



CHURCH OF GOD BANNER



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DECEMBER, 2007

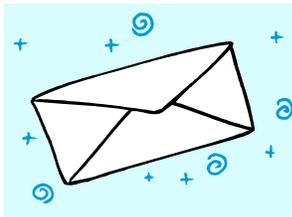
FIRST CHURCH OF GOD: 3RD. AVE. & HWY. 508 ONALASKA, WASHINGTON 98570

SIMPLE WHITE ENVELOPE

It's just a small white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past 10 years or so. It all began because my husband, Mike, hated Christmas -- oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it -- the overspending, the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma -- the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else. Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties, and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way. Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended. Shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church.

These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our

boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes. As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended wallowing them. We took every weight class. And, as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn't acknowledge



defeat.

Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them." Mike loved kids -- all kids -- and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball, and lacrosse.

That's when the idea for his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church. On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years.

For each Christmas, I followed

the tradition -- one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on. The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning, and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents.

As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn't end there. You see, we lost Mike last year due to cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning it was joined by three more. Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing around the tree with wide-eyed anticipation watching as their fathers take down the envelope.

Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit, will always be with us. May we all remember Christ, who is the reason for the season, and the true Christmas spirit this year and always.

◆ Received from James Sparks

THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS

by Os Hillman



See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. ~

Hebrews 12:15

The enemy of our souls has a very specific strategy to destroy relationships. Whether these relationships are in business, marriage, or friendships, the strategy is the same. A conflict arises, judgments are made, and feelings are hurt. What happens next is the defining point of whether the enemy gains a foothold, or the grace of God covers the wrong.

When a root of bitterness is allowed to be planted and grown, it not only affects that person, but it also affects all others who are involved. It is like a cancer.

Breaking Satan's foothold requires at least one person to press into God's grace. It cannot happen when either party "feels" like it, for none of us will ever feel like forgiving. None of us feel like talking when we have been hurt. Our natural response is to withdraw or lash out at the offending party. It is only obedience that allows God's grace to cover the wrongs incurred. This grace prevents the parties from becoming victims who will seek compensation for their pain.

The next time you are hurt by someone, realize the gravity of the crossroads where you find yourself. Choose grace instead of bitterness. Then you will be free to move past the hurt, and a root of bitterness will not be given opportunity to grow.

"Reprinted by permission from the author. Os Hillman is an international speaker and author of more than 8 books on workplace calling.

To learn more, visit <http://www.MarketplaceLeaders.org>

A CHRISTMAS CREED

Walter Russell Bowie

I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town; and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world, in towns both large and small.

I believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room, and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today.

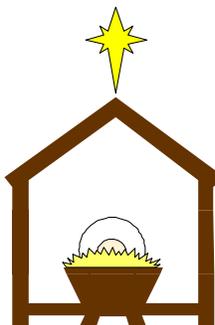
I believe in the one who the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts.

I believe in the one who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible:

I believe in the one whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth, who looked at persons and made them see what God's love saw in them, who by love brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

I confess my ever-lasting need of God: The need of forgiveness for our selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.

I believe in God who gives us the best of himself. I believe in Jesus, the son of the living God, born in Bethlehem this night, for me and for the world.



A PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

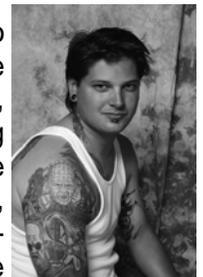
Heavenly Father, Help us remember that the jerk who cut us off in traffic last night, may be a single mother who worked nine hours that day and is rushing home to cook dinner, help with homework, do the laundry and spend a few precious moments with her children.

Help us to remember that the pierced, tattooed, disinterested young man, who can't make change correctly, may be a worried 19-year-old college student, balancing his apprehension over final exams with his fear of not getting his student loans for next semester.

Remind us, Lord, that the scary looking bum, begging for money in the same spot every day (who really ought to get a job!) is a slave to addictions that we can only imagine in our worst nightmares.

Help us to remember that the old couple walking annoyingly slow through the store aisles and blocking our shopping progress, are savoring this moment, knowing that, based on the biopsy report she got back last week, this will be the last year that they go shopping together.

Heavenly Father, remind us each day that, of all the gifts you give us, the greatest gift is love. It is not enough to share that love with those we hold dear. Open our hearts not to just those that are close to us, but to all humanity. Let us be slow to judge and quick to forgive, and show patience, empathy and love.



