



Leading From Behind

with fishing pole and computer trash

Eduventure

by
James Curtis

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Introduction

As a 70 yr old grandfather topped with silver hair and always with my cane, (and emergency cell phone) I have a deeper pain than my arthritis and back pain. When my thoughts focus on teens today, my inward pain overshadows my body's cries for attention.

In unmistakable ways, bodily pain and spiritual pain clammer for my attention and action. But which do I attend first? And does that remedy require pills or a process, or maybe a person?

From the lips of others, and sometimes me too, the labored questions, “God are you doing this to me? How long is this pain going to last? Do you enjoy allowing pain in people? Have I done something to make you angry? Why do Christians that faithfully love and serve You, suffer pain and imprisoning in unspeakable conditions? Why God?”

As with all our problems and questions, God's precious word provides all the answers and direction we need, to serve Him each day with Full Joy. But what is Full Joy? How do we get it? How do we keep it? What's it going to do for me?

This resource will lead us across a bridge, we'll call it THE QUIET BRIDGE. We see an exciting first glimpse of this quiet bridge in 1Thessalonians 4:11, 12.

Second, we see the powerful potential of seniors as mentors to youth; maybe even the best suited generation to reach out to them and teach FULL JOY.

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Scrap 'n Screwdriver Missions

Leading from Behind

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Introduction to Full Joy

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#1 - The Blaster

The warning – in a minute. Seeing as how we as silver-haired seniors are learning about teenagers and how to reach out to them, we must, with caution, include here the lesson learned from the Blaster.

As car doors were closing, members and friends of the Silver-Top Seniors group were entering the activity center and whispering warnings along the way. The warnings were all variations of, “Be on your guard tonight. 'Blaster' Jackson is leading our fellowship tonight.”

No one really knew what Blaster's real first name was, nor did they have any courage to ask. Blaster got his nickname in the coal mines, he worked in most of his life. He was the person that always set off the dynamite charges.

The way Blaster talked loud and sometimes with a bit of confusion, you'd ask yourself if Blaster had been standing too close to his work, a few times. Entering the activity room the first thing to be seen was a long folding table with full coffee makers and a bowl of tea bags sitting near a large thermos of hot water. They were all lined up ready for action, like rifles and hand grenades along the wall of an army barracks.

The same muffled warnings were still being shared as the 40 or so, men and women took their seats; three were in wheel chairs. One thing was crystal clear in the minds of everyone, was the war these silver-haired soldiers (for the Savior) have declared, to recapture the minds and hearts of the youth of the community, especially the teenagers.

When the announcements, thank-you's, and other customary

preliminaries were finished, Blaster Jackson stood straight and tall. His frayed shirt sleeve almost covered the 3-inch scar on his left wrist. Peeking just over his shirt collar was a neck tattoo that said, “MOM.” An unkind rumor started at the barber shop a couple years ago that the rest of the tattoo probably said, “MOM loves me, 'cuz no one else will.” It's just a rumor, you understand.

The room got quiet as a graveyard as Blaster walked up to one of the men at a front table. In a stern tone, Blaster asked him, “Whad you want?” Without time to answer, Blaster asked again, “You came here tonight, whad you want?” Again, not waiting for an answer, his eyes beneath large bristly black eyebrows looked toward Donna Benning. Without a word, Blaster's eyes asked Donna the question with such force she almost dropped her coffee cup.

He returned to the front of the room and lightly tapped the table he stood next to, a few times, thinking of his next words. In a softer look and tone, he scanned the faces of all his audience, beginning with, “Whaddah we want? Everyplace we go, whether it's into the kitchen, the hardware store, doctor, or even here tonight. We know what we want. We mostly know where to get it, and even why.”

With more gentleness than you'd expect possible from Blaster, he slowly walked among the tables as he spoke to everyone, often repeating the question, “Whaddah we want?” “Oftentimes I'd be working in the mine tunnels so dark; so black, you'd think God's eyes couldn't see me, down there. But you and I know He did, and He does, every moment. Can you imagine darkness so intense, you can almost taste it, with your tongue?”

“I can still remember once, in shaft #14, it was black like that.

The battery on my cap lamp was just about gone. I was all alone. I pushed the plunger to set off the blast, but realized I didn't know which way to run. I didn't know where my safe spot was. Maybe you've had a moment, when you didn't know where to run for safety; or even if there was such a safety place for you. Isn't it wonderful to have friends and loved-ones we can run to, that lovingly tell you, "Come follow me. I'll show you perfect safety."

With muscled arms and large calloused fingers, Blaster pointed at the double entry doors and said, "Those teenagers out there will be our leaders tomorrow. They'll be making decisions that'll affect you and me." Blaster Jackson tapped a nearby table a few more times, giving serious thought to his next few words. His gaze covered all the faces present and began, "With a nickname like 'Blaster', you'd think I'm tough and cold about everything. But it ain't so."

