



CHURCH OF GOD BANNER



www.onalaskachurchofgod.com

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

The Folded Napkin A Truckers Story

I try not to be biased, but I had my doubts about hiring Stevie. His placement counselor assured me that he would be a good, reliable busboy.

But I had never had a mentally handicapped employee and wasn't sure I wanted one. I wasn't sure how my customers would react to Stevie.

He was short, a little dumpy with the smooth facial features and thick-tongued speech of Downs Syndrome. I wasn't worried about most of my trucker customers because truckers don't generally care who buses tables as long as the meatloaf platter is good and the pies are homemade.

The four-wheeler drivers were the ones who concerned me; the mouthy college kids traveling to school; the yuppie snobs who secretly polish their silverware with their napkins for fear of catching some dreaded "truck stop germ," the pairs of white-shirted business men on expense accounts who think every truck stop waitress wants to be flirted with. I knew those people would be uncomfortable around Stevie so I closely watched him for the first few weeks.

I shouldn't have worried. After the first week, Stevie had my staff wrapped around his stubby little finger, and within a month my truck regulars had adopted him as their official truck stop mascot.

After that, I really didn't care

what the rest of the customers thought of him. He was like a 21-year-old kid in blue jeans and Nikes, eager to laugh and eager to please, but fierce in his attention to his duties. Every salt and pepper shaker was exactly in its place, not a bread crumb or coffee spill was visible when Stevie got done with the table. Our only problem was persuading him to wait to clean a table until after the customers were finished. He



would hover in the background, shifting his weight from one foot to the other, scanning the dining room until a table was empty. Then he would scurry to the empty table and carefully bus dishes and glasses onto his cart and meticulously wipe the table up with a practiced flourish of his rag. If he thought a customer was watching, his brow would pucker with added concentration. He took pride in doing his job exactly right, and you had to love how hard he tried to please each and every person he met.

Over time, we learned that he lived with his mother, a widow who was disabled after repeat-

ed surgeries for cancer. They lived on their Social Security benefits in public housing two miles from the truck stop. Their social worker, who stopped to check on him every so often, admitted they had fallen between the cracks. Money was tight, and what I paid him was probably the difference between them being able to live together and Stevie being sent to a group home. That's why the restaurant was a gloomy place that morning last August, the first morning in three years that Stevie missed work.

He was at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester getting a new valve or something put in his heart. His social worker said that people with Downs Syndrome often have heart problems at an early age so this wasn't unexpected, and there was a good chance he would come through the surgery in good shape and be back at work in a few months.

A ripple of excitement ran through the staff later that morning when word came that he was out of surgery, in recovery, and doing fine. Frannie, the head waitress, let out a war hoop and did a little dance in the aisle when she heard the good news.

Marvin Ringers, one of our regular trucker customers, stared at the sight of this 50-year-old grandmother of four doing a victory shimmy beside his table. Frannie blushed, smoothed her apron and shot Marvin a withering look. He grinned. "OK, Fran-

Continued on pg. 2

nie, what was that all about?" he asked

"We just got word that Stevie is out of surgery and going to be okay." "I was wondering where he was. I had a new joke to tell him. What was the surgery about?" Frannie quickly told Marvin and the other two drivers sitting at his booth about Stevie's surgery, then sighed: " Yeah, I'm glad he is going to be OK," she said. "But I don't know how he and his Mom are going to handle all the bills. From what I hear, they're barely getting by as it is." Marvin nodded thoughtfully, and Frannie hurried off to wait on the rest of her tables. Since I hadn't had time to round up a busboy to replace Stevie and really didn't want to replace him, the girls were busing their own tables that day until we decided what to do.

After the morning rush, Frannie walked into my office. She had a couple of paper napkins in her hand and a funny look on her face.

"What's up?" I asked. "I didn't get that table where Marvin and his friends were sitting cleared off after they left, and Pete and Tony were sitting there when I got back to clean it off," she said. "This was folded and tucked under a coffee cup." She handed the napkin to me, and three \$20 bills fell onto my desk when I opened it. On the outside, in big, bold letters, was printed "Something For Stevie." "Pete asked me what that was all about," she said, "so I told him about Stevie and his Mom and everything, and Pete looked at Tony and Tony looked at Pete, and they ended up giving me this." She handed me another paper napkin that had "Something For Stevie" scrawled on its outside. Two \$50 bills were tucked within its folds. Frannie looked at me with wet, shiny eyes, shook her head and said simply: "truckers."

That was three months ago. Today is Thanksgiving, the first day

Stevie is supposed to be back to work.

His placement worker said he's been counting the days until the doctor said he could work, and it didn't matter at all that it was a holiday. He called 10 times in the past week, making sure we knew he was coming, fearful that we had forgotten him or that his job was in jeopardy. I arranged to have his mother bring him to work. I then met them in the parking lot and invited them both to celebrate his day back.

Stevie was thinner and paler, but couldn't stop grinning as he pushed through the doors and headed for the back room where his apron and busing cart were waiting.

