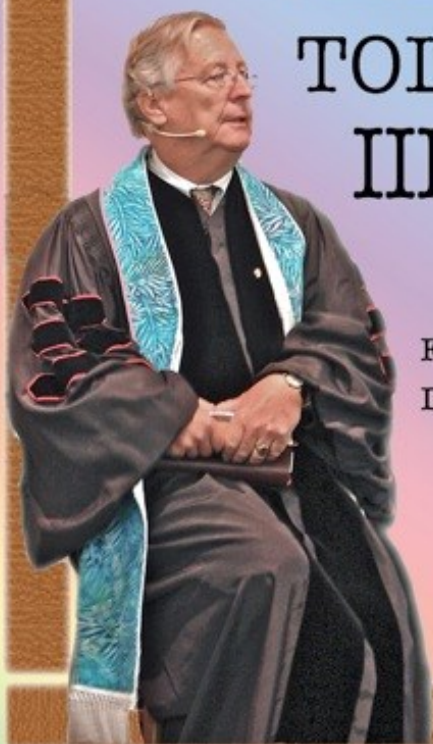


# “STORIES I HAVE TOLD” III



By  
Frank Leeds III  
D. Min., S.T.M.

Book 3

## Forward

The push from **Jewel and Walter Jacques** to get some of these stories into print has now reached the third such booklet. The booklets have been freely distributed to various shut-ins and many have been sold by the church's mission committee whereby 100% of the proceeds have gone to provide food for the homeless. Our church purchases, cooks, and serves thousands of meals for the home-less each year.

Helping me again, for the third time, has been my friend **Ron Priest**. Whether he is in Florida or out of state, he has been readily available to me for pictures and advice and I cherish his valuable insights. He has even gone so far as to provide covers for future publications. They may be a Stories IV, but other one's being plan is my longer story of "The Turquoise Man" and then one more which would be designed for my grandchildren which would be "My Spiritual Journey".

I have been blessed with five grandsons and I plan to live long enough to see how their lives develop. At least I want to get a little more peek into the future that I will not be able to see in its fullness.

Another person who has graciously entered my life and has provided enormous help with this booklet is **Rose Hailey**. When she thought I was missing a picture, she provided one. She is the one who made sure the pages flowed and did the necessary layouts that I am so ignorant about. Thank you Ron. Thank you Rose.

Throughout these booklets, I often mention the power of a story. I have ended this booklet with an example that has brought me great personal joy. A long time ago I told the story of the lobster to a four year old. I hope you enjoy what my four year old son did with that story many years later. His story has been read by hundreds of thousands. It has been circulated in military publications, in class room training seminars, in church newsletters, and blogged about over the internet.

To the congregation at Oakhurst...Thank you for listening.

Frank Leeds III

## **When You Lose Your Job**

The sexton at the village church had been doing a great job cleaning for some 20 years. When the new priest arrived, he left a note for the sexton but the sexton could not read. He took the note to the new priest and explained that reading was not one of his skills. The priest apologized and said the sexton would have to find a new job. He did not want a sexton who could not read and the fact that the gentleman has been doing a great job for 20 years did not matter.

Losing his job, he walked slowly down the street to his home. On the way a gentleman stopped him and inquired as to where the closest tobacco shop might be. "I have searched all over and I cannot find one." The sexton thought for awhile and although he lived in that community all of his life, he did not know of any either.

When he arrived home, and not knowing how he was going to support himself now that he was jobless, the idea hit him. "Why not open a tobacco shop?" And so, he did just that. With no competition in the community, it was so very successful that he opened a second shop, and then a third. All of this time, he had been keeping his money at his home but he figured it was time to open a bank account.

Carrying a very large sack of money to the bank, he walks in and tells the teller he wants to open an account. Looking at the size of the satchel carrying all this money, he gets the president of the bank to sit down with the man. When the president of the bank gives the man the forms, he tells him right up front that he cannot read.

"What!" explains the bank president. "If you can make all of this money without the ability to read, what do you think you would be doing if you knew how to read?" "If I knew how to read," Said the man, "I would be the sexton at the village church."

## A Love Story

Have you ever moved, not because you wanted to, but because you had to? Have you ever experienced a time in your life when it just “soured”?

*Hope would not be possible were there no such things as real progress, and there would be no real progress unless there were those who chose to be pilgrims. M. Scott Peck, M.D.*

*There is no discouragement, shall make him once relent, his first avowed intent, to be a pilgrim. John Bunyan*

This story is about a family. There is a husband, his wife and two sons. They have a farm, but the rains have ceased. Some of the families in the town where they live have been able to survive, but this family is beginning to fear for their lives. The famine in the land is rapidly eating at them rather than their eating of the harvest. Some of us are externally motivated. We wait for the situation to change. Others of us are internally motivated and we asked, “*what must I do given this situation?*” It is an old story, so it is possible that the husband made the decision. I am from the school of thought that believes “*if mamma isn’t happy, no one is happy*”, so I am sure she had a say in the matter. There were also two young teenage children to deal with. I can only guess what their role was. Regardless, the decision was made for them to move in the search of a better life.

The family moves from their town to a town a considerable distance away. It is not only on the opposite side of a large sea, but their move to an entirely different culture. There are strangers in a new land. When they finally arrive to their new location, the father dies.

We quickly learn that the main character in this story is not going to be the father. The family of four has now been reduced to three. Both sons then marry and so we have the family now at five persons. They survive as a family of five for ten years until both sons died. Now we are back to just three—all women.

