get others excited about “Thy Word”.

[~]

=18 Little Big Things

God's up to something. He's REALLY up to something.” The thought kept propping up in Noah's mind in a way that often made him forget about the nagging Rheumatism in his left knee. For that and so many other reasons, he'd often sit in his usual kitchen chair with one leg resting on another chair, just looking at his sweetheart's empty chair, and wonder what encouraging word she'd plant in his heart. If it wasn't for knowing... that's KNOWING that someday he'd see her again in Glory, well... he just didn't know what he'd do.

The front door bell rang and startled him. He seldom got visitors since Nenee wasn't around any more. Oh how he loved the muffled conversations she had with teen girls on the front porch, staring at that forest just a few yards away. That old front porch rocking chair of hers did more powerful healing of hearts than any hospital could do. Noah had no idea of the surprise that awaited him at the door. But up he went, to see the caller.

Ben stood at the front door with his orange hair trimmed pretty short. That probably had a story to it, but nothing like Noah was about to hear. “Gramps. I got your address from Sammy and I rode my bike over here. Whew!”

“I have a favor to ask of you. Ya ever get a picture in your mind, of something that's not exactly real, and you can't forget it? Well I have. I keep seeing the report that some girl named, Mannie put on the little church bulletin board, where we fixed the doors. What I kept seeing in my picture was a little poster right next to her report. The little poster had real important stuff on it too, that all the people should be reminded of. Gramps, it don't look fancy like your posters, and all I could find was a crayon. But I made this little poster myself. If you don't think it looks too ugly, maybe you could get the church to put it up next to Mannie's fancy report.”

Without reading it to Gramps, Ben handed it to him and said, “I know I've bothered you too much already. Here 'tis. I gotta leave.” As Ben climbed on his bike, he shouted to Noah, “Thanks for lovin' me a little, Gramps! I need it!”

Noah turned the poster over to read what started as, “THY WORD is a lamp unto my shoes and a light always on my dangerous path.” At the bottom of the little poster the final words said, “The bible says so, and it's NEVER wrong.”

Noah thought to himself, Give God a little love and trust like a mustard seed, and He'll turn it into mountain-sized changes in the lives of someone near you.

[~]

=19 Testing The Waters

He planted a mighty seed. Ben planted one of those seeds that yields a harvest known only to God. All week long, Noah glanced at Ben's little poster as though it was something that was going to blossom in some unexpected

wonderful way. If the poster was the seed, Mannie's report was somehow the soil. Silver-haired Noah began pondering the same vision Ben had, in seeing his little poster next to Mannie's fancy Nursing Home Report. It was like the poster was the path that Noah's thinking would take through a garden of opportunity at the nursing home.

Noah made an appointment with the Fireplace Hearth Nursing Home's activities director, April Castmon. In making the appointment, he explained to April some ideas he wanted to get her reaction to. The ideas were connected with an imaginary business a couple teen friends, Ben and Sam were putting together. April set an agreeable time and said she'd like to invite a young volunteer helper she had been grooming for a part time position, to the discussion.

Noah arrived to meet the warm-hearted April and both took seats in the vacant activities room where the TV was muted. A great deal of action was going on, in the glassed-in bird aviary in the far corner of the room. Smokey, an overweight cat, sat in his ready mode watching the birds with no friendly thoughts in mind. April took her cellphone pager and summoned her volunteer aid to come to the activity room as soon as she was able. April offered beverages and the discussion began.

A few moments later, a girl about 17 entered the group of two, wearing a badge that said, "Hi! I'm Mannie Toth". Mannie took a seat next to April, as April said, "Noah, this is my helper that I can hardly keep up with. Her name is Samantha Toth, but she prefers Mannie." Noah, replied with, "Mannie, I'm pleased to meet you. My name's Noah Pierson, but I prefer 'Gramps'."

Gramps began describing the joy and opportunities of working with Ben and Sam. Oh sure, they had their own unique ways of being different. Sam had his badly scarred face and a pretty reserved way of connecting with others. Ben, was slowly

moving away from his orange-hair and facial jewelry appearance. In warm tones, Gramps was explaining to April and Mannie how the imaginary business idea was building unity and spirit among them, beyond what he first thought possible.