"Hold up there, Stevie, not so fast," I said. I took him and his mother by their arms. "Work can wait for a minute. To celebrate your coming back, breakfast for you and your mother is on me!" I led them toward a large corner booth at the rear of the room.

I could feel and hear the rest of the staff following behind as we marched through the dining room. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw booth after booth of grinning truckers empty and join the procession. We stopped in front of the big table. Its surface was covered with coffee cups, saucers and dinner plates, all sitting slightly crooked on dozens of folded paper napkins. "First thing you have to do, Stevie, is clean up this mess," I said. I tried to sound stern.

Stevie looked at me, and then at his mother, then pulled out one of the napkins. It had "Something for Stevie" printed on the outside. As he picked it up, two \$10 bills fell onto the table. Stevie stared at the money, then at all the napkins peeking from beneath the tableware, each with his name printed or scrawled on it. I turned to his

mother. "There's more than \$10,000 in cash and checks on that table, all from truckers and trucking companies that heard about your problems. **"Happy Thanksgiving"**.

Well, it got real noisy about that time, with everybody hollering and shouting, and there were a few tears, as well.



But you know what's funny? While everybody else was busy shaking hands and hugging each other, Stevie, with a big smile on his face, was busy clearing all the cups and dishes from the table.

Best worker I ever hired.

⇒ Received from Peter Wolf

There's work to do, deadlines to meet;

*You've got no time to spare,
But as you hurry and scurry-*
ASAP - ALWAYS SAY A PRAYER

*In the midst of family chaos,
"Quality time" is rare.
Do your best; let God do the rest*
ASAP - ALWAYS SAY A PRAYER.

*It may seem like your worries
Are more than you can bear.
Slow down and take a breather*
ASAP - ALWAYS SAY A PRAYER

*God knows how stressful life is;
He wants to ease our cares,
And He'll respond to all your needs*
ASAP - ALWAYS SAY A PRAYER.

◆ Received from Susan Olsen

ALASKA'S HAPPENINGS

SUNDAYS

MORNING WORSHIP 8:15 AM
& 11:00 AM

SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:45 AM

MONDAY'S

BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION
1:00 PM

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WEDNESDAYS

BIBLE STUDY: HEBREWS
2:00 PM

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SATURDAY DECEMBER 10th

MEN'S BREAKFAST @ LISA'S:
8:00 AM

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CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING:
9:30 AM

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LADIES LUNCHEON:
11:00 AM

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18th

FOOD BANK SUNDAY

~

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

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CHRISTMAS DINNER
FOLLOWING THE 11:00 am SERVICE

~

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24th

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE: 6:00 pm

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25th

CHRISTMAS SERVICES:
8:15 & 10:00 am

**COMMUNITY
EVENTS**

MONDAY, DECEMBER 12th

TEA & PRAISE @
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
10:00 AM

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15th

AMERICAN LEGION
6:00 PM
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

~

**WEDNESDAY,
DECEMBER 21st**

SENIORS ON THE GO
12:00 PM

THE CHRISTMAS STORY CAN
NOT BE TOLD WITHOUT THE
CROSS

WIT'S END CORNER

*Antoinette Wilson
Streams In The Desert*

*Feeling you cannot endure it,
You cannot bear the strain,
Bruised through the constant
suffering,
Dizzy and dazed and numb?*

*Remember at "Wit's End Corner"
Is where Jesus loves to come.*

*Are you standing at "Wit's End
Corner"?
Then you're just in the very spot
To learn the wondrous resources
Of Him who faileth not:*

*NO doubt to a brighter pathway
Your footsteps will soon be moved,
But only at "Wit's End Corner"
Is the "God who is able" proved.*

◆ Received from Ruth Bushnell

OUR CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM:

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

8:15 & 11:00 am

CHRISTMAS EVE:

6:00 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY:

8:15 & 10:00 am



CONFIRMING HEARING FROM GOD

When I was preparing a sermon on the ways God communicates with His children, I was struck by the fact that Satan can and does mimic every method. So how does one know you're hearing from God or from the king of lies? Check it out. Whether it is scripture or not, God doesn't mind you asking, "Is this really you?"

When I pondered whether asking God was "doubting" and lacking faith, I considered the first chapter of Luke. The angel told Zachariah that he was going to have a son. He asks the angel "How can I be sure of this?" and gives his reason for questioning. Mary, later in the same chapter is visited by the angel and told she will give birth to a baby and she asks "How can this be?" and gives her reason for the question. Both asked "how" but we're told Zachariah loses his ability to speak until after the baby is born because of his "unbelief". Mary is only told how, but there is no mention of any "unbelief" on her part.

I'm convinced the key is in the clue "unbelief". Both asked "How" but the heart attitude was apparently different. Gideon asked for a sign and so did Zachariah. Gideon was granted a sign (not once, but twice) and Zachariah was too.

If you think you're hearing from God, ask Him to confirm that it is Him. Don't expect Him to communicate in any particular way (such as scripture or vision or dreams or a sign of some sort), but do trust that He will confirm His communication in His way and His time.