"This last week, I took a teen boy for cokes, and I'll never NEVER forget what I saw across the table from me. I looked into the eyes of a teen that were as dark and distressed as anything I've ever seen in shaft 14 or any of um! Just like many of you, I've got Arthritis that pains me somethin' terrible. But people, what pains me even more is there are so very few grownups that care enough about teenagers around us, willing to take the first steps to tell a teen, 'Come follow me. I'll show you perfect safety.' It makes things even blacker to think that church folks CHURCH FOLKS don't know how or don't care to reach out with God's light of truth and peace."

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#2 - You Silver-Tops Are Perfect!

With every pair of eyes of the Silver-Top Seniors group focused on Blaster Jackson, his continuing words poured from a tender heart. His burden for reaching out to teenagers with God's promise of peace and purpose in these chaotic technology-flooded times caught everyone off guard. The mood of the room of 40 or so people forced open the hearts of Blaster's listeners and began inner cries to join his cause.

“Now I know what cher thinkin'. You're sayin' to yourself, I don't know much about today's teens. Most of the time I get edgy just being around them for very long. I think of them as a blood-pumping time bomb, and I wouldn't know what to do or what not to say. I don't know a bunch of Bible verses to show the teen. I once heard that some of them can't read and probably can't write their own name. They got funny ways to shake hands. Where do I learn that?”

Blaster continued his speaking with, “Now if that there's what yer thinkin', you're perfect for the job.” For emphasis, Blaster lightly clapped his hands together twice. “Do you see, we're a perfect match! The teens don't have to answer some kind of interrogation from us, or listen to any rules. All they need to do is slowly share with us, what their world is like. Do we need to be ready with lots of Bible verses we figure only a preacher would know? Absolutely not! We only need to listen with compassion.”

Someone clapped their hands a few times and then spoke up, in halting words. Beulah Radner said, “Mr. Blaster. I can't do much in this wheelchair, but I sure can listen! Can I help ya

listen? Can I help ya with the teens? I want God to use me, in whatever way He can. Would ja let me help? I'll try my best, honest I will.”

History books record stacks of powerful speeches and catchy phrases, but Beulah Radner's words most certainly must rank up there with the best: “I want God to use me, in whatever way He can. Would ja let me help? I'll try my best, honest I will.”

Blaster Jackson nodded to the group's chairman, Bob Tarpin, and took his seat. Bob stood to his feet and was so moved by what had been said and done, he took a drink of water and cleared his throat twice, before speaking. His beginning words held great praise for Blaster's presentation and even Beulah's offer to help.

Bob began, “Maybe there's some real truth to the 'God gave us two ears but only one mouth – because He wanted us to do twice as much listening', rule of thumb. Certainly, God wants us to be super zealous in our listening, not only to those He has put in our field of harvest, but firstly to Him and the beats of His heart, often recorded in His written word.”

“Before we have our closing prayer, I want you to try something. When you get home and prepare for bed, read some scripture, maybe a whole chapter. Then by yourself, pray with Beulah's thoughts: I want God to use me, in whatever way He can. Would ja let me help? I'll try my best, honest I will.' Then spend some quiet time in your prayer, and practice your listening... listening as Heaven leads you in seeing your part to play in all that we've been reminded about, tonight.”

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#3 - Plate Pluggin' 'n Shoo-Fly Pie

It was going to be a battle they had fought before, with not very good results. The two white-headed World War II veterans arrived at Mark Bond's house with their favorite fishing rods in the back seat. Both men questioned each other about what a Shoo-Fly pie was like, and was it something humans would want to eat. Mark happily greeted, "Howdy fellas! I sure hope you remembered your fishing rods. I'm gonna whop both of you good!"

The two men took a seat on the porch while hearing Mark's warning not to trip over his two canes leaning over against the porch railing. As was expected, Pete spoke right up with all the particulars of the birth of his fourth new grand-baby. Mark and Bates could tell Pete was as excited about the event as he was about the first one. And trying to put the skids to Pete's revelation would be about as hard as storming the beach at Guadalcanal with bombs exploding all around you.

Shortly the conversation turned to the events at the recent Silver-Tops Seniors fellowship, last week. With a bit of a struggle, Mark changed his posture in the porch swing. Bates asked, "Mark, is that grenade fragment giving you problems again?" The answer came, "Ya. The army surgeons said it was too close to my spine and that it'd have to stay put. They warned that I'd have occasional pain with it, the rest of my life."

Mark continued, "That talk that Blaster Jackson gave at 'Silver-Tops' really spoke to me. Like most of the rest of the audience, I was really touched by his tenderness about the teens. I didn't think he had deep feelings, like that; about

anything.” Mumbled agreement came from both Mark and Bates. Mark continued, while rubbing his chin in a thoughtful way.