So, we have the mother, without her husband, and without her two sons. There is just she and her two daughter-in-laws. About the same time, she hears the rumors that the famine in her own country is over and she wants to return home.

So, the mother prepares to get on the long road and to make the journey back. As she does, she meets with her two daughters-in-law and she says to them:

I am too old to have another husband, and even if I did and had sons, it would be years before I would be able to give you another husband. I am bitter, but there is no sense in all of us being bitter. Go back to your family. One of them then kissed her mother-in-law and left. The second one then said, "I am not going to leave. I will stick with you until you die and that is the end of this discussion."

So, the two women make this very long journey back to the birthplace of the mother-in-law. When they arrive back at the city, the women of town look at her and say, "Can this be the woman we called Blessed?" The mother-in-law replies, *"don't call me blessed, call me bitter because that is what God has done to my life. He has made it bitter. I left this town full but I come back empty. I am not blessed, but bitter."*

Now the two women are left with the next issue which is how does one survive now that we are back? The mother-in-law says to her daughter, we have a system in our country whereby the farmers are not allowed to take in all that they grow. They are required to leave some of it on the ground for the poor. Go to the farm and see if you can pick up any grain for us. She leaves, goes to a farm, and it belongs to a Mr. B.

Mr. B. happens to take notice of this young woman and he inquires of his foreman as to whom this woman might be. He tells her that she is the daughter-in-law of the bitter woman who recently returned. Mr. B. is impressed, so he goes to the daughter-in-law and tells her to stay on his farm, that there is no need for her to ever go elsewhere. She is as shocked by his kindness as he was impressed by the way she has treated her mother-in-law.

As time unfolds, several things happen. The daughter-in-law ends up marrying the very well off farmer Mr.B.

They have a child, and the women of the town come to the mother-in-law and announce that this child will *“renew your life and sustain you in your old age.”* Remembering how bitter in life this lady was, a renewed life is quite a gift.

As for this child, they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse and the grandfather of King David.

For the complete story that is told above, it is found in the Old Testament In the Book of Ruth. It is this book, more than any other, that is the backbone of the and the underpinnings of the Christian Holiday of Pentecost. The over-all theme of Pentecost is: It is the Lord who gives—we receive. The Lord gives in three ways: 1. Thru the law; 2. Thru the harvest; and 3. As is the book of Ruth. It is the Book of Ruth that was studied at each Pentecost service. Nowhere in the story does one see the hand of the Lord at work. When the story is over however, **one can see the hand of the Lord in everything.**

I have told you enough of the story to hopefully entice you to read the book of Ruth. If you are young, there will be much that you may not understand. If you have many years to look back upon your own life, you know. You have seen it. You have experienced it. It has become the foundation for your perspective on your future.



## THE REUNION HEART

Since Heaven has become your home  
I sometimes feel I'm so alone  
and though we now are far apart  
you hold a big piece of my heart



I never knew how much I'd grieve  
when it was time for you to leave,  
or just how much my heart would ache  
from that one fragment you would take.

God lets this tender hole remain  
reminding me we'll meet again  
and one day all the pain will cease  
when He restores this missing piece.

He'll turn to joy my every tear  
with thoughts of you I hold so dear,  
it will become my special way  
to treasure our Reunion Day.

-B Waggoner

Remembering Evelyne Leeds Cerrone

## Best Preacher Ever

One of the long time members of our church, Horace Danforth, said to me one day, *"Pastor, I want you to know that you are the best preacher ever."* *"Thank you Horace"* I said. *"I am delighted you think so."*

He then said to me, *"Aren't you going to ask me why?"* I wasn't prepared to ask him why, I was just going to accept the compliment with gratitude. So I said, *"Tell me Horace, why do you think so?"* With the straightest of face he said to me *"Because my doctor has limited me to one cup of coffee per day."*

There is a long pregnant pause and then he said, *"But when you preach the doctor allows me two cups so I can stay awake."*



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***Just because the cheese in the  
mousetrap is free, it doesn't mean  
the mouse will end up happy!***





## **Context Determines Everything**

An Amish farmer had not been to town in many years and his children keep telling him that the little town has changed with highways and skyscraper building now dotting the landscape. They encourage him to go into town but he resisted. Then one day, he finds himself alone on the farm and decides to 'check it out'.

So, he hooks up his carriage to the horse, put his pet dog on board, and headed toward town. He is shocked to see the entrance to the road now a large ramps that goes up to what his children called 'the highway'. He drives up the ramp and soon he is driving along the highway when cars go speeding by. He is only on the road for a minute or two when a corvette comes plowing into the back of his carriage and he and his dog and his horse going flying in the air and the car turns over.

It did not take long before the police and ambulance arrive and they are both drivers are taken to the hospital. Shortly thereafter the situation goes to court in search of the guilty party. When the Amish farmer arrives in court, he is wearing a neck brace and can barely walk. The attorney for the car driver has a fit and tells the judge that when the police came to check on the farmer at the accident site that he told the police that, "I never felt better in my life." The judge asked the farmer if that was true and he said, "Yes sir, that is exactly what I said." Noticing the strong contrast between how the farmer looked and what he told the police, has the man to explain the context.

The farmer says to the judge, "Context, what does that mean?" The judge says, "Just tell me what happened before you told the policeman that you never felt better in your life." The farmer said, "When the policeman arrived, he looked at my dog and said, the dog will never survive and he took out his gun and shot my dog. Then he walked by my horse and said 'this horse has a broken leg' and he shot my horse. Then he got to me and said, 'how do you feel?' and I told him, 'I never felt better in my life'.