Gramps was getting good eye contact so he continued, by describing simply their business product they'd been thinking about. Pointing at his fingers he began listing the ideas and the positives of the ideas. Gramps paused to take a sip of his ice water as April rose to her feet and briskly walked toward a large magazine rack next to the aviary. Smokey didn't seem distracted. April pulled out a softbound book and returned with it in hand.

April began, "Noah, I mean Gramps, we have quite a few residents that will go through one of these wordsearch books in less than a month. They'll finish one and begin the next without hardly a breath. Mannie and I try very hard to keep the resident's minds active, but we want to do more than that. We'd like to engage them in doing things that are more than just busy work. We'd like to have them doing things they can say with pride, "I did that." or "I made that. And here's what it's used for."

"Gramps, we have two residents that were both ministers for many years. As each fellow picks up his large print Bible, you can almost see it in their eyes, they'd still love to find a way to get people excited about God's word. And another thing. A little voice in me keeps telling me there ought to be a way to make a contest using those wordsearch puzzles. But the problem is that many of the residents need a simpler version of the puzzles they can finish, and have pride about it. Mannie here, gave me the idea of having a bulletin board with some of the achievements of the residents and their picture connected to it. Gramps this young lady sitting here with me has lots of good ideas, but we just don't have the time to make many of them happen."

Moments before the meeting broke up, Gramps handed April a

couple wordsearch puzzles with blank letters in most of the key word list, and gave a duplicate to Mannie. He explained the right half of the page had about 15 Bible verses that contained the key words. The verses had to be searched through to find the missing letters in the key words. Only then could the key words be searched for in the wordsearch jumble. It was like a double puzzle, that required you to 'search the scriptures' before you did anything else.

With her shift over, Mannie (aka Samantha Toth) headed for home, trying to remember where she'd heard that phrase before... "Search the Scriptures". Have you heard it before? Was it good advice? It certainly is, if your life is full of questions missing answers like the key word list, and if your life is a jumble like the wordsearch puzzle.

What do you do first? Se_rc_ the S_ri_tu_e_.
[~]

=20 Git-er-done-for-Jesus!

The phone rang probably 6 times before Noah got his aching bones moving to answer it. April, the nursing home activities director happily said, "Noah – I mean Gramps. This is April Castmon, the nursing home's activities director. Well, I called to get permission from you, for something. We'd like to make a dozen copies of the word search puzzle sample you left with us. Yesterday I talked with 5 or 6 residents about the puzzles and showed them your sample. It was about all I could do to hold them off till I got permission from you."

In an excited tone, April said, "Monte told me he wanted to share a puzzle with Barb Deets. What thrills me, is that Monte was a circuit riding preacher for forty-seven years, and wants

real bad to be the hands for Barb in working your puzzle. Barb has Arthritis in her hands so bad they're both curled up into permanent fists. Well, Monte got that old determined preacher look in his eyes and told the others that he and Barb mean to be the first puzzle team to complete the thing. He had that real 'gitter-done-for-Jesus' sparkle in his eyes.

April continued. "What's almost comical is that Nancy Fanes doesn't get along with hardly anyone except the aid that feeds her her meals. Well, she told Monte and the others, she aimed to find someone to be her partner and they'd beat the socks off the Monte and Barb team."

It must have been twenty times, at least, that Mannie had to explain to other residents, what the puzzle contest excitement was all about. Margaret was a little lady that had few happy memories, and was always moving her rings around on her fingers, like she was a jewelry model. Mannie described the puzzles and the searching it took to solve the puzzle. Margaret fingered her dime-store engagement ring with its glass diamond inset. She interrupted Mannie in saying, "Mannie, if you have to dig for these key words, and since they're really important, maybe you could call the puzzles 'Diamonds', or 'Heaven's Diamonds', or something."

As Gramps listened to April explain these exciting discussions at the nursing home, it was like God had uncovered a diamond; a real gem of an idea. The little imaginary business was beginning it's own market research with more than positive results. April said, "Gramps. When do you and your teen team get together? I'm going to have Mannie Toth, my helper-in-training, here about 10 am this Saturday, to go over some new regulations we now have. She's just bustin' with some super puzzle ideas for you, I know you and your team will want to hear about, and give serious thought to."