I used to train horses. I started off by reading a book called "Understanding and Training Horses". The emphasis was training horses by understanding how they

react to different stimuli. This is the basis of modern training (vs the old "bronco busting"). The more recent "horse whisperer" takes it even further in studying how horses interact with each other. In other words – how do horses communicate since "words" are not used? It was intriguing to me that I could make this huge animal understand what I wanted, if I had her attention. Sometimes, my horse would get upset or distracted and I'd have to calm her down and try again. I never got upset with her misunderstanding new cues, only with my limited "horse speak" skills. But I usually got her to know what I wanted.

If I, with all my limited ability can make a horse understand what I want, certainly God can make it clear to us what He wants. He has no lack of skill in communicating. So, if I'm not hearing clearly, I'm probably the cause and need to learn to listen better.



Someone may ask, "Why would God want to communicate with me? I'm no one special." Why? Because God made you and loves you with a greater love than you can comprehend. Check out **Psalms 139** or **Isaiah 49:15** or **Jeremiah 31:3**. Believe that God wants to communicate with you. Why else would He preserve His Word or send His Spirit to live within us or allow Jesus die on the cross to make a way for us to be reconciled to God?

Believe He wants to communicate with you and trust Him to make it clear what He wants you to know. Seek Him and He will be found. Trust that He will select the way He communicates. Know that whatever He communicates will always line up with who He is as revealed in the Word. You might find He's been longing to talk with you!

THE EAGLE & THE PRAIRIE CHICKEN

The story is told of a man that was walking through a field one day when he came across an eagle egg lying on the path. He picked up the egg and placed it in the nest of a prairie chicken. As time passed the eggs in the nest all hatched, the chickens and the eaglet. The eaglet looked around at his brothers and sisters and noticed that he didn't look like them, walk like them, talk like them, or fly like them, however he was there when they were all born so he just accepted the differences. One day, the eaglet and his brother were walking down the path and an eagle flew overhead. The eaglet asked, "What is that?" The chicken replied, "That's an eagle. It is the most majestic bird in the sky. See how he soars high above the trees!" The little eaglet bowed his head and said, "I wish I could be an eagle when I grow up." The chicken replied, "Don't even think about it, you are a chicken and you will always be a chicken."

We can listen to the world and fear man and live our lives out as a chicken, or we can put our trust in the Lord and soar like eagles.

ISAIAH 40:31 *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

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Last month's quiz was answered by both Mert Horrocks and my sister Katie.

The answer is found in the 15 chapter of Genesis. It was Abraham and his servant Eliezer.

Here is this month's quiz.

*I an my friends just came from Jerusalem
I stood up and prophesied that famine would fill the land
The disciples believed just what I said*

*And sent relief by two who went a head.
Each gave as much as he could afford
It met the need for that we praise the Lord.*

*Now tell me my name if you think you can
And the name of the two who took the gifts in their hands.
And if you do I'm sad to say I'll have to stump you some other day.*

A LESSON IN LOVE

In his book, *DAD, THE FAMILY COACH*, Dave Simmons tells of an act of sacrificial love that occurred in a shopping mall. One day he took his eight year old Helen and five year old Brandon to the Cloverdale Mall. He needed to buy some tools in Sears. When they pulled into the mall parking lot, there was a big sign that said, "Petting Zoo." Immediately the kids jumped up and asked, "Can we

go, Daddy? Can we go? Please." Seeing that it would be no trouble at all, and concluding that it might even make his trip quicker, Dave said, "Sure," and handed both his kids a quarter. They bolted away as he headed for Sears.

A few minutes later he was making his way down the aisle when he spotted Helen slowly walking up behind him. She looked up at him and said, "Well, Daddy, it cost fifty cents. So, I gave Brandon my quarter." then she said the most beautiful thing of all. She repeated their family motto, "Love is action!"

What do you think he did? Not



what you might think. Dave finished his shopping and then took Helen back to the petting zoo. They stood by the fence watching Brandon go crazy petting and feeding the animals. Helen stood with her hands and her chin resting on the fence just watching. Dave felt fifty cents in his pocket, almost burning a hole, but he never offered it and she never asked for it. Helen was following through with the lesson. Love is not just action. Love is sacrificial action. Love always pays a price. Love always costs something. Love is expensive. When you love, benefits accrue to another's account. Love is for you, not for me. Love gives; it doesn't grab.

WHAT IS LOVE

A group of professional people posed this question to a group of 4 through 8 year-olds "What does love mean to you?" The answers

they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined.

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"Love is that first feeling you feel before all the bad stuff gets in the way."

Charlie - age 5

> > > >

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."

Rebecca - age 8

> > > >

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs."

Chrissy age 6

> > > >

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate."

Nikka - age 6

> > > >

"There are two kinds of love. Our love. God's love. But God makes both kinds of them."

Jenny - age 4

> > > >

"Love is when mommy gives daddy the best piece of chicken."

Elaine age 5

> > > >

"Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day."

Mary Ann - age 4

> > > >

"God could have said magic words to make the nails fall off the cross, but He didn't. That's love."

Max - age 5

◆ Received from Marlana Mulkins

1 Corinthians 13:13 (ASV)

But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.