

THE MEDICINE OF A MERRY HEART

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones
(Proverbs 17:22, NIV)¹

Praising God anyhow, anytime or anywhere

A distinguished looking man was walking by a park bench when he overheard a boy praising God with enthusiasm. He stopped and asked, "What are you so excited about young man?" The boy replied: "O mister our God is so great, it says here in my Bible that God delivered his people from bondage and opened up a way through the Red Sea so they could cross over on dry ground!" Having a background in Bible knowledge, he sat down by the boy in order to enlighten him. "The scholars tell us that the Hebrew word translated 'Red' should be translated 'Reed' Sea. It was a marshy area of reeds adjacent to the Red Sea that often had only 6 inches of water in it. The people could have easily waded through it. It may not have been a miracle but a natural event." The boy looked down at his open Bible with confusion on his face as the man stood up and started to walk away. He had only taken a few steps when the boy began to praise God even with more gusto. The man stopped and asked: "What are you so enthused about now?" The boy replied: "O mister, our God is even greater than I thought. He not only delivered his people but he drowned the army of Pharaoh in only six inches of water!"

Life is often not fair. Bad things can and do happen to good people. A sanctified sense of humor can help us transform tragedy into triumph, pain into praise. The greatest disappointments can become divine appointments and the most difficult circumstances can be a call to praise.

A young pastor was sitting in a restaurant eating lunch. He opened a letter from his mother he had just received. As he opened it a twenty dollar bill fell out. He thought: "Thanks, mom, I could use that right about now." As he finished his meal he noticed a beggar outside on the sidewalk leaning against the light post. He thought: "That fellow could probably use the \$20 more than I." So he put the \$20 back in the envelope and wrote across the top in large letters. "PERSEVERE!" So as not to make a scene, he put the envelope under his arm and dropped it as he walked past the man. The man picked it up and read the message and smiled. The next day, while the pastor was eating his lunch, the same man tapped him on the shoulder and handed him a big wad of bills. Surprised the young pastor asked him what that was for. The man replied, "This is your half of the winnings. PERSEVERE came in first in the fourth race at the track yesterday, and paid 30 to 1."

One never knows what a cheerful act of giving will bring forth.

"A little child shall lead them."

¹ All scriptural quotations are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

A three-year-old regularly watched football games with his father. So much so, that he knew some of the signals the referee makes. On a recent Sunday, the three-year-old attended church with the family. As the pastor raised his hands high to offer a blessing, the child interrupted the service by shouting, "Touchdown!" It took time for the people to recover from their laughter but that bold display of childlike innocence reminds us that when we lift our hands in praise of God with pure hearts we are being blessed, just like when our favorite football team scores a winning touchdown.

A little girl was talking with her mother about how she lived when she was a growing up. The mother said: "Well, we lived on a farm and I had a pony to ride. There was a stream flowing through our farm where I could go swimming. I had a tire hanging from the limb of a tree where I could swing and there was a blackberry patch where I could pick berries." As the little girl heard her mother describe how things were when she was growing up, her eyes got big and she said: "I sure wish I had met you sooner."

A priest at a parochial school, wanting to point out the proper behavior for church, was trying to elicit from the youngsters rules that their parents might give before taking them to a nice restaurant. "Don't play with your food," one second-grader cited. "Don't be loud," said another, and so on. "And what rule do your parents give you before you go out to eat?" the priest inquired of one little boy. Without batting an eye, the child replied, "Order something cheap."

Little Johnny was walking down the beach, and as he did so, he saw a matronly woman sitting under a beach umbrella on the sand. He walked up to her and asked, "Do you go to church every week?" "Yes," she replied. "Do you pray often?" the boy asked next, and again she answered, "Yes." "Do you know the Ten Commandments?" "Yes, I do," she answered, with a smile. "Do you keep them all?" Johnny asked. She nodded her head, "Yes, I do," she said. With that he asked his final question, "Will you hold my dollar while I go swimming?"

A kindergarten teacher gave her class a "show and tell" assignment of bringing something to represent their religion. A boy got in front of the class and said, "My name is Benjamin and I am Jewish and this is the Star of David." A girl got in front of the class and said, "My name is Mary. I am Catholic and this is the Crucifix." Another boy got in front of the class and said, "My name is Belal. I'm a Muslim and this is a prayer rug. Another girl got in front of the class and said, "My name is Mary and I am a Baptist and this is a casserole." Those Baptists sure love their pot-lucks!

A little boy opened the big family bible. He was fascinated as he fingered through the old pages. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible. ! He picked up the object and looked at it. What he saw was an old leaf that had been pressed in between the pages. "Mama, look what I found", the boy called out." What have you got there, dear?" With astonishment in the young boy's voice, he answered, "I think it's Adam's underwear!"

The young son of a Baptist minister was in church one morning when he observed very closely the ordinance of baptism by immersion. He was greatly interested in it, and

the next morning proceeded to baptize his three cats in the bathtub. The kitten bore it very well, and so did the young cat, but the old family cat rebelled. It struggled with him, clawed and tore him, and got away. With considerable effort he caught it again and proceeded with the ceremony. But she acted worse than ever, clawed at him, spit, and scratched his hands and face. Finally, after barely getting her splattered with a little water, he dropped her on the floor in disgust and said: "Fine, just be a Methodist."

It was Palm Sunday, and the family's 6-year old son had to stay home from church because of strep throat. When the rest of the family returned home carrying palm branches, the little boy asked what they were for. His mother explained, "People held them over Jesus' head as he walked by." "Wouldn't you know it," the boy fumed. "The one Sunday I don't go to church, and Jesus shows up!"

A woman was trying hard to get the catsup to come out of the jar. During Her struggle the phone rang so she asked her four-year old daughter to answer the phone. "It's the minister, Mommy," the child said to her mother. Then she added, "Mommy can't come to the phone to talk to you right now. She's hitting the bottle."

Two young boys were spending the night at their grandparents. At bedtime, the two boys knelt beside their beds to say their prayers when the youngest one began praying at the top of his lungs, "I PRAY FOR A NEW BICYCLE AND A NEW PLAYSTATION 2." The older boy leaned over and asked the other, "Why are you shouting? God isn't deaf." The little one replied, "No, but Grandma is!"

A little boy was attending his first wedding. After the service, his cousin asked him, "How many women can a man marry?" "Sixteen," the boy responded. His cousin was amazed and asked, "How do you know that?" "Easy," the little boy said. "All you have to do is add it up, like the preacher said: 4 better, 4 worse, 4 richer and 4 poorer."

A preacher's humble pie

A retired minister was nosing around the house looking for a lost pair of shoes. He discovered a box in the corner of a closet and opened it. It contained a half dozen eggs and a wad of bills that looked like it might be several hundred dollars. The retired pastor asked his wife about the eggs. She said: "Well, every time you preached a boring sermon, I put an egg in the box." His eyes brimmed with tears and his heart swelled with pride as he thought: "Just think in all those years of preaching, in my wife's opinion, I only preached 6 boring sermons." Still he was curious about the large wad of bills. He asked, "what about the money?" "Oh," she said, "That's what I've earned through the years as I sold the eggs."

A servant of the Lord can never take his or her service too seriously. But the Lord's servants may take themselves too seriously as they perform their service. There's nothing like the medicine of a merry heart to mollify those prideful tendencies and put some space between self and service.

No matter what you do, you're not going to please everybody. A church had to hire a new pastor. Over the protests of one vocal male member, a woman was hired as the new senior pastor. After she had been there a few weeks, a member of the congregation offered to take their new pastor fishing. Her most vocal critic reluctantly agreed to allow them to use his boat and to go along. They fished all morning and the pastor didn't get even one bite, while the other two caught their limit. The pastor looked at her watch and said that she had an appointment and would have to leave. They started to pull up anchor but she said that would not be necessary. Getting out of the boat she walked on water back to the shore, got in her car and drove away. After a long pause her detractor said: "I told you so, not only can she not fish, she can't even swim. Even if you can walk on water, you are going to get criticized. But, as Jesus said: "Be of good cheer."

A young minister in his first church was giving a sermon on the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish. He got flustered and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to speak to you on the miracle of how Jesus fed 5 people with 5,000 loaves and fishes. His head deacon was so tickled that he just about fell over in his pew laughing. Realizing his mistake the young minister decided to get his revenge the following Sunday. He said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to speak to you on the story of how Jesus fed 5,000 people with only 5 loaves and 2 fish." Then looking at his head deacon he said: "Sir, I bet you couldn't do that." The deacon replied: "I beg your pardon pastor; I believe I could if I had what was left over from last Sunday."

Keeping a merry heart in marriage

"How did the wedding go?" asked the preacher's wife.
"Just fine until I asked the bride if she would obey and she said, 'Do you think I'm nuts?' and the groom said, 'I do,' and then things really began to happen fast."

My fiancée and I spent months preparing for our wedding. During the ceremony, we planned to recite our vows--without any prompting from the pastor. When the day arrived, we stood face to face in the garden, and Jim was so nervous that he accidentally omitted some of his lines. Nevertheless, I responded with my vows, and we were pronounced man and wife. When our pastor greeted us on the receiving line, I jokingly asked him if our union was legal. "After all," I said, laughing, "Jim flubbed his lines." "You're fine," he replied reassuringly. But as he walked away, he called back, "Just don't get sick!"

Submitted to the Reader's Digest by Amy Babcock

In a moment of frustration after trying to explain something technical regarding the family car; the husband blurted out, "how can you be so beautiful but at times so dumb?" In her most delightful feminine voice the wife replied: "That's easy darling, I'm so beautiful so that you can love me and I am so dumb so that I can love you."