“But what I really connected with, was Blaster's thoughts about the two kinds of pain. You remember – his physical pain – his Arthritis. And then, his mental pain – seeing the stress and confusion in the life of the teen he had cokes with. A buddy of mine had a pump implanted under his skin to feed medicine when his back pain got so bad. Scientists have come up with all kinds of wonderful medicines and technology to help control our physical pain. But they're stopped cold trying to find something that will deal with that deeper pain; the mental pain within our spirit.”

Bates was never a real talkative person, but spoke up. “Guys. I've started building a teenage boy – on paper, that is. It always helps me to write things down and move my thoughts around – get them sort-of lined up. I can think about things more clearly and pray better too. I've printed out the list I'm beginning and here's a copy for each of you.” All three men were looking at their copy of the list. “I want you both to tell me stuff that could probably be added, to help build 'our teenage boy'; on paper, that is.”

The beginning list already included statements like, “1. unlike girls, boys enjoy loud, messy, flashy outside events, especially if a contest or food is involved. 2. boys are far more independent and want to establish their own rules, rather than being controlled by teachers, parents, and other authorities. 3. fashion and first impressions are rarely close to the top of a boy's to-do list. 4. boys have begun the lifelong battle to try to understand the reasons for the actions of those other soft-speaking teens that wear frilly dresses, and

matching ribbons in their hair.”

Pete suggested another teen boy note: “teen boys are often seen playing hand-held video games. The ever-present gaming may be coverups for painful family circumstances or the absence of a true friend that deeply cares about the boy's hurts – physical or especially mental/spiritual.”

The men grabbed their fishing rods and headed for the backyard battle, still wondering what a Shoo-Fly Pie was.

Each of the trio was seated in a chair, facing an aluminum pie plate about 30 feet in front of them. As directed by yesterday's phone call invitation, a casting plug was attached where a fish hook was usually found. The obvious task was to carefully cast your plug into the pie plate, without getting it tangled in the low-hanging tree limbs. Mark explained, “The first one who mistakenly gets tangled in the tree limb, has to be the first to taste my Dixie's Shoo-Fly Pie. You both already know that she likes to experiment with new pie recipes, and this one, I have some real questions about.”

The first taster of Dixie's new creation, we'll learn about later. A Shoo-Fly pie is made with sweet crumbs and molasses. Evidently the flies love 'em. [~]

#4 - I'm a C.B. MAX

The next hour would change Blaster's life forever. Blaster's grizzly calloused hand motioned for Max to take a seat on the grass and both leaned up against the perfect shade tree. Blaster came just to listen. There'd be no spouting rules or accusations of stupid choices... he'd just

listen.

Max was all of 16, and headed down a road to the rocks, very much out of control, emotionally. Before Max spoke, he breathed out a long deep sigh. He felt his exhaled distress could make a difference to that sailboat smoothly gliding among the sparkling diamonds of reflected sunlight. He popped the tab on his coke, as did Blaster. Both begged themselves for the right things to say, and when to keep silent.

“Blaster, this sure is relaxing. Thanks for caring enough to bring me. I'm sure you got more important things to do, but I sure needed this. It seems like this growin' up gets tougher for me every week.” Max looked at the silver-haired Blaster with an expression that silently said, “Help me Mr. B. I'm drowning and I don't know where shore is, or who to ask. I mean, the way I've acted, I know for certain God sure isn't going to listen to me! That's why I'm so glad you do.”

“Mom and dad are so stressed, they can't say 5 words without shouting at each other. Their shouting even splatters over onto me, if I'm around or can hear them.” Max took a drink of pop and rested it on the grass, making sure no ants were around.

“Mom told me once about the puppets they had before television came along. These puppets had strings connected to them and a person up above would pull different puppet strings and make it dance, lay down, move its mouth, or shake its head. Mr. B. I don't know if you can understand it, but there are many times I wished I could put mom and dad on those strings. Oh how I wished I could pull some strings and make them dance with each other, smile, and walk hand in hand.” Max looked into Blaster's eyes and wanted to find those strings to make his home much easier for a teenager to

find his way into adulthood.

“Mr. B. I'm a C.B... Well, I used to be a C.B. I'll explain in a minute what a C.B. is. Last year in school, I met a guy that told me how I could have some fantastic fun with my computer on the Internet, and it wouldn't cost anything. You need to be able to talk to other people in Facebook. You know... send short messages. Well, I learned about a girl in my school that was on Facebook a whole lot.”

“I'll keep this story short. I began sending funny rumors to her group of friends in Facebook and I could start making a difference in her attitude. See, this can all be done, anonymously... fake names, and all that. Anyhow, I'd see her in the hallways and some classes and tell I was really stirring her up. It started out just as a game. I wanted to see if it really worked like this guy said it would.” Blaster and Max took another drink of pop and glanced at the progress of the sailboat, with its tall proud white sail.