The phone call ended on an excited note. “Thank ya, Jesus. Thank ya, Jesus,” Gramps repeated countless times, as he tried to busy himself around his house, so empty since his precious Nenee passed away. But he knew what he had to do, and without further delay. Gramps stood the broom in the utility closet, closed the closet door and headed straight for the front porch.

Almost like it was made of fragile paper, Noah (that's Gramps), sat himself in the front porch rocker that had been Nenee's favorite. He couldn't count the number of times he'd hear her through the screen door, always with her open Bible on her lap. She'd be telling some teen girl, of God's peace, power, and promises that were there for the accepting, by faith.

Oh how Noah missed his sweetheart. But there was some kind of connection with those past memories, to be had, as he let himself relax in the rocker and watch the nearby tall forest trees sway in the afternoon breeze. In some odd way, he imagined the trees were all swaying in unison like robed choir singers, praising God through song. Noah imagined the message of the song must be something like, “God's up to something. He surely is. Trust Him today, in every way, 'cuz there are diamonds just waiting for you.”

[~]

=21 Go With Whatcha Got!

Words can't describe the spirit of enthusiasm that flooded the little business meeting that Saturday. It was surely what was needed to overcome Sam's shyness caused by his badly scarred face. Anyone would be quick to state there was no product for this business to be centered on, but everyone was certain God was up to something, that involved them.

April stayed for the opening prayer, while silver-haired Gramps, Sam, Ben, and Mannie began discussing their ideas and the ton of questions. April returned momentarily with some beverages and chips for the biz meeting, and then was summoned by her pager to ward 3-B.

Mannie moved an easel pad near the table for all to see. Her blue marker was put to work listing many of those questions that seemed to have no answer. Noah watched the teens really work together in listing hurdles that might discourage some folks trying to begin a business. After most of the large page was full, Gramps asked Mannie if she could find a roll of masking tape pretty easy. Mannie was gone and back in a flash with the tape, and a smile of accomplishment, even in this small task.

Gramps carefully tore the filled sheet off the easel pad and had Sam tape it to the nearby wall, for easy reference. Proving he was no artist, Gramps drew a small door at the top of the clean sheet. He tried to draw it as though it was partly open. He placed the cap on the marker firmly and then faced the teen team. With one hand outstretched toward the filled page he said, “It's certainly important we make a list of things we need to give attention to – even if we don't have the answers yet. But we need to start an God's Open Door List right away. There are some Bible stories – actually called PARABLES, that God teaches us we are to be careful to put into use the things He's already given us. I'm sure He wants us to be good stewards; good managers, of the skills, tools, materials and stuff, before He gives us any more. God doesn't waste His gifts on slackers and goof-offs.”

“Something I want you three to dig out for our next meeting. In Matthew chapter 25 we're told about the very stewardship thing I just referred to. OK? Find that principle and promise for our next meeting. Now. Let's begin a list here of things we CAN do with what God has already given us. The reason this is important, is that God will show us His will; what He wants us

to do, in about 3 different ways. If you've wondered what God wants of you, well... this might help.”

“Number 1 is that He tells a great deal of what He wants of us, by what we learn from scripture. You'll see some of that, as you dig into Matthew 25. Number 2 is that God speaks to our heart as we hear good preaching and teaching, and as we spend quiet time in prayer LISTENING for His leading. And number 3 is by opening and closing doors of opportunity in front of us. We are to go through doors He has opened in front of us, and stay out of the others.”

Gramps continued by listing the things the teens saw as open doors of opportunity God has set before them. Each teen took a hard look at what things they might be able to start making some puzzle books as prototypes, until God showed them how to get machinery for printing etc. You really get blessed knowing God is leading as you remain happy and content 'with such things as you have'. Hebrews 13:5 – 6.

Don't forget your Matthew 25 homework! [~]

= Addendum =

Stepper Starter Minding Your Business

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[end of resource]

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