***A sick man turned to his doctor as he was preparing to***

***Leave the examination room and said,***

***'Doctor, I am afraid to die.***

***Tell me what lies on the other side..'***

***Very quietly, the doctor said, 'I don't know..'***

***'You don't know? You're a Christian man,  
and don't know what's on the other side?'***

***The doctor was holding the handle of the door;  
On the other side came a sound of scratching  
and whining,***

***And as he opened the door, a dog sprang into the room***

***And jumped into his master's arms.***

***The Dr. said, the dog has never been in this room but  
he knew his***

***Master was here. That is all it takes.***



Dogma is something that one affirms to be true. It is a truth statement. Most of think the choices are between belief and non belief, or truth and non truth, regarding the realities of life, but I show you this little structure that I think helpful. The process or the choices read left to right.

We have:



[what is disbelieved is another dogma]

So you will find there are some things in life you believe. Other things you may believe, but have some doubts. You may also believe but have some real difficulties. Finally, you may simply not believe something or disbelieve it, which is a dogma about something else.



## **Family Roots**

When my grandfather was about 50 years old, he announced to the family that he had never found his 'mission in life' and decided to leave the family and not return until he found it. Today we would call that a mid-life crisis.

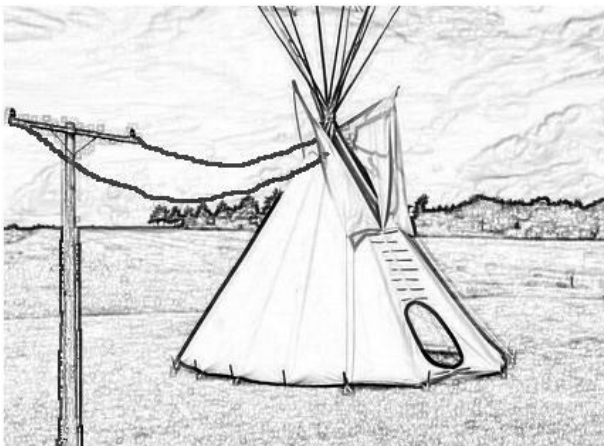
So, he left town and headed west. He wasn't sure where he was going, he was just sure that he would know what he was looking for when he found it. As he was driving through a back road in Arizona, he came across an Indian hitching a ride, so he stopped and gave him a ride. It was getting late and because he and the Indian hit it off immediately, the Indian invited my grandfather to spend the night with his people. He was assured that they had an extra Tee-Pee for guest and that he would be treated very kindly and warmly by the entire tribe. He would also be able to stay as long as he wished.

So, that is exactly what he did. The Indian was exactly right. Everyone was more than kind and gracious to him. He was given his own Tee-Pee and he sleep very well. My grandfather had reached the age however that in the middle of the night, he needed to use the Pee-Pee Tee-Pee [if you know what I mean]. As he stepped outside his Tee-Pee, there was no moon and the sky was really dark. It was so dark that he had a terrible time finding the Pee-Pee Tee-Pee. It was a rather traumatic experience for him.

When he awoke in the morning, he had discovered his mission in life. He went into town and bought a light bulb and some wire and came back and hooked up the light bulb in the middle of the Pee-Pee Tee-Pee. That night when he woke up to use the Pee-Pee Tee-Pee, he stepped out of his Tee-Pee and sure enough, the Pee-Pee Tee-Pee could be seen with a nicely lit glow and he found it with ease and with a smile on his face.

The next morning when he awoke, he knew that he had found his mission in life, had fulfilled it, and was now free to return home to his family.

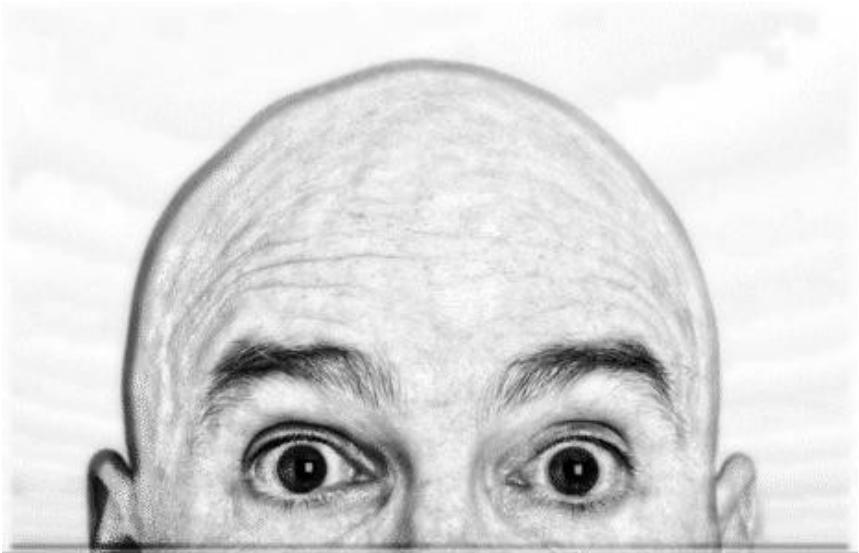
Now I realize that a story like this has absolutely no value to you. But I ask you to look at it from my perspective. Do you realize that I am a direct descendent of the first man to ever “wire a head for a reservation”?