“But Mr. B. I don't know exactly what made me do it, maybe it was all the stress at home, but I began sending mean rumors about her to her Facebook friends, that she would also see. I'd sit at my laptop in my bedroom and visualize her squirming like I do every minute I'm at home. This girl couldn't tell her parents that a Cyber Bully was taring her life apart. Because the minute she did, her parents would take her cell phone away and clamp down on her computing. She couldn't stay away from Facebook social networking 'cuz that was about the only friends she had.”

“Now, Blaster. You may not understand this, but I was feeling a little like a god. Because as a C.B., a cyberbully, I could control someone, like I wished I could control my bickering

parents.”

Max took another long deep breath and rotated to face Blaster, straight on. “Mr. B. This has got way out of hand. The girl began loosing weight and looked like she didn't sleep 2 hours a week. After a while, I didn't see her at school, anymore. I'm tellin' ya. I feel so guilty; so dirty in what I've done. It's like the pain and stress that I saw in my parents, and that I spilled onto that girl, in Facebook, has rebounded back at me in full force.”

“Blaster. I want to ask a big favor of you. I want you to talk to your silver-haired friends and warn them about Cyberbullying and to try so much harder to make connections with the tender-hearted girls struggling with growing up, AND the terrible danger that can be done by playing around someone's feelings in Facebook, or anywhere else. But it's super important that you don't use my name, in what you teach them. OK?”

Blaster Jackson was so overcome with compassion, two large arms that so often carried cases of dynamite into the coal mines, reached out and wrapped around the 16 year old young man. It seemed like an eternity before they both settled back against the tree, enjoying the cool fresh breeze, somehow feeling a load; an inside load, had been lifted to the surface of sharing.

Like a magnet, the tall white sail drew the stare of both Max and Blaster. Blaster spoke in a gentle tone, “Isn't it great that God made that sailboat do what it was designed to do? I mean, it floats on top of the water, and at the same time is powered by the breeze. Max, you and I can't see the breeze, but we both know it's there, don't we? Well, there are many

things God has given us, too wonderful for us to see. Let's start opening our eyes – our heart-eyes, travel a little slower – like that sailboat, and we'll both notice other good stuff God has for us.” [~]

#5 - Isn't Worth Nothin'

The annoying phone rang for the third time in the last hour. Hattie was at the grocery store, so Blaster Jackson was stuck with answering the thing. If it wasn't for the hip problems his wife Hattie has been having lately, he'd think seriously about unplugging the noisy phone for most of each day. This time he was glad he answered it, and with just a twinge of courtesy too.

The phone receiver said, “Hi Mr. B. This is Max. You know Max Litton. How you doin'?” “Not too bad, Max. This stormy weather coming in, is sure stirring up my aching bones. But... I guess it's better than never having any pain at all.” Blaster's statement wasn't meant to be a hook, but that's exactly what it did. “Well, how you getting along, young man? And I want to really know. You've been on my mind a whole lot since we had cokes at the lake. I wasn't going to say anything, but I think some tree ants took a shortcut down through my shirt.”

“The reason I called, Mr. B, is to tell you how so very much I treasure our time together in your busy schedule. It means a whole lot that you listen to my hurts and don't jump on me for all the stupid choices I've made before. Well, anyhow, I was wonderin' if I could sort-of pay you back by picking up sticks in your yard, or something that'd save you from having to bend over a lot. I could come anytime... anytime I'm not in school.”

Blaster's mind raced to find the answer to the question immediately shouting to his soul. The simple question is why is this troubled teen, full of pain in his spirit and soul, caring about my aching back muscles? Is pain (in any form) some kind of magnet that draws two quite different generations together? Is there some kind of two-way compassion going on. Is pain some kind of language that needs no alphabet or polished grammar?

Almost without testing the thought, Mr. B. asked the 16 yr old Max. “Max. I was just wondering. Some of us older people are taring apart old computers and using the parts to make teaching toolkits for missionaries. And we've got 32 old computers that need to be taken apart. Maybe, if you were free next Saturday, you'd like to help us. I'd provide the transportation, and I'll bet I could find a pizza that needs our taste test. How about it?”

“Sounds fantastic!” was the reply in the phone receiver. The silver-haired coal mine blaster felt like it was his birthday, and he was about to open the biggest best present of them all. Little did he realize that orange hair was to be part of that present.

Saturday morning promised to be a bright sun-shiny day. Blaster Jackson was just finishing the loading of some needed tools in Nothin'. Around the garage rode Max Litton, pulled to a stop and almost dropped his bike. But right behind him was another boy in his middle teens, with orange hair the color of beautiful Autumn leaves.

“Mr. B. When I started telling Duke here, about how great I feel when you listen to me, he said right away, he wanted to

come along, and just maybe, you'd let him help us with the computer trash.” Blaster didn't know how this was going to wind up, but said, “Great. Get your bikes loaded into Nothin' then we'll be about ready to leave. I'll be able to drop you both off at your homes when we're done.”