Prior to our wedding, David and I met with the minister to discuss our marriage ceremony and various traditions, such as lighting the unity candle from two individual

candles. Couples usually blow out the two candles as a sign of becoming one. Our minister said that many people were now leaving their individual candles lit to signify independence and personal freedom. He asked if we wanted to extinguish our candles or leave them burning. After thinking about it, David replied, "How about if we leave mine lit and blow out hers?"

Submitted to Reader's Digest by Cara Sue Taucher

A man was walking in the street when he heard a voice. "Stop! Stand still! If you take one more step, a brick will fall down on your head and kill you." The man stopped and a big brick fell right in front of him. The man was astonished. He went on, and after awhile he was going to cross the road. Once again the voice shouted: "Stop! Stand still! If you take one more step a car will run over you and you will die." The man did as he was instructed, just as a car came careening around the corner, barely missing him. "Where are you?" the man asked. "Who are you?" "I am your guardian angel," the voice answered. "Oh yeah?" the man asked. "And where were you when I got married?"

Learning how to argue without hitting below the belt and wounding your partner's spirit is an important skill in building an enduring relationship. My wife and I sometimes use the Bible in our disagreements. One of our favorite books is Proverbs. I might quote Proverbs 21:9, "Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife." Another one of my favorites is: "...a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping" (Prov. 19:13). Then she will remind me that the next verse says, "...a prudent wife is from the Lord." Another one of her favorites is: "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord" (Prov. 18:22). This kind of playful banter can keep the sharp edge off arguments. Truly, the "cheerful heart has a continual feast" (Prov. 15:15).

In a Christian marriage being able to quote chapter and verse can prove to be of great practical value. I heard about a minister who strenuously protested that washing dishes was not a man's job. The pastor's wife replied, "Would you help with the dishes if I could prove to you from the Bible that it is a man's job? Thinking that this was not possible, he confidently said: "If it's in the Bible I will do it." Opening her Bible to 2 Kings 21:13 she read: "I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down" (King James Version). "O.K. you got me," he retorted, you wash and I will wipe." They had discovered the truth of Proverbs 15:13, "A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit."

During the weeks before Amy's wedding, she was terribly anxious about making some mistakes at the ceremony. The minister reassured her several times, pointing out that the service was not difficult and she will do just fine. "All you have to remember," he said, "is that when you enter the church you walk up the AISLE. The groom and best man will be waiting before the ALTAR. Then I shall request the congregation to sing a HYMN... then we shall get on with the ceremony. All you have to remember is the order in which those things happen and you can't go wrong." The happy day finally arrived, and the bridegroom waited nervously for his bride to appear. When she arrived and stood alongside him, he heard her quietly repeating to herself, "Aisle, altar, hymn; aisle, altar,

hymn." It sounded to the groom like she was saying, "I'll alter him!" Now he knew that he was in for it.

When I remind my wife, in the words of Scripture, that I am the head of the home: she often replies, "Yes dear, but I am the neck and the neck turns the head." How often, husbands have been turned in the right direction by a devoted and faithful wife.

In marriage sometimes silence is golden. Two guys from Missoula County are quietly sitting in a boat on Georgetown Lake fishing and making small talk when suddenly Mel says, "I think I'm going to divorce my wife. She hasn't spoken to me in over two months." As Earl makes a cast he says, "You better think it over -- women like that are hard to find."

The generation gap quickly became apparent when I tried to discuss marriage with my daughter, who is very career-oriented. "A husband might not tolerate your ambition forever," I pointed out. "He might become concerned about how such total dedication to a job could fit into a successful relationship." "You don't understand, Dad," my daughter countered. "It's going to be a merger, not a takeover."

Submitted to Reader's Digest by L C Elmore

Wisdom from Grandpa: Whether a man winds up with a nest egg, or a goose egg, depends a lot on the kind of chick he marries. Trouble in marriage often starts when a man gets so busy earnin' his salt that he forgets his sugar. When a man marries a woman, they become one; but the trouble starts when they try to decide which one. If a man has enough horse sense to treat his wife like a thoroughbred, she will never turn into an old nag.

Avoiding emotional extremes

The aspiring psychiatrists from various colleges were attending their first class on emotional extremes. "Just to establish some parameters," said the professor, to the student from the University of Houston, "What is the opposite of joy?" "Sadness," said the UH student. "And the opposite of depression?" he asked of the young lady from the University of Texas. "Elation," said she. "And you sir," he said to the young man from Texas A and M, "how about the opposite of woe?" "The Aggie replied, "Sir, I believe that would be giddy-up."

There's nothing like the spirit of gladness to change ones woes into goes and glows.

Lon and I were involved in a petty argument, both of us unwilling to admit we might be in error. "I'll admit I'm wrong," I told my husband in a conciliatory attempt, "if you'll admit I'm right." He agreed and, like a gentleman, insisted I go first. "I'm wrong," I said. With a twinkle in his eye, he responded, "You're right!"

The ideal place for a happy heart—the Sunday church school.

Sunday after church, a Mom asked her very young daughter what the lesson was about. The daughter answered, "Don't be scared, you'll get your quilt." Needless to say, the Mom was perplexed. Later in the day, the pastor stopped by for tea and the Mom asked him what that morning's Sunday school lesson was about. He said "Be not afraid, thy comforter is coming."

Every Easter our church stages an elaborate pageant. Last year the man who played Pontius Pilate had to work on the night of the dress rehearsal, and a chorus member substituted for him. As we began rehearsing Pilate's solo, the conductor stopped the orchestra. "Pilate, I don't hear you," he called out. "You're not loud enough." "Pilate is at work," a voice on the stage shouted back. "We've got our co-Pilate tonight."

Submitted to Reader's Digest by Bill Dyson

I once heard of a pastor who was offering a series of children's sermons on the symbols of the church. On one Sunday the pastor was speaking about vestments and asked the question, "Why do you think I wear this collar?" The response was soon in coming, "Because it kills fleas and ticks for up to five months."

The Sunday school teacher was carefully explaining the story of Elijah the Prophet and the false prophets of Baal. She explained how Elijah built the altar, put wood upon it, cut the steer in pieces, and laid it upon the altar. And then, Elijah commanded the people of God to fill four barrels of water and pour it over the altar. He had them do this four times "Now," said the teacher, "can anyone in the class tell me why the Lord would have Elijah pour water over the steer on the altar?" A little girl in the back of the room started waving her hand, "I know! I know!" she said, "To make the gravy!"

The Sunday School teacher was describing how Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, when little Jason interrupted, "My Mummy looked back once, while she was driving," he announced triumphantly, "and she turned into a telephone pole!"

A Sunday school teacher was telling her class the story of the Good Samaritan, in which a man was beaten, robbed and left for dead. She described the situation in vivid detail so her students would catch the drama. Then, she asked the class, "If you saw a person lying on the roadside, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?" A thoughtful little girl broke the hushed silence, "I think I'd throw up."

A Sunday school teacher in a church in Las Vegas said to her children, " We have been learning how powerful kings and queens were in Bible times. But there is a higher power. Can anybody tell me what it is?" One child blurted out, "Aces!"

I am told that one can always tell a church going person from Las Vegas. Instead of saying "amen" they say "you bet."

Nine-year-old Joey was asked by his mother what he had learned in Sunday school. "Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he had his army build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. Then, he radioed headquarters for reinforcements. They sent bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved." "Now, Joey, is that really what your teacher taught you?" his mother asked. "Well, no, Mom; but, if I told it like the teacher did, you'd never believe it!"

KIDS WERE ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT THE BIBLE WERE WRITTEN BY CHILDREN. THEY HAVE NOT BEEN RETOUCHEDED OR CORRECTED. INCORRECT SPELLING HAS BEEN LEFT IN...

1. LOTS WIFE WAS A PILLAR OF SALT DURING THE DAY, BUT A BALL OF FIRE DURING THE NIGHT.
2. SAMSON SLAYED THE PHILISTINES WITH THE AXE OF THE APOSTLES.
3. THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT IS THOU SHALT NOT ADMIT ADULTERY.
4. MOSES DIED BEFORE HE EVER REACHED CANADA. THEN JOSHUA LED THE HEBREWS IN THE BATTLE OF GERITOL.
5. THE GREATEST MIRICLE IN THE BIBLE IS WHEN JOSHUA TOLD HIS SON TO STAND STILL AND HE OBEYED HIM.
6. DAVID WAS A HEBREW KING WHO WAS SKILLED AT PLAYING THE LIAR. HE FOUGHT THE FINKELSTEINS, A RACE OF PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN BIBLICAL TIMES.
7. SOLOMON, ONE OF DAVIDS SONS, HAD 300 WIVES AND 700 PORCUPINES.
8. ST. PAUL CAVORTED TO CHRISTIANITY, HE PREACHED HOLY ACRIMONY WHICH IS ANOTHER NAME FOR MARRAIGE.
9. CHRISTIANS HAVE ONLY ONE SPOUSE. THIS IS CALLED MONOTONY!

Smiles from the Bible

Q. What kind of man was Boaz before he married Ruth?

A. Ruthless.

Q. What do they call pastors in Germany?

A. German Shepherds.

Q. Who was the greatest financier in the Bible?

A. Noah. He was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.

Q. Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible?

A. Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

Q. What kind of motor vehicles are in the Bible?

A. Jehovah drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden in a Fury. David's Triumph was heard throughout the land. Also, probably a Honda, because the apostles were all in one Accord.

Q. Who was the greatest comedian in the Bible?

A. Samson. He brought the house down.

Q. What excuse did Adam give to his children as to why he no longer lived in Eden?

- A. "Your mother ate us out of house and home."
- Q. Which servant of God was the most flagrant lawbreaker in the Bible?
- A. Moses. He broke all 10 commandments at once.
- Q. Which area of Palestine was especially wealthy?
- A. The area around Jordan. The banks were always overflowing.
- Q. Who is the greatest babysitter mentioned in the Bible?
- A. David. He rocked Goliath to a very deep sleep.
- Q. Which Bible character had no parents?
- A. Joshua, son of Nun.
- Q. Why didn't they play cards on the Ark?
- A. Because Noah was standing on the deck.
- Q. Why didn't Noah fish on the ark?
- A. He only had two worms, "one of each kind."
- Q. Who was the shortest man in the Bible?
- A. Nehemiah (knee-high miah). Actually there was one shorter, Bildad the Shuhite.
- Q. Where is baseball mentioned in the Bible?
- A. Genesis 1:1, "in the big inning."
- Q. Where is tennis mentioned in the Bible?
- A. In the book of Daniel where he served in the court of the king.

The art of listening

A man is driving down the road. A woman is driving up the same road. They pass each other. The woman yells out the window, "PIG!" Insulted, the man yells back, "COW!" The man rounds next curve. He crashes into a huge pig in middle of the road and dies.

A Catholic priest and a Methodist pastor from two local churches are standing by the side of the road, feverishly pounding a handmade sign into the ground with a large rock. The sign reads: "THE END IS NEAR. TURN YOURSELF AROUND BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!" As a car speeds past them, the driver leans out and says: "Why don't you religious fanatics get off my back." From the curve they hear screeching tires and a big splash. The pastor turns to the priest and asks, "Do you think the sign should just say 'Bridge Out?'"

Thought For the Day: If only men would listen. I am told that the reason there may not be as many men in heaven as women is that they have grave difficulty taking directions.

A merry heart makes all the difference.

There once was a woman who woke up one morning, looked in the mirror and noticed she had only three hairs on her head. "Well," she said, "I think I'll braid my hair today?" So she did and she had a wonderful day. The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and saw that she had only two hairs on her head. "Hmmm," she said, "I think I'll

part my hair down the middle today?" So she did and she had a grand day. The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and noticed that she had only one hair on her head. "Well," she said, "today I'm going to wear my hair in a pony tail." So she did and she had a fun, fun day. The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and noticed that there wasn't a single hair on her head. "Yea!" she exclaimed, "I don't have to fix my hair today!" Attitude is everything.

And the proper punctuation can make all the difference. An English professor wrote these words on the blackboard, directing his students to punctuate it correctly. "Woman without her man is nothing." The men wrote: "Woman, without her man, is nothing." The women wrote: "Woman! Without her, man is nothing." Don't forget to punctuate your life with some holy humor.

A merry heart can face death with a smile.

On the outskirts of a small town, there was a big, old pecan tree just inside the cemetery fence. One day, two men filled up a bucketful of nuts and sat down by the tree, out of sight, and began dividing the nuts. "One for you, one for me. One for you, one for me," said one man. Several dropped and rolled down toward the fence. A boy came riding along the road on his bicycle. As he passed, he thought he heard voices from inside the cemetery. He slowed down to investigate. Sure enough, he heard, "One for you, one for me. One for you, one for me."

He just knew what it was. He jumped back on his bike and rode off. Just around the bend he met an old man with a cane, hobbling along. "Come quick," said the boy, "you won't believe what I heard! Satan and the Lord are down at the cemetery dividing up the souls." The man said, "Beat it kid, can't you see it's hard for me to walk."

When the boy insisted, the man hobbled slowly to the cemetery. Standing by the fence they heard, "One for you, one for me. One for you, one for me." The old man whispered, "Boy, you've been tellin' me the truth. Let's see if we can see the Lord." Shaking with fear, they peered through the fence, yet were still unable to see anything. The old man and the boy gripped the wrought iron bars of the cemetery fence tighter and tighter as they tried to get a glimpse of the Lord. At last they heard, "One for you, one for me. That's all. Now let's go get those nuts by the fence and we'll be done." They say the old man made it back to town a full five minutes ahead of the kid on the bike.

A tough old cowboy counseled his grandson that if he wanted to live a long life, the secret was to sprinkle a pinch of gunpowder on his oatmeal every morning. The grandson did this religiously to the age of 103. When he died, he left 14 children, 30 grandchildren, 45 great grandchildren, 25 great-great grand children, and a 15-foot hole where the crematorium used to be. That's what I call going out with a bang.

Billy Graham told the story about a Southern Baptist gentleman who went to the racetrack. He wasn't a betting man. He went to see the thoroughbreds run. Before the first race the priest went out on the track and blessed one of the horses. When that horse won, he thought it was a coincidence. The priest did the same thing before the second race. And again, that horse won. It happened again before the 3rd race, and that same horse won. When the priest went out before the 4th race the Southern gentleman could

not resist the temptation to wager a few dollars. Half way into the race the horse stumbled and fell dead on the track. The Southern Baptist sought out the priest. How is it that the first three horses you blessed won but the 4th fell down dead? "My son," the priest replied, you must not be a Catholic, you don't know the difference between a blessing and the last rites."

The medicine of grace

A man dies and goes to heaven. Of course, St. Peter meets him at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter says, "Here's how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you've done, and I give you a certain number of points for each item depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in." "Okay," the man says, "I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart" "That's wonderful," says St. Peter, "that's worth five points!" "Five points?" the man asks. "Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithe and service." "Terrific!" says St. Peter. "That's certainly worth three points." "Three points! Well, I also started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for homeless veterans." "Fantastic," says St. Peter. "That's good for two more points." "Two points," the exasperated man cries out. "At this rate the only way I'll get into heaven is by the grace of God." "Bingo, 100 points!" says St. Peter. "Come on in!"

A legalistic attempt to merit the acceptance of God by our own righteousness is bound to failure and frustration. A religion of works ultimately drives all the joy out of life and leaves a person in confusion. How can I know if I have done enough to merit God's favor? Perhaps I have failed at some point. A merry heart is based not upon 'don't' or 'do' but upon 'done,' as we trust in the finished work of Christ on the cross to do for us what we can't do for ourselves. How can we give ourselves spiritual life? We couldn't even give ourselves physical life. But we can receive by faith in Christ God's free gift of eternal life and allow ourselves to be clothed in the perfect righteousness of our Savior. That becomes a well in our innermost being that springs up in joy and gladness.

Cheerfulness in giving

Many people, I've heard it said, are willing to give God credit, fewer are willing to give him cash.

Two men were shipwrecked on a remote island in the Pacific. One of the men immediately started searching for signs of civilization, for food, shelter, any means of survival until rescuers arrived. After several hours of fruitless searching, he returned to the spot where they had washed ashore. He found his partner right where he'd left him, sitting on the beach, staring at the horizon. He began yelling at him, "We're doomed! Why won't you get up and help me look for help?" Slowly, his friend replied, "The week before we left on this voyage, I earned half a million dollars. The week before that, I earned half a million dollars, just like I have for the past two years. I tithe faithfully to my church every week. Don't worry, my pastor will find me!"

A middle aged gentleman with a bad heart received a family inheritance of 1 million dollars. Nobody in the family wanted to tell him. They thought the shock of being an instant millionaire might be too much for his weak heart. So they asked their pastor to convey the news. The pastor used good discretion. He asked him: "What would you do if you inherited 1 million dollars?" "Well, pastor, I think I would give half of it to our church!"- Whereupon the pastor died of shock.

Anyone who thinks, money grows on trees is bound, sooner or later, to get caught out on the end of a limb.

A man was talking to God and out of curiosity asked, "God, what's a million years to you?" God replied, "A second!" The man said, "Okay, what's a million dollars to you?" God replied, "A penny!" The man asked, "God, could I have a penny?" To which God replied, "Sure, in a second!"

One Sunday a pastor told the congregation that the church needed some extra money and asked the people to prayerfully consider giving a little extra in the offering plate. He said that whoever gave the most would be able to pick out three hymns. After the offering plates were passed, the pastor glanced down and noticed that someone had placed a crisp, new \$1,000 bill in offering. He was so excited that he immediately shared his joy with his congregation and said he'd like to personally thank the person who placed the money in the plate. A very quiet, elderly and saintly lady all the way in the back shyly raised her hand. The pastor asked her to come to the front. Slowly she made her way to the pastor. He told her how wonderful it was that she gave so much and in thanksgiving asked her to pick out three hymns. Her eyes brightened as she looked over the congregation, pointed to the three most eligible widowers and said, "I'll take him, him and him." It cost her dearly, but she got her three hims.

One day 3 boys were playing at school during recess. They were taking turns bragging on their fathers. One boy said: My Dad is so smart he writes down a few lines, calls it a poem and gets 50 dollars for it. That's nothing, the second boy said. My Dad writes down a few lines, calls it a song and gets 100 dollars for it. The third boy said: That's nothing. My dad writes down a few lines, calls it a sermon and it takes 4 grown ups to haul in all the loot.