◆ Received from Joe & Freda Downs

◆ Received from David Chilson

ONALASKA'S HAPPENINGS

SUNDAYS

SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:45 AM
MORNING WORSHIP 11:00 AM

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EVENING SING & PRAISE
SERVICE
6:00 PM

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TUESDAYS

KID'S CLUB
3:30 — 4:30 PM

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WEDNESDAYS

BIBLE STUDY
7:00 PM

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1

THE LADIES LUNCHEON
12:00 NOON

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING
6:00 PM

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CHURCH DINNER

3:00 PM—5:00 PM

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15

MEN'S BREAKFAST
7:00 AM
NATE
FROM OCYC
GUEST SPEAKER

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16

FOOD BANK SUNDAY

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM
11:00 AM

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
6:00 PM

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28

ALL CHURCH GAME NIGHT
6:30 PM

COMMUNITY EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19

SENIORS ON THE GO
12:00 NOON

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20

AMERICAN LEGION
7:00 PM

SCRAPBOOK & RUBBER STAMP

Saturday, December 15 in the Fellowship Hall, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Check the office for further details and schedules. Sharon Larson is leading this event.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Ever wonder what animals think about all the whoop-de-do about Christmas? We humans make up all kinds of stories but the animals know the real thing. **Come join us the morning of December 16th to hear the animals tell the story of the very first Christmas.**

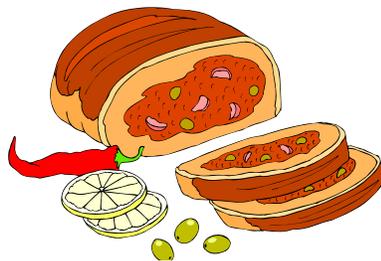


Children's Christmas Program

It's food bank Sunday so be sure to bring something and join the Wise Men in a celebration of giving to the real King. Worship starts at 11 am at the Onalaska First Church of God.

The play was written by Kathleen Mulkins and will be performed by the children and youth of our Sunday School. Katie Nederlander has been teaching the children how to use puppets and Hannah Meade has been directing the music.

BATTLE OF THE MEATLOAVES



Pastor Mulkins has laid down a challenge to all the cooks in our church to try and make a meatloaf better than his. The Battle of the Meatloaves will take place on Saturday, December 8 in the churches Fellowship Hall, from 3:00 PM until 5:00 PM. So far three or four have accepted his challenge; John Haun, Hannah Meade

and Kathleen MacDonald. Are you up to the challenge? We would like to have at least 3 more to participate.

The full meal will consist of; salad, mashed potatoes, vegetables, rolls and desert as well as coffee, tea or juice.

Everyone is invited to come and bring a guest to be part of the judging of the meatloaves. The cost of this meal will be donations which will go to the building fund.

COMMON SENSE AND FUR

Author Unknown

My husband and I had been happily (most of the time) married for five years but we haven't been blessed with a baby. I decided to do some serious praying and promised God that if he would give us a child I would be a perfect mother, love it with all my heart and raise it with his word as my guide.

God answered my prayers and blessed us with a son. The next year God blessed us with another son. The following year, he blessed us with yet another son. The year after that we were blessed with a daughter. My husband thought we'd been blessed right into poverty. We now had four children, and the oldest was only four years old. I learned never to ask God for anything unless I meant it. As a minister once told me, "If you pray for rain, make sure you carry an umbrella."

I began reading a few verses of the Bible to the children each day as they lay in their cribs. I was off to a good start. God had entrusted me with four children and I didn't want to disappoint him. I tried to be patient the day the children smashed two-dozen eggs on the kitchen floor searching for baby chicks. I tried to understand when they started a hotel for homeless frogs in the spare bedroom, although it took me nearly two hours to catch all twenty-three frogs. When my daughter poured ketchup all over herself and rolled up in a blanket to see how it felt to be a hot dog, I tried to see the humor rather than the mess.

In spite of changing over twenty-five thousand diapers, never eating a hot meal and never

sleeping for more than thirty minutes at a time, I still thank God daily for my children. While I couldn't keep my promise to be a perfect mother (I didn't even come close), I did keep my promise to raise them in the Word of God.

I knew I was missing the mark just a little when I told my daughter we were going to church to worship God, and she wanted to bring a bar of soap along to "wash up" Jesus, too. Something was lost in the translation when I explained that God gave us everlasting life, and my son thought it was generous of God to give us his "last wife."

My proudest moment came during the children's Christmas pageant... My daughter was playing Mary, two of my sons were shepherds and my youngest son was a wise man. This was their moment to shine. My five-year-old shepherd had practiced his line, "We found the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." But he was nervous and said, "The baby was wrapped in wrinkled clothes."