Duke always suspected old folks were a little strange – even more than his orange hair, but he asked anyway. “Mr. Jackson, ummm. How do we load our bikes in nothin'?” Blaster smiled at the boy's confusion. “Well, Duke. First off, I'd really prefer you call me Gramps. Second, I named my pickup truck, Nothin'. My wife Hattie always tells me, that ol' rattlin' bucket of rust, isn't worth nothin'. So I decided that's what I'll call it, Nothin'.”

If Gramps could have read the minds of the two teens, he'd hear them thinking they ought to call themselves, Nothin'; I'm a teen not worth nothin'. I'm just a bucket of painful stress not knowing where I'm headed. Duke wondered if God, wherever He is, cares anything about orange hair. Maybe when He looks down from heaven, His gaze doesn't get past my orange hair... 'cuz that's sure what people do. [~]

#6 - Fishing 'n Feeling

The two teens, Max and Duke, got the tools out of Nothin' (Gramps' old pickup truck) and followed silver-haired Gramps (that's Blaster Jackson) into the activity hall. The three continued on into a back room, where two long tables were holding a couple computers partially dismantled. In the corner were three stacks of computers about 6 feet high.

On the walls of the store room were some posters, that included images of teens, and adults teaching teens in casual settings. One poster showed a simple map outline of Mexico with the bold wording, “Tech Trash for Mexico Teens”.

Max and Duke immediately began to relax in spirit. Even before any words were spoken, they both sensed this was a real hands-on place. The spirit of the room seemed to say, “hey guys, let's do it!. Forget the talk, just jump in!”

While Gramps began teaching a bit of preliminary things to consider, both boys were itching to grab the tools and start ripping into the computer boxes. Gramps was explaining the purpose of dismantling the computers and all the safety tips to remember. It included all the warnings about (1) sharp edges of the metal brackets, (2) don't put your hands on your face until you've washed your hands and the computer parts have been disinfected with the spray can.

Max raised his hand to get Mr. B's attention. “Gramps, I've been listening good, honest I have. But that poster over there is bugging me no end. I don't mean to be disrespectful, but whoever drew that poster got the words wrong. See? It says, 'Study to be quiet...' then 'that you might lack for nothing.’” Almost like Gramps had heard the question before, he casually walked toward an open Bible over on a small corner table in the room they were working. Max finished his question, “I think the words were supposed to read 'be quiet to study'. Like being quiet in a library or when you're fishing.”

Gramps rubbed his chin, thinking over his answer. “Max. You are really sharp today. You noticed our 'quiet' poster, and its odd wording. You're absolutely right! That sign would be

worded wrong if it was referring to 'fishing quiet'. But let's say it this way. There are two kinds of quiet.”

Duke (he's the one with the orange hair), “Whoa now Gramps. Ya lost me there...two kinds of quiet?” Gramps replied, “Yes Duke. Two kinds of quiet. There is 'inside' quiet and 'outside' quiet. The inside quiet of this poster reminds us of the importance of quiet inside our self; in our mind and in our heart. Having a quiet spirit inside our self is far more important than outside quiet, that fishing quiet you mentioned. But for sure, both used together is just what God wants of us.”

Just then Mark Bond, the vet with the spinal grenade fragment, came in the room with both canes helping him walk. He said, “Fishing! Did I hear the word fishing? I love fishing! I especially love the quiet challenge of outthinking that fish,” he said with a big grin. Maybe it's a coincidence, maybe not, but I just finished a little planning meeting in the other room with Bob Tarpin and a few of the members of our Silver-Tops Seniors group. We've planned a little fishing fun next week at Snyder's Pay Lake. Blaster, (that's Gramps) we want to have you and your young friends to come. They can each bring two other friends apiece. Silver-Tops will pay for the entrance, bait, and burgers.”

Later that day, Mark's phone call explained to Gramps, the real purpose for the Fishing Fun day. It wasn't fishing for fish, but fishing for deep fellowship with the teen generation and their missing inner quiet that the poster referred to. There was plenty of shaded areas at Snyder's, that seniors could minister to their youth.

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#7 - *Orders Are Needed*

The teens, Max and Duke, busied themselves following the instructions they'd just been given on dismantling the computer boxes, remembering all the warnings. “While you fellas are gutting those computers in front of you, I want to teach you something that will put loads of fun into your life, squeezing out lots of the stress we all have to deal with. It has to do with order.”

Blaster, (I mean Gramps) walked to a nearby marker board and picked up a marker, checking to see if it still had some life in it. He wrote in bold letters at the top of the board, “ORDER”. “Fellas, our word for the day, sort-of, is ORDER. You and I hear orders put to us far more than we like it. 'Do this.' 'Do that.' 'Ya better clean your room before dad gets home.' 'If you don't have that report on my desk by 3 pm today, you won't like what happens next.’”

“Our first type of order is like a command – 'do this or else...’” Gramps wrote the word COMMAND below the bold word ORDER.

“Our second type of order is to purchase or obtain something – 'We'll order pizzas, later'.

The third type of order is the way scientists group plants and animals and stuff. They group by family, order, species, etc.’”