I heard about a lady that was suddenly promoted from substitute to permanent organist. One Sunday the regular organist couldn't play in the Sunday morning service and she asked the substitute to fill in. During the service the pastor made an impassioned plea for extra giving so that the roof of the church could be repaired. He said: any of you that could make a \$100 pledge for this special offering, please stand. It was at this point that the back up organist, on the spur of the moment, came in with a stirring introduction to the Star Spangled Banner. And that's how she was promoted to permanent organist. Now you know the rest of the story.

The heart of humor is the recognition that no matter how good you are you are not perfect and then to smile at your imperfections.

An off-duty police officer, familiar with radar equipment, drove through a school zone within the legal speed limit when suddenly the flash of a camera went off, taking a picture of his car and license plate. The officer, thinking the radar was in error, drove by again; even more slowly. There was another flash. He did it again for a third time, at an even slower speed, with the same result. So, he made a note to himself to contact the traffic department and tell them that their machine wasn't working properly. A few weeks later, the off-duty police officer received an envelope from the police department containing three traffic citations. Each one of them was for NOT wearing a seat belt.

As we read in Scripture: "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10).

During an interview, the employer said to the applicant, "In this particular job, it's very important that we hire someone who is responsible!" The applicant replied, "Then I'm the one you want! In my last job, every time something went wrong, they said I was responsible!"

The merriest of ministers are those who can smile at themselves.

A preacher prepared for Sunday morning service in a rural church but only one person was there. He asked the farmer, "What do you think we should do?" The farmer replied with a drawl, "Well, if only one cow came into the barn, I'd feed it." So the preacher mounted the pulpit and began to preach ... and preach ... and preach. After about two hours, he concluded. Then he stepped down and said to the farmer, "So, what did you think?" The farmer replied, "Well, if only one cow came into the barn, I wouldn't dump the whole load!"

A young clergyman, fresh out of seminary, thought it would help him better understand the fears and temptations his future congregations faced if he first took a job as a policeman for several months. He passed the physical examination; then came the oral exam to test his ability to act quickly and wisely in an emergency. Among other questions he was asked, "What would you do to disperse a frenzied crowd?" He thought for a moment and then said, "I would take up an offering."

A church secretary takes a call. The caller says, "Is the head hog at the trough there?" The secretary says, "Please Sir, do not refer to our pastor as the head hog at the trough. That is very insulting." "Oh, I'm very sorry. I meant nothing by that. It's just a local phrase we use in the part of the country I come from. The real reason I called was to donate \$50,000.00 to your building fund." The secretary says, "Hold on. I see the 'Big Oinker' coming through the door right now."

A pastor was having trouble paying his bills. He went to his board and asked permission to moon-light. The board said: "we wish we could pay you what you're worth pastor, but we are a small church. The pastor applied to the local zoo. The zoo-keeper said: "Our bear, that the children loved so much, finally died. If you are willing to get into this bear costume and be our new bear, you've got the job." The pastor practiced in his costume until he perfected all his bear antics. The children loved him and flocked to see him. One day he decided to really entertain the children. He climbed a tree and scooted out toward the end of the limb. The limb broke and down he came; not in his own cage, but in the lion cage next to his. The lion came roaring out and pounced on him. So he got the lion in a bear hug and began to squeeze tighter and tighter. The lion stopped roaring and said: "not so tight preacher, you think you are the only underpaid pastor in this zoo?!"

Before the service the minister conferred with his song leader. "I think we need to change the opening hymn. Why? I'm preaching on gossip this morning. "I Love to Tell the Story" just doesn't seem like the best choice to me.

It was Memorial Day. A boy was standing in the foyer of a church looking up at a bronze plaque with a list of names on it. The minister walked by and asked: "do you know what that means?" I sure don't, but I would like to." "Well son, that plaque has the names of all the boys in this church that died in the service." The boy looked at the minister with a serious look on his face and asked: "Did those boys die during the first or second service?"

Bringing some holy humor to the discipline of dieting

After starting a new diet I altered my drive to work to avoid passing my favorite bakery. However, I 'accidentally' drove by the bakery this morning. As I approached, there were a host of goodies in the window. I felt this was no accident, so I prayed ... "Lord, it's up to you, if you want me to have any of those delicious goodies, create a parking place for me directly in front of the bakery." And sure enough, on the eighth time around the block, there it was! God is so good!"

If you are having trouble with pastry let me suggest a pasta diet. You drive pasta the bakery with a smile on your face.

Sometimes we just don't get it.

The Lone Ranger and Tonto went camping in the desert. After they got their tent all set up, both men fell sound asleep. Some hours later, Tonto wakes the Lone Ranger and says, "Kemo Sabe, look towards sky. What you see?" The Lone Ranger replies, "I see millions of stars." "What that tell you?" asked Tonto. The Lone Ranger ponders for a minute then says, "Astronomically speaking, it tells me there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, it tells me that Saturn is in Leo. Time wise, it appears to be approximately a quarter past three in the morning. Theologically, it's evident the Lord is all-powerful and we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, it

seems we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you, Tonto?" Tonto is silent for a moment and then says, "Kemo Sabe, you dumber than buffalo chip. Someone has stolen tent."

Hoping to make some money on sales commissions, I took a job as a telemarketer. With a prepared script and a list of 300 names, I started my calls. "Congratulations," I'd say. "You've just won a Christmas ham." For four hours, as soon as I got the opening pitch out of my mouth, the prospects hung up. Meanwhile, the other telemarketers were making sales right and left. When my supervisor came by to check on my progress, I asked what I was doing wrong. "Perhaps it's the list," he said, handing me another one. "You've been calling the members of Temple Israel." By Larry Solomon (obviously he knows how to laugh at himself).

My wife shared a hospital elevator with an employee who was dressed in the traditional "whites" and whose charge was a complex-looking piece of equipment. It was all chrome with a myriad of handles, bars, valves, gauges, dials and inverted bottles. "Gee," my wife said, "I would hate to be hooked up to that machine." "So would I," the attendant replied. "This is a rug shampooer."

A marriage counselor was attempting to find out something about his patient's attitude by asking her some questions. "Did you wake up grumpy this morning?" he asked. "No," replied the woman, "I just let him sleep."

A young man came home weeping. He had gone to propose to his girl and his father eagerly awaited the response. "What happened?" the old man asked. "Did she accept?" "No Pop, she didn't. When I told her what you advised me to, she slapped my face!" "Did you start out by saying what I told you to?" "Honey, time stands still when I look in your eyes." Did you say that?" "Oh, man! I got it wrong! I said, 'Honey, your face would stop a clock!'"

A traffic cop spots a woman driving and knitting at the same time. He says, "Pull over!" "No," she shouts back, "a pair of socks!"

Beware of Signs: Signs may be very good, but your interpretation of the sign may be faulty. I heard of a man who was heading for the racetrack. He got on bus #5 that was traveling down 5th street. He purchased his ticket and went through gate #5 and sat down in seat #5. When he arrived at the ticket booth to bet on race #5 his eye was drawn to horse #5. He thought of all these coincidences and decided that this must be a sign. So he bet all his money on horse #5. Guess what happened? It came in 5th

It reminds me of the farmer that was out in his field harvesting his grain. He was real good as a farmer but couldn't communicate with people very well. He saw a sign in the sky; two big letters, P C. He went to his minister and said: "I have been called to preach Christ. I saw this sign in the sky where 2 letters appeared, P C." The minister replied, "Brother Bill, how do you know those letters didn't mean plant corn?" God may give us a sign but we need a lot of wisdom to know how to interpret its meaning.

Two guys rent a boat and go fishing. They have great success and fill the boat with fish! One guy says, "We need to remember this spot!" The other says, "No, problem. I'll just paint a big X in the bottom of the boat." The first says, "That won't work... how do you know we'll get this boat next time?"

"In everything give thanks."

A 4-year-old boy was asked to give the blessing before Christmas dinner. The family members bowed their heads in expectation. He began his prayer, thanking God for all his friends, naming them one by one. Then he thanked God for Mommy, Daddy, brother, sister, Grandma, Grandpa, and all his aunts and uncles. Then he began to thank God for the food. He gave thanks for the turkey, the dressing, the fruit salad, the cranberry sauce, the pies, and the cakes -- even the Cool Whip. Then he paused, and everyone waited--and waited. After a long silence, the young fellow looked up at his mother and asked, "If I don't thank God for the broccoli will he be mad?"

Teacher in the red

A teacher was trying to make use of her self-esteem courses. She started her class by saying, "Everyone who thinks you're stupid, stand up!" After a few seconds, a child stood up. The teacher said, "Why do you think you're stupid, young man?" "Oh I don't think I'm stupid. I just hate to see you standing there all by yourself!"

A man tells a doctor, "I think my wife's going deaf. What can I do?" The doctor says, "Well, try to test her hearing. Stand some distance away from her and ask her a question. If she doesn't answer, move a little closer and ask again. Keep repeating this until she answers. That way we can see how bad the problem is." The man goes home, sees his wife and says, "Hi honey, what's for dinner?" He doesn't hear an answer, so he moves closer. "Honey, what's for dinner?" He repeats this several times, until he's standing right next to her. Finally, she answers, "For the tenth time, I said we're having Pot Roast!"

"A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down."

To commemorate her 69th birthday on October 1, actress/vocalist Julie Andrews made a special appearance at Manhattan's Radio City Music Hall for the benefit of the AARP. One of the musical numbers she performed was "My Favorite Things" from the legendary movie "Sound Of Music." However, the lyrics of the song were deliberately changed for the entertainment of her "blue hair" audience. Here are the lyrics she recited:

Maalox and nose drops and needles for knitting,
Walkers and handrails and new dental fittings,
Bundles of magazines tied up in string,
These are a few of my favorite things..