My four-year-old "Mary" said, "That's not wrinkled clothes silly. That's dirty, rotten clothes." A wrestling match broke out between Mary and the shepherd, which was stopped by an angel, who bent her halo and lost her left wing.

I slouched a little lower in my seat when Mary dropped the doll representing Baby Jesus, and it bounced down the aisle crying, "Mama-mama." Mary grabbed the doll, wrapped it back up and held it tightly as the wise men arrived.

My other son stepped forward wearing a bathrobe and a paper crown, knelt at the manger and announced, "We are the three

wise men, and we are bringing gifts of gold, common sense and fur."

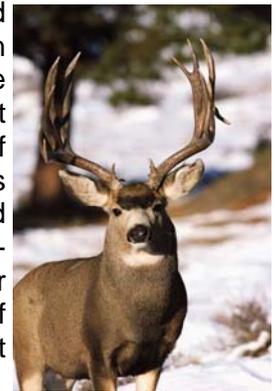
The congregation dissolved into



laughter, and the pageant got a standing ovation. "I've never enjoyed a Christmas program as much as this one," Pastor Brian laughed, wiping tears from his eyes. "For the rest of my life, I'll never hear the Christmas story without thinking of gold, common sense and fur."

HUNTING FRIENDS

A group of friends went deer hunting and paired off in twos for the day. That night, one of the hunters returned alone, staggering under the weight of an eight-point buck.



"Where's Henry?" the others asked.

"Henry had a stroke of some kind. He's a couple of miles back up the trail," the successful hunter replied.

"You left Henry laying out there and carried the deer back?" they inquired.

"A tough call," nodded the hunter. "But I figured no one is going to steal Henry!"

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Last months winner was my sister from Scottsdale, Arizona. Pastor Jeanne Hossler was a close second. They were the only ones to come up with the correct answer, which was Nadab and Abihu, two sons of Aaron and Moses was their uncle. God brought judgment against them because they offered strange fire unto the Lord. Their story is found in the Exodus 24:9-11 and Leviticus 10:1-2.

Here is this month's quiz.

He called me to come and write a letter

In hopes that things would become a little bit better.

The words that I wrote were very hard and strong

For the people had done many things wrong.

I knew that it didn't matter what he would say,

The people wouldn't turn from their wicked way.

They worshipped idols made out of gold.

They failed to look to God as they been told.

They had more faith in the gods made with their hands

Than in the God that brought them into their land.

I went to the Temple and read it out loud.

I read in front of a very large crowd.

They listened intently to what I had to say,

Then they just led me away.

The ones I read to next were filled with fear.

They thought that the king should be next to hear.

He sat by the fire and as I read The leaves of the book to the fire was fed.

Now tell me my name the name of the one for whom I wrote.

And the name of the king who thought it was a joke.

And if you're first I very glad to say, A candy bar will be yours on the next Sunday.

THE MOMMY TEST

I was out walking with my 4-year-old daughter. She picked up something off the ground and started to put it into her mouth. I took the item away from her and asked her not to do that.

"Why?" my daughter asked.

"Because it's been on the ground, you don't know where it's been, it's dirty, and probably has germs," I replied.

At this point, my daughter looked at me with total admiration and asked, "Mommy, how do you know all this stuff? You are so smart!"

I was thinking quickly. "All moms know this stuff. It's on the M o m m y Test. You have to know it, or they don't let you be a mommy."

We walked along in silence for about 2 to 3 minutes, but she was evidently pondering this new information. "Oh, I get it," she beamed, "So if you don't pass the test, you have to be the daddy."

"Exactly," I replied back, with a big smile on my face.

◆ Received from Ruth Bushnell



KITTENS JOINING THE CHURCH

A mother looked out a window and saw Johnny playing church with their three kittens. He had them lined up and was preaching to them. The mother turned around to do some work.

A while later she heard meowing and scratching on the door. She went to the



window and saw Johnny baptizing the kittens. She opened the window and said, "Johnny, stop that! You'll drown those kittens."

Johnny looked at her and said with much conviction in his voice: "They should had thought of that before they joined my church!"

◆ Received from Joe & Freda Downs

YOU WONDER WHAT THEY WERE THINKING

When his 38-caliber revolver failed to fire at his intended victim during a hold-up in Long Beach, California, would-be robber James Elliot did something that can only inspire wonder. He peered down the barrel and tried the trigger again. This time it worked.

~

An American teenager was in the hospital recovering from serious head wounds received from an oncoming train. When asked how he received the injuries, the lad told police that he was simply trying to see how close he could get his head to a moving train before he was hit.