The words PURCHASE and GROUPING were written below the word COMMAND.

Gramps continued teaching while the teens made good use of screwdrivers on the computer scrap. Our fourth type of order we'll call QUIET. Do you remember, we've already begun learning about that kind of quiet. We'll be learning more about

those two kinds of quiet; inside quiet and outside quiet, as we go along.”

“Our fifth type of ORDER is the arrangement of things we have and do. It's what we think of when we get up in the morning... well, first get my clothes on, grab something quick to eat and then... This is what people are referring to, when they tell you, 'Don't get your cart before the horse.' Do you remember how we started out this morning? First we prayed and asked God to direct us, then we covered a few safety tips, and then we went to work. I'll add the words QUIET and ARRANGEMENT to our ORDER list here on the board.”

“Did you two know the Bible tells us how to take computers apart? It certainly does. While you're working, I show you in our computer 'how-to' manual, here. Yeah, I know we also call it the Bible.” Gramps quickly turned to 1 Corinthians 14:40. He slid the Bible over in front of the teens and said, “see here? It says 'Let all things be done decently and in order.' In another place it says, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.' Some other day we'll talk about the building instructions for a guy that was going to build a tower.”

“But it's how we arrange things that is so important. Whether we're storing computer pictures in this folder or that hard drive folder or the way you both are putting all the screws in this jar and the small cables in that box over there. It's truly calming to our minds and hearts to begin getting things sorted out. The first thing to do, is to decide what you really want – down deep. Way down where a part of you always stays, and the first to say 'good morning' to your mind, in the morning. Max and Duke, look at me a minute.” They did. “Fellas, God has given us a whole toolbox of things to get our hearts sorted

out and do great work for Him. But He only asks that you put Him first, on your daily 'to-do list', and the top spot on your list of what and who you love. [~]

#8 - *Silent Seniors*

Was he going to keel over or not?” That was the question many of the attendees of the Silver-Tops Seniors Soup Supper were asking themselves as they watched Blaster, (that's Gramps) take his first few bites of Dixie's Shoo-Fly Pie. Gramps lived, and enjoyed the rest of his pie, while others tried a slice for themselves. The group of 40 or so seniors had gathered for a bit of a training session everyone needed to effectively reach out to the teens God had placed in their harvest field of souls.

As most everyone was done eating, their chairman, Bob Tarpin walked to the front of the group and tapped a water glass with a spoon to get everyone's attention. Bob asked everyone to bow for prayer, asking God to bless and lead the following discussion.

He began with, “Thank you for all of you coming, and the ladies that prepared the soup and sandwiches... including the Shoo-Fly pie,” he said with a big smile. It's important that we make sure we're all on the same page and are sharing our own ideas and opportunities. With what we are reaching out with, Satan is certainly going to try to destroy. Our unity is so crucial.”

“I want to thank Blaster Jackson for the very moving presentation we had last time. I really sensed that all of you want what Beulah spoke up about. To help out in any way

God can use each of us.”

Bob picked up a dry erase marker and drew a large triangle on the white board behind him, in the orientation of a pyramid. He began, “We see many examples of the triangle providing strength and also unity in objects large and small, and trios too. Here at the bottom left of our triangle we'll put, 'Hurting Teens'. To the right we'll write, 'Silent Seniors'. And then at the top of our triangle of strength and unity, we'll put 'Full Joy'.”

Our plan is to build a bridge of understanding and compassion, as God leads us, between ourselves and the teenagers. This done decently and in order as 1Corinthians 14:40 reminds us, will move us both to possess Full Joy.”

“You'll notice in our triangle diagram, I refer to our white-haired generation as SILENT SENIORS. As you and I begin to reach out to the teens, in prayer and action, I'm confident that God will show us powerful ways to connect with those we mentor; ways we never thought of. I also expect each of us will enthusiastically share and encourage each other, one on one, and also in our group meetings here.”

“Before I tell you one of the key ingredients to this process toward Full Joy, I want us to use the remainder of this meeting time to begin sharing our own ideas, and thoughts on how this can all happen. What I'd like us all to do, is break up into groups of 4, where no two family members are in the same group. Next, I want each group to pray as a group and then elect a secretary to record all the great ideas you'll be coming up with.”

“It might even be a great help to choose a particular teen you

know, or one you can visualize and give thought how you can reach out to them without preaching AT them or ruling OVER them.”

Bob continued, “Oh. By the way. You'll want to pray for the teen fishing event our men and women are having at Snyder's Pay Lake this Saturday, at 1:30pm. We all want the efforts of burdened adults that will be fishing for men and ladies, using worms, minnows, and tears, to be blessed by God.” Bob grinned with one of those expressions where the cheeks and lips gave a smile, but the eyes said this is very serious business for the Lord and the eternal destiny of hurting teens. Do your best. Jesus did His best on Calvary for each of us.[~]

#9 - Catfish 'n Candy Bar

Saturday Morning, the two teen boys and Gramps were bouncing down the road in Nothin'. The two boys remembered that Nothin' was the nickname of this old pickup truck that most folks didn't think it was worth nothin'. Duke was careful to keep his foot on the piece of plywood that covered the open place in the floor... mud puddles can get messy.