Cadillacs and cataracts and hearing aids and glasses,
Polident and Fixodent and false teeth in glasses,
Pacemakers, golf carts and porches with swings,
These are a few of my favorite things.

When the pipes leak,
When the bones creak,
When the knees go bad
I simply remember my favorite things,
And then I don't feel so bad.

Hot tea and crumpets, and corn pads for bunions,
No spicy hot food or food cooked with onions,
Bathrobes and heat pads and hot meals they bring,
These are a few of my favorite things.

Back pains, confused brains, and no fear of sinnin',
Thin bones and fractures and hair that is thinnin',
And we won't mention our short shrunken frames,
When we remember our favorite things.

When the joints ache,
when the hips break,
When the eyes grow dim,
Then I remember the great life I've had,
And then I don't feel so bad.

Ms. Andrews received a standing ovation from the crowd that lasted over four minutes and repeated encores.

While staying at our retreat in the Sierras, I was awakened by loud singing from a nearby cabin. After what seemed like hours of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," and "Ninety-Nine Bottles of Beer," I tried to think of non-hostile ways to let the revelers know just how disturbing the racket was. Finally I walked out on the back deck and sang, to the tune of "Taps": "Day is done, gone the sun, from the hill, from the dale, from the sky. It's two o'clock, I need rest. God is nigh." My serenade was rewarded by a burst of applause and then beautiful silence

Submitted to Reader's Digest by Barbara Elvin

Even our legal system has its humorous side.

Out of curiosity, an accident victim and his lawyer attended a healing revival meeting being conducted by a traveling evangelist who had acquired a large following and a reputation for results. Much to their surprise, they discovered that the evangelist truly had the power to heal. He laid his hands on a blind man and the man jumped up

shouting, "I can see! I can see! Bless you, Brother, bless you!" Then the evangelist touched a deaf man and said, "Tell me your name." The man jumped up, shouting "I can hear! I can hear!" Seeing the accident victim in a wheelchair with multiple casts and bandages, the evangelist approached. The lawyer leaped to his feet. "Don't you dare touch him!" he shouted. "The trial isn't until next week!"

We can smile even in the face of death.

The staff at the office where my wife works was hosting a farewell luncheon for a retiring colleague. As the group prepared to go to the restaurant, they found that they couldn't fit the giant balloon they had purchased for the guest of honor into the car. Undaunted, they simply held the balloon out the window as they drove. My wife and her co-workers weren't prepared for the glares they received from passers-by. As the long line of traffic in front of their vehicle began to turn, they saw that their car was right behind a funeral procession. There was nothing they could do but hold on to the balloon with its farewell message: "Gone but not forgotten."

Submitted to Reader's Digest by David W. Voegel

A passenger in a taxi tapped the driver on the shoulder to ask him something. The taxi cab driver screamed, lost control of the cab drove up over the curb and stopped just inches from a large plate glass window. For a few moments everything was silent in the cab; then the passenger apologized and said he didn't realize that a tap on the shoulder could frighten him so much. The driver said: "'I'm sorry; it's really not your fault. Today is my first day driving a cab. For the last 25 years I have been driving a hearse."

I heard about a person who died and went to heaven. He was interviewing with St. Peter when he suddenly disappeared. St. Peter looked around, "where did he go?" A few minutes later he appeared again. St. Peter was about to open the door of heaven and he disappeared again. This is highly irregular. When he appeared a third time, St Peter asked, "what is going on here?" The person replied, "I don't know. I just know I'm in this hospital and they keep bringing me back."

A Minnesota couple decided to escape the cold and spend a few days in Florida. Due to scheduling problems, the wife flew down a day before her husband did. Upon her arrival, she wrote an E-mail to her husband and sent it, not realizing she had added one extra letter to his address. In Kansas, a minister had just returned from the funeral of his beloved wife of many years. He decided to check his e-mail, and soon gasped loudly and passed out onto the floor. His daughter ran into the room and saw her father on the floor, then saw this message on the computer screen: "To my loving husband: I have checked in and am settled. Everything is ready for your arrival here tomorrow. I can't wait to see you.

Your devoted wife.

P.S. It sure is hot down here!

There were two old gentlemen in their late 80s. Both had been best friends since they were 15 and they loved baseball. They made a pact that when one of them passed

on, he would come back and tell the other if there was baseball in heaven. Well, right after a big Yankees game, one of them died. Two days later the other was awakened late at night by the voice of his deceased friend, "John, is that you?" "Yes Bob, it is me." "John, are you in heaven?" "Yes I am." "Tell me, is there baseball in heaven?" "Well Bob, I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that there is baseball in heaven!" "That's wonderful! Well, what could the bad news be?" "You are pitching tomorrow night!"

The great communicator

Ronald Regan used to tell this story at political rallies. A baseball pitcher stayed home one night to baby-sit their new baby while his wife attended a church function. She had only been there a short time when the young husband called with a desperate tone in his voice. The baby needed to be changed and he didn't have the least idea how to do it. The wife explained it in a very clever way that her baseball player husband could understand. She said; "take the diaper and lay it out like a baseball diamond. Now take second base and bring it down to home plate. Lay the baby in the middle of it. Take first base and third base and fold them over to the pitcher's mound. Now take home plate and bring it up to the pitcher's mound and where they all come together, stick a safety pin. But be careful you don't get rained out." Now that is effective communication.

Humor in retirement

After Christmas, a teacher asked her young pupils how they spent their holiday away from school. One child wrote the following: "We always used to spend the holidays with Grandma and Grandpa. They used to live in a big brick house but Grandpa got retarded and they moved to Arizona. Now they live in a tin box and have rocks painted green to look like grass. They ride around on their bicycles and wear name tags because they don't know who they are anymore. They go to a building called a wrecked center, but they must have got it fixed because it is all okay now, and do exercises there, but they don't do them very well. There is a swimming pool too, but in it, they all jump up and down with hats on. At their gate, there is a doll house with a little old man sitting in it. He watches all day so nobody can escape. Sometimes they sneak out. They go cruising in their golf carts. Nobody there cooks, they just eat out. And, they eat the same thing every night, called early birds. Some of the people can't get out past the man in the doll house. The ones who do get out, bring food back to the wrecked center and call it pot luck. My Grandma says that Grandpa worked all his life to earn his retardment and says, I should work hard so I can be retarded someday too. When I earn my retardment, I want to be the man in the doll house. Then I will let people out, so they can visit their grandchildren."

Since my parents are as much in love today as when they were first married 40 years ago, it was no surprise to watch them glide romantically across the dance floor at my brother's wedding. I got misty-eyed as Dad steered Mom energetically around the ballroom, and it was particularly touching when he waved away anyone who attempted to cut in. "Mom," I said during the band's first break, "it's great to see that Dad still worships

the ground you walk on. He danced every dance with you!" "Oh, no, dear," she stated matter-of-factly. "He just missed his fitness class today and was trying to sustain his target heart rate for 30 minutes."

Submitted to Reader's Digest by Ann Del Vecchi

Facing the aging process with a merry heart

Subject: Humor from Huisman (there are several other stories here which I got from Huisman but I have lost the citation). Aging gracefully:
Some people grow old gracefully, while others fight and scratch the whole way. Andy's wife, refusing to give in to the appearance of growing older, goes out and buys a new line of expensive cosmetics guaranteed to make her look years younger. After a lengthy sitting before the mirror applying the "miracle" products, she asks her husband, "Darling, honestly, if you didn't know me, what age would you say I am?" Looking over her carefully, Andy replied, "Judging from your skin, twenty; your hair, eighteen; and your figure, twenty five." "Oh, you flatterer!" she gushed. Just as she was about to give Andy a big kiss for his flattery, he stops her by saying, "Whoa... hold on there, Sweetie! I haven't added them up yet!"

A couple in their late 80s was having problems remembering things so they decided to go to their doctor to make sure nothing was wrong with them. When they arrived at the doctor's office, they explained to the doctor about the problems they were having with their memory. After checking the couple out, the doctor told them that they were physically okay but might want to start writing things down, making notes to help them remember things. The couple thanked the doctor and left. Later that night while watching TV, the old man got up from his chair and his wife asked, "Where are you going?" He replied, "To the kitchen." She asked, "Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?" "Sure." Then his wife asked him, "Don't you think you should write it down so you can remember it?" "No, I can remember that." "Well, I also would like some strawberries on top. You had better write that down 'cause I know you'll forget that," his wife said. "I can remember that, you want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries." She replied, "Well, I also would like whipped cream on top. I know you will forget that. You had better write it down." With irritation in his voice, he said, "I don't need to write that down, I can remember that." He went into the kitchen. After about 20 minutes, he returned from the kitchen and handed her a plate of bacon and eggs. She stared at the plate for a moment and said, "You forgot my toast."

SPECIAL POEM FOR SENIOR CITIZENS!!

A row of bottles on my shelf
Caused me to analyze myself.
One yellow pill I have to pop
Goes to my heart so it won't stop.

A little white one that I take
Goes to my hands so they won't shake.

The blue ones that I use a lot
Tell me I'm happy when I'm not.

The purple pill goes to my brain
And tells me that I have no pain.
The capsules tell me not to wheeze
Or cough or choke or even sneeze.

The red ones, smallest of them all
Go to my blood so I won't fall.
The orange ones, very big and bright
Prevent my leg cramps in the night.

Such an array of brilliant pills
Helping to cure all kinds of ills.
But what I'd really like to know.....
Is what tells each one where to go!