## Mixed Priorities

A bald man who always wore a toupee had just moved into a new home and there were no window treatments. That night after moving all day, he took a shower in the dark and did not want to turn the lights on because he neighbors were all outside in their yard and could see into his house.

After his shower, he walked into his bedroom that had a large picture window and he could see all his neighbors sitting outside. Standing their buck naked and in the dark, his wife entered the room, and not knowing he was there, turned on the lights. Standing there without a stitch of clothes on, with all of his neighbors looking at him, he quickly placed his hands on his head.



### **Mortality:**

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?  
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,  
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,  
He passes from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,  
Be scattered around, and together be laid;  
And the young and the old, the low and the high,  
Shall molder to dust, and together shall lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved;  
The mother that infant's affection who proved;  
The husband, that mother and infant who blessed;  
Each, all, are away to their dwelling of rest.

The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in whose eye,  
Shone beauty and pleasure—her triumphs are by;  
And the memory of those who loved her and praised,  
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.

The hand of the king that the sceptre hath borne,  
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn,  
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave,  
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap,  
The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up the steep,  
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread,  
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

The saint, who enjoyed the communion of Heaven,  
The sinner, who dared to remain unforgiven,  
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,  
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.

So the multitude goes—like the flower or the weed  
That withers away to let others succeed;  
So the multitude comes—even those we behold,  
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same that our fathers have been;  
We see the same sights that our fathers have seen;  
We drink the same stream, we feel the same sun,  
And run the same course that our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking, our fathers would think;  
From the death we are shrinking, our fathers would shrink;  
To the life we are clinging, they also would cling—  
But it speeds from us all like a bird on the wing.



They loved—but the story we cannot unfold;  
They scorned—but the heart of the haughty is cold;  
They grieved—but no wail from their slumber will come;  
They joyed—but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died—aye, they died—we things that are now,  
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,  
And make in their dwellings a transient abode,  
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea, hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,  
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain;  
And the smile and the tear, the song and the dirge,  
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye—'tis the draught of a breath—  
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,  
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud  
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

The Lonely Hearth, the Songs  
of Israel, Harp of Sion, and  
Other Poems



## The On/Off Switch?

I managed hospitals for over ten years. In my first one, the pathologist came into my office late one afternoon and requested an orderly to assist him with an autopsy. I did not have an extra orderly to give him so I explained to him that I did not have one, but that I would be happy to assist him unless it required some expertise that I did not have. He said that would be fine. He just needed two more hands and basically to take pictures.

I had never seen an autopsy so I figured I could be helpful and also learn something. It was quite an experience. As he removed the heart and handed it to me and I stood there with a human heart in my hand, I semi-jokingly but also seriously asked him, *“where is the on/off switch?”*

On one hand, I did not expect to see an on/off switch, but then again the curiosity was over-powering. “Once a heart is stopped for surgery as an example, how does one get it started again?” Did you ever think about that?

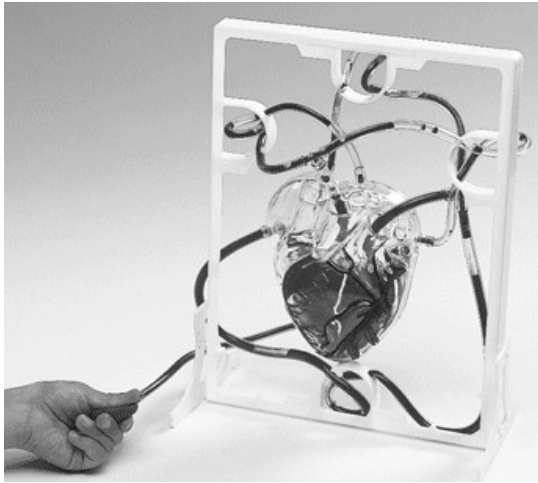
“Oh” said the pathologist. “It is all in the blood. Stop the blood flow to the heart and it stops. Pour blood back in and it restarts. Life is in the blood.”

In years past, I had studied the “Cutting of a Covenant” in which our ancient ancestors made all significant contracts with the shedding of blood. Without the blood, there was no

contract. It was said that the most precious thing in life was blood. That is why a contract required it. It revealed the importance of the contract. It was foundational to a contract.

I then thought of the Bible, both old and new testaments.  
*"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin."*

***The next time you participate in a communion service...may you reflect on this little story.***



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***I sought myself and sought my God, and neither could I see.  
But when I sought my neighbor, it is there I found all three.***

## **The Federal Reserve Bank And the power of a wink**

It was my first and last 'Sting Operation' and I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. My class was privileged to take a bus trip from Atlantic City, N.J. to the Federal Reserve Bank in Philadelphia. On the way there, the tour guide from the Fed stressed repeatedly that the security was so tight that no one would ever be able to steal from the facility. The first time he said it, I was impressed. The second time he said it, I was bored. The third time he said it, I was challenged.

When we got to the bank, I could not believe all of this money being moved around on fork- lifts and stored in rooms that looked like cell blocks that I had seen in prison movies. The tour guide was sure right, this place was locked up tight and no one was going to take any money out of this bank. Then I understood why he stressed the security so strongly.

Then I saw it. There was an old small empty canvass bag with the words, "Federal Reserve Bank" written on it and laying on a metal - table. It was so old that I assumed it was going to the trash. At least that is how I justified my helping the bank get rid of it.