Silver-haired Gramps headed Nothin' down a rough dirt road toward Snyder's Pay Lake. The talk in the truck was always full of excitement and expectation. Max told his fish joke about the Catfish 'n Candy Bar. It was one of those fish stories not quite worth writing home about, but he got a couple chuckles out of his two companions. The two teens talked a little about school activity, including the history tests ol' Mrs. Grudy gives. They're murder.

Gramps spoke to the boys while watching the rough road ahead. “Boys. I've heard a lot of strange fishing stories in my time, but the strangest one, I suppose is one that no fishing poles, string, or hooks were used. Oddly enough, it almost cost the lives of everyone in the boat. The gist of it, as I remember is this guy was riding in this boat and the whole crew threw him overboard. Now here's where this turns strange. When this guy landed in the water some kind of a fish, or maybe a shark, swallowed him. Two or three days later this fish spit this guy out on shore. The guy got up and walked away. Strange, huh?”

Gramps hardly took a breath before he started explaining some of the rules to be observed at Snyder's Pay Lake, just a little farther down the bumpy road, that is, if Nothin' will hold together.

The teens grabbed their fishing tackle and headed for spots they were sure some hungry fish or two, were waiting to taste their bait... which was not a candy bar. While the boys were fishing Gramps was gathering a few things in an area approved to build a camp fire and have a great time. Blaster Jackson (that's Gramps) was quietly praying as hard as he could for the boys and this fishing time. Gramps continually prayed something like, “Lord, I've started the Jonah story and cast it upon the waters of imagination and curiosity of the boys. I'm asking you to use the story as bait to draw their hearts close to you and their need for salvation and your peace and even Full Joy.”

About half an hour before Gramps had planned for their lunch, Max walked over to Gramps with a confused look. He said, “Gramps I can't fish right now. I stare at my fishing line and think about your strange fish story, and it's bugging me

awful. Will you tell me the meaning of the story? I know enough about you and your burden for us teens and all our inner stress. So I know you got something good hidden in the story. Tell me please, 'cuz I won't be able to think of anything else the rest of the day. Please?"

Gramps motioned Max to follow him a couple steps away from the campfire area, but yet easy to be seen by others fishing at the lake. Gramps looked both ways, in a shifty way, like he was about to pass on some military secrets. He looked directly at Max and said, "I'll tell you the rest of the story, if you'll promise to share the story with at least one other person, as best as you can. Agreed?" Max's nod sealed the bargain.

The old gentleman began, "Well God had told this guy to do something very important, He was supposed to go to this great big town and tell everybody how much God loves each of them. But see, this guy didn't think it was a good idea, so he got on this boat and headed in the other direction. Now since this guy on board this ship wasn't obeying God, the ship got in a big storm and almost sank. They threw most stuff overboard. Finally this guy was honest with the captain and said, 'I'm the reason God is about to sink your ship.' He tells the captain to throw him overboard and everybody will live."

"Well that's what happened, Max. Now the strange and wonderful part of the story is that God had prepared a big fish at the right time and the right place to save this guy that had been disobedient, but was now being honest with himself and God. Now I know that only God has the power to keep this guy alive inside that fish, until he got spit up on dry land."

"I'm sure that guy had learned for sure not to disobey God,

especially when He wants others to know about how He can save them for eternity, to live with Him in Heaven. Max, what I've told you is not a story at all. It's a real piece of history, that you can read for yourself. Oh, you'll want to know the guy's name was Jonah. The town that learned about God's deep abiding love is named, Nineveh.”

A couple days later, Blaster's phone rang, as it so often does. Blaster's wife Hattie, shouted, “Blaster, someone called and wants to talk to you!” He took the phone from Hattie and spoke, “This is Blaster. Whatcha need?” The voice in the phone said, “Gramps, I told the Jonah fish story to Duke and he said the strangest thing. Gramps. Duke said, 'Ya know, Max. I feel a whole lot like I'm a Jonah, not being honest with God, and going the wrong way to find happiness and risking the lives of people around me.”

Max's voice in the phone became noticeably humble in asking, “Gramps. If Duke and I was to come over, sometime after school, would you explain to Duke and me how to keep from being thrown overboard by God?”

Tears almost appeared in the eyes of the old coalmine dynamite blaster as he realized God wants us to go fishing for those He loves. No license is needed, and there's no limit. [~]

#10 - Izzy Helps Out

Bob Tarpin and his wife were just finishing the hanging of 4 more posters along one wall of the Silver-Top Seniors activity room. Most of the posters featured happy faces of youth while some showed some senior couples with almost as much white hair as Bob and his wife Betty.