A distraught patient phoned her doctor's office. Was it true, the woman wanted to know, that the medication the doctor had prescribed was for the rest of her life? She was told that it was. There was a moment of silence before the woman continued, "I'm wondering, then, just how serious my condition is. This prescription is marked 'no refills'."

My feisty 70-year-old neighbor Frances had to call a furnace repairman. After a quick inspection the man put some oil into the motor and handed her a \$70 bill for labor. "Labor charges!" Frances exclaimed. "It only took you five minutes." The repairman explained that his company had a minimum one-hour charge on every house call. "Well, I want my remaining 55 minutes of labor," my neighbor responded and she handed him a rake. He spent the next 55 minutes in her back yard bagging leaves.

A grandma spent the day with her grandson at the zoo. His face was generously sprinkled with freckles. They were standing in line waiting to get their cheeks painted by a local artist who was decorating all the children with tiger paws. "You've got so many freckles, there's no place to paint!" a girl in the line said to the little fella. Embarrassed, the little boy dropped his head. His grandmother knelt down next to him. "I love your freckles." "When I was little I always wanted freckles." Tracing her finger across the child's cheek she said: "Freckles are beautiful." "Why just name me one thing that's prettier than freckles." The little boy thought for a moment, peered intensely into grandma's face, and softly whispered, "Wrinkles."

Three sisters ages 92, 94 and 96 live in a house together. One night the 96 year old draws a bath. She puts her foot in and pauses. She yells down the stairs, "was I getting in or out of the bath?" The 94 year old yells back, "I don't know, I'll come up and see." She starts up the stairs and pauses. "Was I going up the stairs or down?" The 92 year old is sitting at the kitchen table having tea listening to her sisters. She shakes her

head and says "I sure hope I never get that forgetful." She knocks on wood for good measure. She then yells, "I'll come up and help both of you as soon as I see who's at the door."

Making merry at Christmas

At Christmas a man goes through 4 stages. First he believes in Santa Claus. The he doesn't believe in Santa Claus. Third he is Santa Claus. And finally he begins to look more like old Saint Nick.

One for the ladies: According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year (which are the only members of the deer family, Cervidae, to have females do so), Male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually late November to mid-December. Female reindeer retain their antlers till after they give birth in the spring. Therefore, according to every historical rendition depicting Santa's reindeer, every single one of them, from Rudolf to Blitzen.....had to be female.

We should have known this when they were able to find their way.

It was the day after Christmas at a church in a small town. The pastor of the church was looking over the manger scene when he noticed that the Baby Jesus was missing from among the figures. Immediately, he turned and went outside. He saw a little boy with a red wagon and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus. So he walked up to the boy and said, "Well, where did you get Him, my fine friend?" The little boy replied, "I got Him from the church." "And why did you take Him?" The boy said, "Well, about a week before Christmas I prayed to the little Lord Jesus and I told Him if He would bring me a red wagon for Christmas I would give Him a ride around the block in it."

A Sunday school teacher invited her children to draw pictures of the nativity scene. One child had the manger scene with Mary and Joseph and the baby in stick figures. Standing by were the shepherds and the 3 wise men. In the background of the picture there was an airplane and a figure standing next to it which the teacher did not recognize. "Who is this?" she asked the child. He replied: "O teacher you know who that is, it is Pontius the pilot."

Another child had his "Wise Men" in firemen's hats. When the teacher asked why they had hard hats on, she said in her southern drawl: "Teacher you said they came from a faaar."

A five year old was chosen to play the angel for the Sunday school Christmas pageant. He had only one line: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." He was having trouble memorizing it because he didn't understand the words. He asked his mother: "What are tidings?" She answered: "That means news; the angel is bringing good news to the shepherds." "What is behold?" he asked. "That means pay attention, I have something important to announce." So the night came for the play and the boy was standing in his angel's suit in position when the curtains opened and the flood lights came

on. They hadn't rehearsed the flood lights. They shocked him into forgetting his line. But he remembered what his mother told him so he blurted out: "Hey you guys, listen up, do I have news for you!" After several minutes, the play recovered and continued. What his opening line lacked in the dignity of King James speech, it more than made up for in childlike exuberance, which caught the true spirit of Christmas.

Another child was chosen to play the inn keeper in a Sunday school play. When Mary and Joseph knocked on the door of the prop on stage, he was to open the door and declare boldly, "There is no room in the inn!" From there Mary and Joseph were to retire to the facsimile of a stable. He opened the door and said his line, but then his chin began to quiver and he said, "But won't you come in and have a cup of coffee?" Needless to say, that brought down the house. But it illustrated, in an unforgettable way, the openness of children to receive the Savior, the true gift of Christmas.

The joy of fatherhood

Four expectant fathers were in a Minneapolis hospital waiting room, while their wives were in labor. The nurse tells the first man, "Congratulations! You're the father of twins!" "What a coincidence! I work for the Minnesota Twins baseball team!" The nurse returns and tells the second man, "You are the father of triplets!" "Wow, what a coincidence! I work for 3M Corporation!" The nurse tells the third man that his wife has given birth to quadruplets. "Another coincidence; I work for the Four Seasons Hotel!" At this point, the fourth guy faints. When he comes to, the others ask what's wrong. "What's wrong? I work for Seven-Up!"

A cowboy goes to church.

Cowboy Joe was telling his fellow cowboys back on the ranch about his first visit to a big-city church. "When I got there, they had me park my old truck in the corral," Joe began. "You mean the parking lot," interrupted Charlie, a worldly fellow. "I walked up the trail to the door," Joe continued. "The sidewalk to the door," Charlie corrected him. "All I know is the door had a funny brand on it." That was not a brand, it was the logo of the church. "Inside the door, I was met by this dude," Joe went on. "That would be the usher," Charlie explained. "Well, this here wrangler led me down the chute," Joe said. "You mean the aisle," Charlie said. "Then he led me to a stall and told me to sit there," Joe continued. "Pew," Charlie retorted. "Yep," recalled Joe, "that's what that pretty lady said when I sat down beside her."

Having fun with theology

"Prevent truth decay; brush up on your Bible."

I heard about a Catholic priest, a Protestant minister and a Jewish Rabbi who were discussing the question of when life begins. As you would expect, the priest said, "Life begins at conception." The minister said, "No, life begins at birth." The Rabbi said,

"You're both wrong. Life begins when your last child moves out and your 20 year old dog dies."

What do you get when you cross a praying mantis with a termite?
A bug that says "grace" before eating your house.

A doctor an engineer and lawyer were comparing God to their professions. The doctor said: "To remove a rib from Adam's side and make a woman shows amazing surgical skills." The engineer said: "the world was chaotic, 'without form and void.' To bring order out of all that chaos took great engineering gifts." The lawyer replied: "Where do you think all that chaos came from?"

Making melody in your heart

I was talking with a senior adult at our 60 + club. She is living in an assisted living facility. I asked her if she could sing. She replied: "Are you acquainted with the black notes?" I said, "yes, those are the sharps and flats." She said, "are you acquainted with the white notes?" I said, "yes, those are the naturals." She said, "well, I sing in the cracks in between."

Humor in the military

As a brand-new Army officer, I was determined to make a sharp impression in my first assignment. Reporting to the division commander, I snapped my finest salute, causing one of my second-lieutenant bars to pop off my shoulder and land on the major's desk. "Well, pick it up, son," he said. "The last thing we need around here is another 'half-brassed' lieutenant."

One day a young Marine and his commanding officer were aboard a train heading through the mountains of Switzerland. They sat directly across the aisle from a young woman and her grandmother. Before long, the young Marine and the young lady were eyeing each other with mutual attraction. Suddenly passing through a mountain tunnel, it was pitch black in the train for a few minutes. Nothing could be seen in the car of the train, and the only sounds were the smack of a kiss, followed by a slap. When the train emerged from the tunnel, the four people sat without saying a word. The grandmother was thinking to herself: "It was very brash for that young soldier to kiss my granddaughter, and I'm glad she slapped him." The commanding officer was thinking: "I didn't know this young Marine was brave enough to kiss that girl, but I sure wish she hadn't missed him and slapped me instead!" The young woman was thinking: "I'm glad the handsome Marine kissed me, but I wish my grandmother wouldn't have slapped him!" The young Marine sat back with a smile on his face, thinking: "Life is good. How often does a fellow have the chance to kiss a beautiful girl and slap his commanding officer, all at the same time?"

Smiling at racial differences

A black man in Texas wrote this: "When I was born I was black. When I grew up I was black. When I go in the sun I am black. When I get cold I am black. When I get sick I am black. And when I die I will still be black. When you white folks are born you are pink. When you grow up you are white. When you go in the sun you become red. When you get cold you turn blue. When you are sick you get green. When you bruise, you are purple. And when you die you turn gray. So who's calling who colored?"

A merry heart, the 8th great wonder of the world

A group of students was asked to list what they thought were the present "Seven Wonders of the World." Though there were some disagreements, the following received the most votes:

1. Egypt's Great Pyramids
2. Taj Mahal
3. Grand Canyon
4. Panama Canal
5. Empire State Building
6. St. Peter's Basilica
7. China's Great Wall

While gathering the votes, the teacher noted that one quiet student hadn't turned in her paper yet. So she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list. The girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many." The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help." The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the 'Seven Wonders of the World' are:

1. to see
2. to hear
3. to touch
4. to taste
5. to feel
6. to laugh
7. and to love."

The room was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop.