When we got back on the bus for our trip home, there were some old newspapers on the bus that the teachers had been reading and my friends and I took a section with us to the back of the bus. Sure enough, the lecture came again about no one could ever take anything from the bank. The challenge was simply too much for me. I ripped up the news paper, filled the little bag, and put a dollar bill on top. A dollar bill was a huge sum

of money back then for an 8<sup>th</sup> grader. My friends also chipped in and we had as I recall \$4.00 on the top of the newspaper that filled the bag.

Sure enough, when the guide stressed the security one more time, I was ready for it. As I sat in the back of the bus, I merely held the bag up in the air with the “Fed” showing. The guide looked at me but said nothing as he tried to figure out what it was. I then said, “I do not believe it was that secure.” It was then that he walked toward me, looked at the bag, and I thought he was going to have a stroke.

As he began to open the bag and saw the money on top, the look on his face said it all. What does that commercial say? “Priceless!”

As he went through the bag further and saw all the newspaper in it, and the money only coming to \$4.00, he knew it was a joke. No one dared to laugh. When the bus arrived back at school, you guessed it. I was taken to the principal’s office with my friends and had to defend why we should get our dollars back. The principal tried to act tough with us, but his wink to me and his attempt to hide his smile more than covered his disciplinary scolding.

I never found out what happened to the old canvas bag.



## Thinking Positively

I try to think positively. On a plane one day, the gentleman who sat next to me sat down and immediately started to complain about the weather, and I told him I lived in Florida and loved the weather. He complained about the airlines, and I mentioned how much better it was for me to fly rather than drive my car. He complained about the cost and I mentioned it was cheaper to fly than drive. Are you starting to get the picture?

To top it off, before the plane took off, a large group of college aged students got on the plane. They not only were loud and boisterous getting on but they all carried soccer balls. He complained about all of this and I commented on how nice it was to have young people involved with healthy activities such as soccer.

When the plane landed, we all got announcement you have all heard repeatedly. *"Items in the overhead compartment have a tendency to shift during flight so please be careful when opening the over-head compartments."* As the over-head compartments were being opened, soccer balls were dropping on people's head all over the plane.

With that, the gentleman next to me said, *"Well poly-Anna, what positive thing do you have to say about that?"*

I replied, *"Isn't it great that they are not all on the bowling team?"*



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***Prayer is our radical response to the mystery we call life.***

## The Value Of A Cup Of Coffee

When I was serving a church in New York City, I received a call one day asking me to do a graveside funeral service for a woman that I had never met. The funeral director picked me up at the church on this cold gray foggy day and the two of us drove a considerable distance to the cemetery. When we got there, it was like something out of a horror movie. It was almost too foggy to see the hole in the ground. The grave diggers trying to stay out of sight, hid behind a tree in their yellow rain suits. There were only four people in attendance and that included the funeral director and me. The other two people were the deceased brother and a next door neighbor.

When the service was over, I gave my card to the elderly gentleman who was the brother and said, *"If there is anything I can ever do for you, please give me a call."* I thought I would never hear from him. He called me the next day. *"Would you please call me once a week to make sure I am still alive? I don't want to die and be left in my apartment for an extended period of time."*

I agreed, and called him every week. After several weeks, he asked me to take him to the store for some medical supplies which I did. When I entered his apartment, I immediately got the picture. He and his two sisters lived together in a rent controlled apartment which they had lived in since or before the great depression. It had not been painted in over 50 years. Apparently if one painted or fixed it up in any way the rent went

up. They had only one lamp in the center of the room with a low wattage bulb in it. They shut the old refrigerator off each night to save money. It was pure survival mode. His shirt was so threadbare that while we were out, I offered to buy him a new shirt. He agreed but upon entering a men's store, the price of a shirt was so high that it gave him an anxiety attack. I think the last shirt he ever bought cost him about 50 cents and seeing a price tag of \$15.00 was more than he could stomach.

A few days later, he had me take him to the bank. He took care of his business while I waited and then I took him home. On the way to his apartment, he told me that he attended a meeting once and after the meeting a gentleman was walking home from that meeting and they were going in the same direction. The fellow asked him if he would like cup of coffee and the two of them stopped, had coffee and the other fellow treated him. He gave me that fellows name and phone number and said to me, *"When I die, please tell him how appreciative I was. No one ever bought me a cup of coffee before. He was the only one."*

A few weeks after that, I received a call from the police. The call said they were in the apartment of an elderly gentleman who had died and on the wall in big letters was written, IN CASE OF DEATH, CALL DR. LEEDS and my phone number. He also left instructions that I was to bury him.

He died without a will, but I later received a call from the bank and/or someone who handles probates. When I had taken this gentleman to the bank that day, he had assigned his bank



books to a few charities. I was not privileged to this information. But one of them I was. I was asked about the gentleman whose name and number I had. It was the fellow that had once bought him a cup of coffee. In appreciation for that act, he was left \$25,000. I had the joy of making that phone call to tell him.

I tell you this story because we never know where people are coming from and what experience they have had. This gentleman had polio as a child. He lived in fear all his life. It was just he and his two sisters brought together in a survival mode. He had no friends. When someone offered to buy him coffee and to spend a few minutes with him, the act of doing so was powerful enough to be remembered for the many years that he had remaining. It was the greatest single act that anyone had ever done for him.



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***We rarely think out way into a new way of acting.***

***We act our way into a new way of thinking.***

## **When Life Sours**

In the course of a ten minute walk near my very tiny home in Michigan, I saw three people that made me ask myself, "I wonder how that felt?"