Four themes were clearly presented:

1. Teens today are really hurting inside, with no-one wanting to care about them.
2. Faith-based groups were not doing nearly as much as they could – and should.
3. Silver-haired generation was the most qualified to reach out and mentor them.
4. Scripture is the premier 'how-to manual' to guide mentors of teens.

Bob's wife shared her thoughts about the youth program called, 'Scrap 'n Screwdriver Missions'. “Bob, I'm really excited about the connecting up of our silver-haired generation and the youth. We all realize that to connect with youth, we have to have some computer flavoring somehow. But so many of us are afraid of the things. God has made the perfect link by using broken computers and their parts. More than that, we don't need to know how computers work and our teens don't either. But something is bothering me.”

“I don't know if it's just me or what, but it seems like the program is pretty much gender one-sided.” Betty (that's Bob's wife), continued with, “Yeah I know there are a few girl screwdriver jockeys, but I wish God would show us how to get girls into the program. So many of the girls are stuck in the middle of social networking on their cellphones, and hate it. They know it's not satisfying in the long run. Most every one of them see all this networking is computer quicksand and is taking away their life and happiness by inches, each day. Bob, I believe that 2Timothy 3:17 pertains deeply to girls too. Honey, could we stop with the posters for a couple minutes and ask God what His plan is?”

Even when you're not around quicksand, step one of your plan should always be to ask God what His plan is, and to

switch all your plans to following His plan. Why? The reason is simple and straightforward. His plan is already in motion and right on His schedule. Do you want a plan that carries you to victory and FULL JOY? There's no other way. Adopt His will and way and trust Him every moment. That old black book that begins, "In the beginning God..." is full of evidence that He is in control in every situation.

Blaster's phone rang with Beulah wanting to ask Blaster a question about the Scrap 'n Screwdriver program. "Mr. Jackson. I have a question, I want to ask you. OK?" Blaster, (that's Gramps), remembered that even though Beulah was confined to a wheelchair, she still had a real passion for serving her Savior in whatever way she could.

Gramps asked, "Well, Beulah, what's your question?" "Well, I have this 19 year old friend of mine, Isabel Rohas, that's handicapped worse than me, but she loves Jesus too. She wants to help missionaries tell kids how much He loves them. Now I was just thinking. You are having some of the youth take old computers apart to make toolbox teaching kits that are going to be sent to missionaries in Mexico and other places. Gramps, maybe there would be a way that Isabel, we call her Izzy, could help."

Beulah continued with her idea. "I bet Izzy would be pretty good at translating some of your stories and directions into Spanish. Maybe you could have a Mexican pastor check out a couple of her translations to make sure she was doing a good job. That way lots more kids and Bible teachers could use your toolkits. See, Izzy is a pen pal with several teens in Mexico and South America, and she does a good bit of translating into English when she reads them to me."

"Even though Izzy is pretty much confined to her bed, she still wants to help. Gramps. I figure you're better at talking to

God than me, so could you ask God if He could find a way to let Izzy help? If you're too busy, I'll ask someone else to ask God.”

Friend...

If you received a telephone request like this, what would you do after you hung up the phone?

[~]

Addendum

Introduction to Full Joy

[An excerpt from TEEN BRIDGE by the same author]

Full Joy is that level of character and living that makes us most Christian; most 'Christ-like'. Jesus tells us, in John 15:11, that we're given the same joy that Jesus has and it comes through scripture, and its proper use. Excitedly, we see this joy will remain in us and ends the verse with the expected result. This stated result - 'joy might be FULL' adds an almost mysterious dimension to this joy. 1Peter 1:8 labels this full joy as 'joy unspeakable'. Jude 24 gives another aspect of this joy that could only come from God and His deep abiding 'parent-passion' for each of us.

Our Full Joy definition touches on just one of the many facets of 'unspeakable' Full Joy.

Full Joy is to savor our expanding joy as we consistently give sacrificially in service and substance in God's will.

Our meager definition tells us that Full Joy is best known through experiencing God's bountiful blessing as we give sacrificially.

- The boy must have experienced full joy as he gave his 5 loaves and 2 fish to Jesus to feed the hungry 5000+ multitude, and then see 12 baskets-full left over.
- The widow must have experienced full joy as she filled barrels with God's abundance from her having sacrificially given the remaining food to Elijah that she was preparing for she and her son before they starve.
- How about the Jews giving sacrificially to build the tabernacle and the city of Jerusalem?
- Though wracked with unspeakable pain, Our Lord must have felt full joy as He completed His mission, for His heavenly Father, in shedding His blood on Calvary.

It should be understood giving sacrificially is not some kind of painful investment program where I give a little expecting to get back a whole lot more. It's our willingly cheerfully giving sacrificially, because that's what Jesus did. Full Joy is also experienced, in the knowledge of the other two 'Over-The-Top' principles of God's great grace to us as we trust and serve Him.

[~] [~] [~]