The things we overlook as simple, ordinary & take for granted are truly wondrous! A gentle reminder - that the most precious things in life cannot be built by hand or bought by man. Each day comes bearing its unique gifts. Untie the ribbons with a cheerful heart.

Be of good cheer, life is a piece of cake.

A daughter is telling her Mother how everything is going wrong, she's failing algebra, her boyfriend broke up with her and her best friend is moving away. Meanwhile, her Mother is baking a cake and asks her daughter if she would like a snack, and the daughter says, "Absolutely Mom, I love your cake." Here, have some cooking oil," her Mother offers. "Yuck" says her daughter. "How about a couple raw eggs?" "Gross, Mom!" "Would you like some flour then? Or maybe baking soda?" "Mom, those are all yucky!" To which the mother replies: "Yes, all those things seem bad all by themselves. But when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake!"

God works the same way. Many times we wonder why He would let us go through such bad and difficult times. But God knows, when He puts these things together, they always work for good! We just have to trust Him and, eventually, they will all make something wonderful! God is crazy about you. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, He'll listen. He can live anywhere in the universe, and He chose to live in your heart. I hope your day is a "piece of cake!"

It is with the saddest heart that we must pass on the following news. The Pillsbury Doughboy died yesterday of a yeast infection and complications from repeated pokes in the belly. Doughboy was buried in a lightly greased coffin. Dozens of celebrities turned out to pay their respects including Mrs. Butterworth, Hungry Jack, the California Raisins, Betty Crocker, the Hostess Twinkies and Captain Crunch. The gravesite was filled high with flours. Aunt Jemima delivered the eulogy and lovingly described Doughboy as a man who never knew how much he was kneaded. Doughboy rose quickly in show business, but his later life was filled with turnovers. He was not considered a very smart cookie, wasting much of his dough on half baked schemes. Despite being a little flaky at times, he still, as a crusty old man, was considered a roll model for millions. Doughboy is survived by his wife, Play Dough, two children, John Dough and Jane Dough, plus they had one in the oven. He is also survived by his elderly father, Pop Tart. The funeral was held at 3:50 for about 20 minutes. Rest, Doughboy, before you rise once again.

I cannot tell a lie.

Two young country lads were bored one summer day and decided it would be fun to push over the outhouse. They snuck up like a couple of spies, pushed it over, then ran laughing into the woods. When they returned home later, their father called them over. "Did you two push over the outhouse this afternoon?" he demanded. The older boy nodded. "I learned in school that I cannot tell a lie. Yes, father, we did push over the outhouse." Their father whipped them and sent them to bed without supper. In the morning, he asked them, "Have you two learned your lesson?" "Yes, father," the older boy said, looking confused. "But in school we learned that George Washington admitted to his father that he had chopped down a cherry tree and he was forgiven because he told the truth!" Their father nodded. "That's true. But George's father wasn't IN the cherry tree when he chopped it down!"

Having a good head on your shoulders

Something funny happened to us in Sunday school. My adult class published a membership book with the pictures of the couples and the individuals in our class and a thumb nail sketch under the picture. When Kay and I turned to our picture I was towering over my wife. "Was I standing on a box when that picture was taken?" It just so happened that they had in their files a headshot of me without a body. But they had a full-length picture of my wife with my son, who is 6'3" standing next to her. They cut off his head and put my head on his shoulders. You could tell the head didn't fit the body. We laughed and laughed about it. It was a very innovative thing to do. I appreciated my

wife's comment: "The thing I like best about our tall son is that he has such a wonderful head on his shoulders."

Who says 13 is an unlucky number.

For those who think #13 is an unlucky number, let me point you to the back of a one dollar bill. There were 13 original colonies, 13 signers of the Declaration of Independence, 13 stripes on our flag, 13 steps on the Pyramid, 13 letter in the Latin word above it, annuit coeptis (meaning, he blesses our undertaking), 13 letters in "E pluribus Unum," (meaning, out of one many), 13 stars above the Eagle, 13 bars on that shield, 13 leaves on the olive branch in one of the eagle's talons and if you look closely, 13 arrows in his other talons. To a merry heart there is no 'unlucky' number only days that are blessed by God.

Count your blessings.

When Kristi got home from school, she proudly told her father that she got a 100 in school that day. Pleased, her father told her to sit down and tell him all about it. "Well," Kristi explained, "I got a 20 in math, a 30 in science, and a 50 in spelling!"

The power of the Bible

An elderly woman had just returned to her home from an evening of church services when she was startled by an intruder. She caught the man in the act of robbing her home of its valuables and yelled, "Stop! Acts, 2:38!" ("Repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.") The burglar stopped in his tracks. The woman calmly called the police. As the officer arrived and cuffed the man to take him in, he asked the burglar, "Why did you just stand there? All the old lady did was quote a bible reference to you." "Bible reference?" replied the burglar. "She said she had an ax and two 38's!"

Take heart, you are important in the plan of God.

The Pope had just finished a tour of the East Coast and was taking a limousine to the airport. Having never driven a limo, he asked the chauffeur if he could drive for a while. Without much of a choice, the chauffeur climbed in the back of the limo and the Pope took the wheel. After gleefully accelerating to about 90 mph, the Pope was pulled over by the State Patrol. The trooper came to his window, took a look inside, and said, "Just a moment, please. I need to call in." The trooper called in and asked for the chief. He told the chief, "I've got a REALLY important person pulled over and I need to know what to do." The chief replied, "Who is it a senator?" The trooper said, "No, even more important." The chief asked, "It's the Governor, isn't it?" "No, even more important." "The President?" "No, more important still." "Well, Who the heck is it?!", screams the chief. "I don't know," said the trooper. "But he's got the Pope as a chauffeur."

Let your joys be many and your words be few.

Wanting to join a monastery, a man was told by the head monk that, in order to join, he would be allowed to say only two words a year. The man agreed. After the first year was up, the head monk said, "You've done well this year. What are your two words?" The man replied, "Hard bed." The head monk said, "Okay, well, I'll see what I can do." At the end of the second year, the man was allowed another two words. He told the head monk, "Bad food." The head monk again told him that he would see what could be done. At the end of the third year, the head monk asked for the two words the man wanted to speak. The man said, "I quit." Wanting to join a monastery, a man was told by the head monk that, in order to join, he would be allowed to say only two words a year. The man agreed. After the first year was up, the head monk said, "You've done well this year. What are your two words?"

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"Well, I'm not surprised," the head monk told him. "You've been complaining ever since you got here!"

When people ask me what my ambition is, I tell them: "I want to become everything my dog thinks I am. The thing I like most about my dog is he wags his tail and not his tongue.

THE PATIENT GRANDFATHER

A woman is in a grocery store and happens upon a grandpa and his poorly behaving 3 year-old grandson. At every turn, it's obvious gramps has his hands full with the kid screaming for candy in the candy aisle, cookies in the cookie aisle; same for fruit, cereal and soda. Meanwhile gramps is working his way around saying in a controlled voice, "Easy Albert, we won't be long, easy boy"

Another outburst and she hears gramps calmly say, "It's OK Albert, just a couple more minutes and we'll be outta here, hang in there.

At the checkout, the little terror is throwing items from the cart and gramps again in a controlled voice is saying, "Albert, Albert, relax buddy, don't get upset -- we'll be home in five minutes; stay cool, Albert".

Very impressed the woman goes up to gramps as he's loading the kid and the groceries into the car and says, "You know sir, it's none of my business, but you were amazing in there. I don't know how you did it. The whole time you kept your composure and no matter how loud and disruptive he got, you just calmly kept saying

things would be OK. Albert is very lucky to have you for his grandpa".

"Thanks, lady," said gramps, "but I'm Albert . . . the little monster's name is Johnny".

HOW THE FIGHT STARTED

Officer, this is how the fight started...

I rear-ended the car in front of me. I admit that it was my fault.

So, we both pull over to the side of the road, and slowly the driver of the car I hit gets out of his car.

Well, the driver of the car I hit is a DWARF!

He gets out of his car and I get out of my car.

He is frowning and scowling and he storms over to me.

Right up close at me he looks up in my face and says, "I AM NOT HAPPY!"

And I don't know what possessed me, officer, but I look down at him and I said, "Well, if you're not Happy -- which one are you?"

And that's how I got this shiner.

HOSPITALITY

Many years ago, a Jewish lady named Mrs. Rosenberg was stranded late one night at a fashionable resort on Cape Cod -- one that did not admit Jews.

The desk clerk looked down at his book and said, "Sorry, no room. The hotel is full."

The Jewish lady said, "But your sign says that you have vacancies."

The desk clerk stammered and then said curtly, "You know that we do not admit Jews. Now if you will try the other side of town..."

Mrs. Rosenberg stiffened noticeably and said, "I'll have you know I converted to your religion."

The desk clerk said, "Oh, yeah? Let me give you a little test. How was Jesus born?"

Mrs. Rosenberg replied, "He was born to a virgin named Mary in a little town called Bethlehem."

"Very good," replied the hotel clerk. "Tell me more."

Mrs. Rosenberg replied, "He was born in a manger."

"That's right," said the hotel clerk. "And why was he born in a manger?"

Mrs. Rosenberg said loudly, "Because a jerk like you in the hotel wouldn't give a Jewish lady a room for the night!"

ON HIS FIRST day on the job, a vacuum cleaner salesman was assigned to a backwoods area.

He knocked on a door and was met by a farmer's wife, who asked him what he wanted. The salesman barged past her and said, "I'm selling vacuum cleaners and I want to show you something."