The first gentleman was about 20 yards ahead of me. He was someone I had been introduced to many years earlier and I know of some family connection to him. What little I know of that man is what made me ask myself that question, "I wonder how it felt?" As a young man he was a surgeon. With a medical degree and a surgical residency behind him, he was standing near a small plane with his young son and when his son moved too close to the spinning propeller, he reached out to grab his son and got hit by the propeller himself. Instantly his surgical career was over. His hand was damaged beyond repair.

The second gentleman was walking the other way and on the other side of the court yard that divided us. He too was someone that I know very little about but his wife and my daughter are friends. This fellow is also a physician. He is an emergency room physician. He came home from work one day and announced to his wife that he wanted to give up being an emergency room physician and to find another occupation. The Medicare laws were such that he found himself writing notes all day and answering the same 12 questions over and over again. He claimed he went to school to take care of patients not to be a writer.

As I saw him walk the other way I said to myself, "I wonder what that felt like?" One goes through all those years of medical school and residency and then decides that this is not what I

want to do. That has to be a terrible feeling.

After these two encounters at a distance, the third person is coming right towards me in her motorized wheelchair. Now this good-looking lady is someone that I have never met but one in which I have a strong but strange emotional tie to.

Let me explain as succinctly as possible what I mean. Many years ago when I was a seminary student, I was a consultant with the Suicide Prevention Clinic of Denver. One day we received a call from a hospital asking if we would come see a suicidal patient who was in a car accident and had just 'given up'. I was sent to see her and spent no more than a half hour with her. By the time I got back to the office, the hospital had called singing the praises of this miracle worker who had changed this lady's life around so dramatically and in such a brief period of time. They begged to have this young fellow to come back as often as possible and to spend time with other patients. I was most flattered and feeling pretty good about myself after that.

When I returned to the hospital, they gave me an office and set me loose to do my thing. The very first patient I called on was flat on his back in bed and after a few minutes of talking with him, I got nothing back but a glassy eyed stare. I then went to the nurses' station to read the medical record. There I discovered that this young man, engaged to be married, was walking down the street under a covered construction site when a brick fell and went through the slot where the walk way was covered , and the brick hit him in the head. He was paralyzed from the chin down. When I read this, I went outside by my car and threw up. This was a tragedy that I found unbearable. I also

knew then that I was as they say “way over my head.” I left and never went back to that hospital. Shortly thereafter, I read an article about some young lady that did a dive off a diving board and came back down on the board and hitting her head became paralyzed. This was a very similar story that brought back all of these feeling. A few years after that I read an article about this lady becoming a Christian. Later I read that she was drawing with a pencil in her teeth and the paper being held on a pad above her head. Over the years, I have encountered stories of her from various sources. Each time I would say to myself, “Whoever talked with her was sure better at it than I.”

Now, back to my original story: The woman in the powered-wheelchair that was coming right at me was the woman mentioned above, the one I had read about over the years.

Life can dish out some terrible stuff. At the same time, let me fill you in on these three people.

The first gentleman who could no longer be a surgeon went on to become a successful psychiatrist. His son, another close neighbor, is a hand surgeon.

The emergency room physician, in telling his wife all of the problems with his needing to write all of the notes that he refused to do anymore, developed a software product that allowed him to use a computer to do all of this writing and with a few key strokes made his life much more simplified. It was so successful for him, that other hospitals use the same software. This software product grew to be very large and successful and secured his financial future when he sold the company.

I purposefully left off the names of the above physicians. Each person has a right to tell their own story and I told you a little of it to show you how it affected me. As for the woman in the wheelchair, I will readily tell you her name because her life has been used so significantly. She is Joni Eareckson Tada. I have been able to witness first hand just a small portion of her work and my wife and I have been so impressed by it that we volunteer two weeks each summer to help out with her camps for those children and families dealing with a variety of developmental disabilities.

I have no interest in glorifying some of the sour events that life brings. At the same time, this little walk of mine that I describe above, reveals to me the present reality that some really 'bad stuff' can turn out pretty good. The Bible is filled with such stories from Joseph having a bunch of sleazy brothers that sell him to the present stories that I just shared.

When souring comes your way, it may very well be your finest time.

Note: You may want to google "Joni Eareckson Tada" or "Joni and Friends" to see what an abundance of really good stuff has flowed through this woman's life.

## **When Things Go Wrong**

When we started a paper recycling program at the training center for adults with developmental disabilities, my first customer and highly significant partner in this endeavor was the Florida Power Corporation. The major utility companies of the world belong to an organization called The Edison Electric Institute in which they share common research. Because the disposal of waste paper is common to all of them, I was invited to address their conference which was held in Corpus Christi, Texas. At that time, I was able to explain what we were planning to do. During the following year, several of the power companies came to our facility and toured our warehouse and watched it operate.

The following year, I was invited to again address this group at a hotel adjacent to the University of Syracuse. As I am about to give my presentation on the success of our operation, I receive an emergency phone call. Succinctly, the message was,

“As your truck left the nuclear power plant in Crystal River, your driver failed to close the back door of the truck. As a result, the truck load of confidential papers is now strewn all over the roadway from the power plant and throughout the City of Crystal River.”

What a night-mare!!! When you make a mess, you clean it up. My warehouse was two hours from Crystal River. I have a warehouse full of disabled students. I really do not have staff to send. I am in New York. I send whomever I could to start cleaning up. I send three telegrams all to apologize. One was sent to Florida Power, one to the City of Crystal River, and a third to Citrus County Government.

What a disaster, and now it was time for my speech about the success of the project. I started my speech with the things that can unexpectedly go wrong. I then went into the successes.

But here is my point, I had only one customer and it was Florida Power. After the fiasco which was our fault, the City of Crystal River and Citrus County Government were so impressed with what we were attempting to do, that they asked if they could be our customers also. We now had three customers and that became the beginning of an entirely different operation.

***Things can and do go wrong in life. When they do, opportunity often follows and when you least expect it.***



***The more you have in the window for display,  
the less you have in stock.***

## **Who Am I**

There are those who are convinced they know themselves rather well. I am of the mind that we can never know ourselves, by ourselves. We learn much about ourselves from the feedback of others. There are also times where that feedback is in total conflict of what we think about ourselves to be true. The following was written by a gentleman put into jail because of his plot to assassinate Adolph Hitler. While he is in jail, his fellow inmates think one thing of him while he himself thinks something else. His fellow inmates think he walks around the prison like a Squire but he thinks differently.

***This is my favorite poem.***

### ***Who Am I?***

Who am I? They often tell me  
I stepped from my cell's confinement  
Calmly, cheerfully, firmly,  
Like a squire from his country house.

Who am I? They often tell me  
I used to speak to my warders  
Freely and friendly and clearly,  
As though it were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me  
I bore the days of misfortune  
Equably, smilingly, proudly,  
Like one accustomed to win.



Am I then really all that which other men tell of?  
Or am I only what I myself know of myself?  
Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,  
Struggling for breath, as though hands were  
compressing my throat,  
Yearning for colors, for flowers, for voices of birds,  
Thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness  
Tossing in expectation of great events,  
Powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,  
Weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,  
Faint, and ready to say farewell to it all?

Who am I? This or the other?  
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?  
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,  
And before myself a contemptibly woebegone weakling?  
Or is something within me still like a beaten army,  
Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?  
Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.  
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am Thine!  
--Dietrich Bonhoeffer



## Tyndall

The name William Tyndall may not mean much to any of you. You have heard me say repeatedly that languages do not always line up where a translator merely substitutes one word for another in translation. Many words are 'picture' words. One has to understand the picture to catch its meaning. One who was able to do that for both Hebrew and Greek and then to create his own new expressions or phrases was William Tyndale

It was not only his linguistic skills in these two languages that is so outstanding but it is impossible to over-praise the quality of Tyndale's writing. Its rhythmical beauty, its simplicity of phrase, its crystal clarity have penetrated deep into the bedrock of English today wherever it is spoken. Approximately 75% of his wording is now found in the King James Translation of 1611 and his words and phrases now circle the globe.

His phrases that we still use today are:

- Scapegoat
- Let there be light
- My brother's keeper
- Filthy lucre
- Fight the good fight
- Sick unto death
- Flowing with milk and honey
- The apple of his eye
- A man after his own heart
- The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak
- Signs of the times
- Ye of little faith
- Eat drink and be merry
- Broken-hearted

- Clear-eyed
- Fisherman
- Landlady
- Sea-shore
- Stumbling-block
- Taskmaster
- Two-edged
- Viper
- Zealous
- 100s more including the word “beautiful” that only referred to human beauty before Tyndale.

Although I knew it before, it has been reinforced to me that language, like people, develops over time. As our children grow and mature, they learn more and more words. Eventually, words are added to account for new experience, new technology, new discoveries. Words! They can tear one down, build one up, disable, enable, discourage, or encourage.

May our words be a solid reflection of our values as we use them...because they are powerful...and we cannot take them back once we let them go.

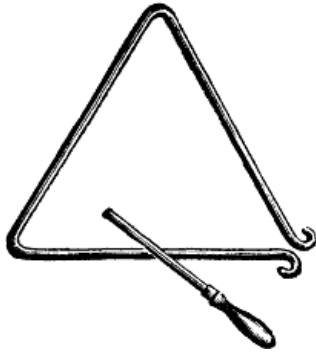
*The Adventure of English...a biography of a language,*

by Melvyn Bragg



## A Biblical Lifestyle:

Three 'road signs' I share with you to judge where you are on the road of life. I look at it as a triangle with three points and we live within these three.



At the top, we have the Golden Rule: *You shall love the Lord you God with all your heart soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself.*

On the bottom right we have the Micah mandate: *What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* Micah 6:8-9

The third one is often lost because of partial theft by hedonism: The hedonist says to “eat *drink and be merry* **for tomorrow we die.**” The biblical accent is “to eat drink and be merry—**for this is the gift of God.**”

***As your life rings with the sound of the music of living,  
may it ring with responsible love and gratitude.***

## Beef Jerky

On a few occasions, my wife and I have met with Stephen Bly. He has written scores of cowboy books, and poems about cowboys. As a Christian, he blends his stories into his faith. The last time we were with him and his wife, he was fighting a significant battle with cancer and returned to his Lord about a year ago.

One of his stories is about jerky and various sorts and how it saved the West. He describes it as the time before refrigeration and the cowboy could fill his pockets with this meat that did not spoil and thus was able to carry this energy source with him. It was small, it was compact, and it would sustain one's life. It was a key factor in settling the west.