He threw a bucket of dirt on the floor and said, "If my cleaner doesn't pick up all of this, I'll eat the dirt."

The farmer's wife said, "You better start now, 'cause we ain't got no electricity."

NURSES CAN MAKE YOU NERVOUS

The nurse starts with certain basic items. "How much do you weigh?" she asks.

"One-seventy." he says.

The nurse puts him on the scale.

It turns out that his weight is 183.

The nurse asks, "Your height?"

"Five-eleven." he says.

The nurse checks and sees that he's only 5' 8 1/2".

She then takes his blood pressure, and it's very high.

The man explains, "Of course it's high. When I came in here, I was tall and wiry. Now, I'm short and fat!"

WHEN THE DRUGS WEAR OFF

A husband was just coming out of anesthesia after having surgery in the hospital and his faithful wife was sitting at his bedside. His eyes started to open and he quietly uttered, "You're beautiful."

He soon drifted back to sleep and after awhile he woke up and said, "You're cute."

"What happened to beautiful?" she asked him.

"The drugs are wearing off," he replied.

TRAPPED IN PARENTHOOD

Two kids are talking to each other. One says, "I'm really worried. My dad works twelve hours a day to give me a nice home and good food. My mom spends the whole day cleaning and cooking for me. I'm worried sick!"

The other kid says, "What have you got to worry

about? Sounds to me like you've got it made!"

The first kid says, "What if they try to escape?"

DON'T JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS

Hospital regulations require a wheel chair for patients being discharged. However, while working as a student nurse, I found one elderly gentleman already dressed and sitting on the bed with a suitcase at his feet, who insisted he didn't need my help to leave the hospital. After a chat about rules being rules, he reluctantly let me wheel him to the elevator.

On the way down I asked him if his wife was meeting him. 'I don't know,' he said. 'She's still upstairs in the bathroom changing out of her hospital gown.'

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

A pastor was giving the children's message during church. For this part of the service, he would gather all the children around him and give a brief lesson before dismissing them for children's church.

On this particular Sunday, he was using squirrels for an object lesson on industry and preparation. He started out by saying, "I'm going to describe something, and I want you to raise your hand when you know what it is." The children nodded eagerly.

"This thing lives in trees (pause) and eats nuts (pause)..." No hands went up. "And it is gray (pause) and has a long bushy tail (pause)..." The children were looking at each other, but still no hands raised. "And it jumps from branch to branch (pause) and chatters and flips its tail when it's excited (pause)..."

Finally one little boy tentatively raised his hand. The pastor breathed a sigh of relief and called on him.

"Well," said the boy, "I *know* the answer must be Jesus ... but it sure sounds like a squirrel to me!"

THE HONESTY OF A CHILD

One of my fourth graders asked my teacher's assistant, "How old are you, Mrs. Glass?"

"You should never ask an adult's age," I broke in.

"That's okay," Harriett said smiling. "I'm fifty."

"Wow, you don't look that old," the boy said. I was breathing a sigh of relief when another child chimed in, "Parts of her do."

WHY I WEAR TIES

A fleeing al-Qaeda guerilla, desperate for water, was plodding through the desert when he saw something far off in the distance. Hoping to find water, he walked toward the object, only to find a little old Jewish man at a small stand selling neckties.

The Arab asked, "Do you have water?"

The Jewish man replied, "I have no water. Would you like to buy a tie? They are only 5 shekels."

The Arab shouted, "Idiot Jew!
Israel should not exist!"

I do not need an overpriced tie.

I need water!

I should kill you, BUT I must find water first."

"OK," said the old Jew, "it does not matter that you do not want to buy a tie and that you hate me.

I will show you that I am bigger than that.

If you continue over that hill to the east for about five kilometers, you will find a lovely restaurant. It has all the water you need.

Shalom."

Muttering, the Arab staggered away over the hill.

Several hours later he staggered back, near collapse -

"Your brother won't let me in without a tie!"

DON'T MESS WITH THE TOOTH FAIRY

My seven-year-old son informed us that part of his tooth had come out. We checked and, sure enough, a piece had broken off. Trying to lighten the moment, I asked my husband, "What do you suppose the tooth fairy gives for half a tooth?" "Nothing," he replied, "She wants the tooth, the whole tooth, and nothing but the tooth."

PINCHING PENNIES

The strongman at a circus squeezed the juice from a lemon between his hands. He then said to the audience, "I will offer \$200 to anyone in the audience who can squeeze another drop from this lemon.

A thin scholarly looking woman came forward, picked up the lemon, strained hard and managed to get a drop. The strongman was amazed. He paid the woman and asked, "What is the secret of your strength?"

"Practice," the woman answered. "I was the treasurer of a Church for thirty-two years!"

THE LAZY SON-IN-LAW

A very successful businessman had a meeting with his new son-in-law. "I love my daughter and now I welcome you into the family," said the man. "To show you how much we care for you, I'm making you a 50-50 partner in my business. All you have to do is go to the factory every day and learn the operations."

The son-in-law interrupted, "I hate factories. I can't stand the noise."

"I see," replied the father-in-law. "Well then you'll work in the office and take charge of some of the operations."

"I hate office work," said the son-in-law. "I can't stand being stuck behind a desk all day."

"Wait a minute," said the father-in-law. "I just made you a half owner of a profitable corporation, but you don't like factories and won't work in an office. What am I going to do with you?"

"Easy," said the young man. "Buy me out!"

My friend Agnes is an accomplished harpist who frequently plays for weddings, receptions, parties, and other such events. She is also blonde and has an appropriately cherubic face.

She was on her way to an engagement at the Peabody Hotel

in Memphis, and she stepped into an elevator with her large golden harp. Just before the doors closed, a distinguished gray-haired man stepped on. As the elevator rose, he looked thoughtfully first at her and then her harp and asked,

"And just how far up are you going?"

GOD'S COUNTRY

A man in Topeka decided to write a book about churches around the country. He started by flying to San Francisco and started working east from there.

Going to a very large church, he began taking photographs and making notes. He spotted a golden telephone on the vestibule wall and was intrigued with a sign, which read, "Calls: \$10,000 a minute."

Seeking out the pastor he asked about the phone and the sign. The pastor answered that this golden phone is, in fact, a direct line to heaven and if he pays the price he can talk directly to God.

The man thanked the pastor and continued on his way. As he continued to visit churches in Seattle, Dallas, St. Louis, Cleveland, Milwaukee and other major cities he found more phones with the same sign and the same answer from each pastor.

He finally arrived in Iowa. Upon entering a church in Des Moines he saw the familiar golden telephone but THIS time the sign read, "Calls: 35 cents."

Fascinated, he asked the pastor, "Reverend, I have been in cities all across the country and in each church I have found this golden telephone and have been told it is a direct line to heaven and that I could talk to God, but in the other churches the cost was \$10,000 a minute. Your sign reads only 35 cents a call. Why?"

The pastor smiled and replied, "Son, you're in Iowa now. You're in God's Country. It's a local call."

PERSEVERENCE

A young pastor was sitting in a restaurant eating lunch. He opened a letter from his mother he had just received. As he opened it a twenty dollar bill fell out. He thought: "Thanks, mom, I could use that right about now." As he finished his meal he noticed a beggar outside on the sidewalk leaning against the light post. He thought: "That fellow could probably use the \$20 more than I." So he put the \$20 back in the envelope and wrote across the top in large letters. "PERSEVERE!" So as not to make a scene, he put the envelope under his arm and dropped it as he walked past the man. The man picked it up and read the message and smiled. The next day, while the pastor was eating his lunch, the same man tapped him on the shoulder and handed him a big wad of bills. Surprised the young pastor asked him what that was for. The man replied, "This is your half of the winnings. PERSEVERE came in first in the fourth race at the track yesterday, and paid 30 to 1."

One never knows what a cheerful act of giving will bring forth.

A little girl was talking with her mother about how she lived when she was a growing up. The mother said: "Well, we lived on a farm and I had a pony to ride. There was a stream flowing through our farm where I could go swimming. I had a tire hanging from the limb of a tree where I could swing and there was a blackberry patch where I could pick berries." As the little girl heard her mother describe how things were when she was growing up, her eyes got big and she said: "I sure wish I had met you sooner."

GIVE 'EM THE GOSPEL

As a young minister in Kentucky, I was asked by a funeral director to hold a Grave-side service for a homeless man, who had no family or friends. The funeral was to be held at a new cemetery way back in the country, and this man would be the first to be buried there.

I was not familiar with the backwoods area, and I soon became lost. Being a typical man, I did not stop to ask for directions. I finally arrived an hour late.

I saw the backhoe and the open grave, but the hearse was nowhere in sight.. The digging crew was eating lunch. I apologized to the workers for my tardiness, and I stepped to the side of the open grave. There I saw the vault lid already in place. I assured the workers I would not hold them up for long, as I told them that this was the proper thing to do.

The workers gathered around the grave and stood silently, as I began to pour out my heart and soul. As I preached about 'looking forward to a brighter tomorrow' and 'the glory that is to come,' the workers began to say 'Amen,' 'Praise the

Lord,' and 'Glory!' The fervor of these men truly inspired me. So, I preached and I preached like I had never preached before, all the way from Genesis to Revelations.

I finally closed the lengthy service with a prayer, thanked the men, and walked to my car. As I was opening the door and taking off my coat, I heard one of the workers say to another,

'I ain't NEVER seen nothin' like that before, and I've been puttin' in septic tanks for thirty years.