In the same way, he encouraged his readers to memorize bible verses. I had never heard anyone make the association between jerky and bible verses, but Stephen Bly was a different kind of person with different life experiences on his ranch in Idaho than my life which centered on living near the beach.

Memorizing scripture is spiritual jerky. It is what the psalms say about "hiding the word in your heart". Memorize a verse and you will be stuffing your pockets with spiritual jerky.



## Healers Beware

While at the University of Illinois in Carbondale to give a presentation, I was having a cup of coffee when some people I knew, as well as those I did not, joined me at a large table. Introductions were made and if you are like me, it is difficult to remember anyone's name when the intros are over. One of the men was Henry and all I knew was that he had what I thought was a German accent. I was invited to a large luncheon later that day and discovered that the key note speaker was this Henry. It turned out to be Father Henri J.M. Nouwen and his accent was not German but Dutch.

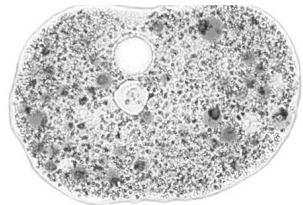
I had never heard of him and had never read any of his books, but to hear him speak made me want to read his books. This man was outstanding and I would recommend all of his works to you. One of his works is entitled, *The Wounded Healer*. The title alone speaks volumes.

My youngest daughter is a licensed clinical social worker and I am concerned for her and for those of you in the healing professions, where you deal with the pains of life day in and day out. It is essential for you to ground yourself in the larger picture, to balance your life with all that is good, and to keep yourself strong. The healer does become 'wounded'.

## **The Ameba:**

I am not a zoologist, but the smallest animal I am aware of is the ameba. It is just a blob. Have you ever seen one under a microscope? In watching those years ago, I noticed a trait that I thought was interesting. This little thing in a pool of water would have 'particles' floating toward them. As the particle reached them, they would surround it by wrapping itself around this tiny particle. Some of these particles would be absorbed into the ameba. Other particles were simply discarded. That may not seem note worth to you, but in comparing that behavior to myself and other humans, I noticed a significant difference. I have a tendency to discard via a prejudgment before embracing it. Have you ever thrown something out before you knew what it was? Have you ever pre-judged? The ameba embraces before it decides.

This little primitive form of life has something to teach us. Embrace first. Then it is OK to judge as to what nourishment is and what is trash.



## **The Lobster:**

I love seafood. Soft shell crabs are one of my favorite foods, but hard shell crabs are great too. I love lobsters and I have enjoyed both the hard and soft shell lobsters over the years. These creatures give us a lesson in life also.

There comes a time in the life of a lobster when it has to make a decision. It has a hard shell. It is safe and it is comfortable. But it is small. The decision is this: If it stays within its shell, it will never grow and it will die. If it sheds its shell, i.e. crawls out from the security of it all, it will be scared to death. Having lost its protection, it will shrink into a corner, stay away from life threatening creatures of the sea, and feel terribly uncomfortable — but it will grow and grow quickly. It will then develop another shell and once again feel strong, secure, and protected, but it will be a whole lot bigger.

There are times when we all have to crawl out of our shells and to face a new reality.

### **Power of a Story:**

In the introduction to these stories in both booklet I and II, I commented on the POWER of a story told by someone who loves you. Many years ago, I told a four year old the story of the lobster and I end this little booklet with a commentary taken directly from Air Force PRINT NEWS TODAY. I quote verbatim.

### **Leave your shell behind; the lesson of the lobster**

2/29/2012 - FAIRCHILD AIR FORCE BASE, Wash. (AFNS) -- As a child growing up in New York City, I didn't have much, but I did have a pet lobster and an early philosophy lesson (okay, it was actually a crayfish, but in my youth I didn't know the difference).

Every morning when I woke, the first thing I did was run to the fish tank to see my "lobster." One morning, a rather appalling sight greeted me: a hollow shell. It looked like the lobster, but it had become transparent, it lacked tentacles and it was definitely not moving.

My father reassured me that he wasn't dead and gone; he had shed his shell and was watching us from behind a rock. But why was he hiding? My father explained the lobster was vulnerable without his shell, and he hid to seek safety.

I don't remember how old I was when this happened, but I found fault with this explanation: "If the lobster needs to be safe and he's safe inside his shell, then why would he ever leave his shell?" In answering this question, my father sprung my first philosophy lesson on me: "If he never leaves his shell, he never gets any bigger."



Throughout my life, the number of times I've reflected on that lesson is astounding. Safety is essential, but it's not our purpose. We are programmed for growth; it's in our DNA. People from all walks of life face frequent choices between these two imperatives: to leave our "comfort bubbles" and dare something new, or to play it safe? Tragically, many choose to deny themselves life's challenges in order to play it safe and, like Shakespeare's cowards, they "die many times before their deaths."

This is not to suggest we should be anti-safety. Safety is a mindset that serves us well -- especially when we "leave our shells" -- but pursued as an ultimate end, results in nothing. Like the lobster, we ought to think of growth as the given assumption and safety as a way to manage all the vulnerabilities that go with it.

The Air Force term for growth is "professional development." That kind of growth requires us to change jobs, take new assignments and even live in new countries. In each new environment, we listen more, and we learn fast. We harden our shells with the confidence of new knowledge, and, at the end of the process, we are "bigger" in our minds and safe, too. We thrive, we lead.

Until the itch to leave our shells begins again.

Commentary by Lt. Col. Oliver Leeds  
92<sup>nd</sup> Air Refueling Squadron Commander

