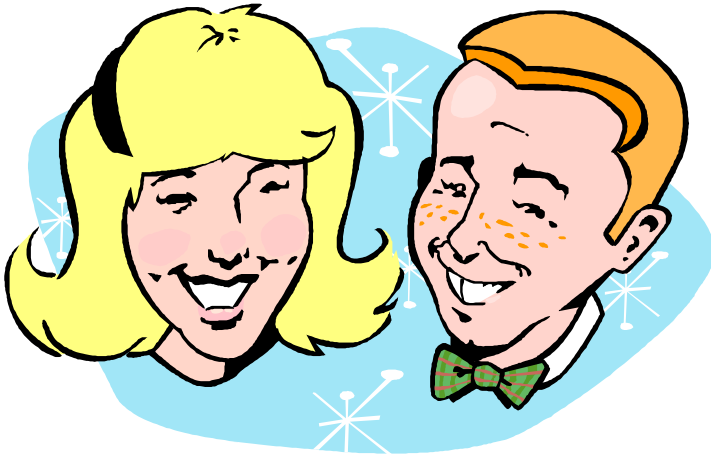


Booklet 14

Helps for Young People



***I Have All These Plans
My Weird Mom***

I Have All These Plans ...

Jim Burns answers your questions

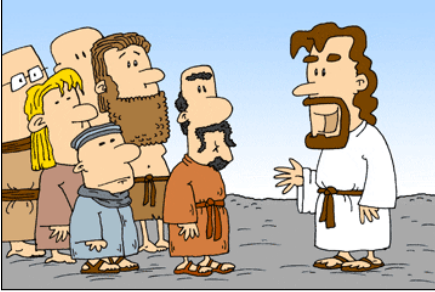
I am a born-again Christian and excited about Jesus returning someday. However, I have to admit I'm uncomfortable with the idea he could come back any minute. Some people say he'll be back very soon, and I feel like I'm running out of time to live my life. Heaven will be amazing, but I'm only 15 and want to grow up, become a missionary, fall in love, and be a wife and mom. But what if Jesus comes back before that?

First things first. Jesus was quite clear about his second coming, and he said, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matthew 24:36, NIV). It is very apparent that no one really knows when Christ will come back, so don't be worried by the predictions you hear.

When that time comes, heaven will be more amazing than we can ever imagine. I love what the Scripture says about eternity with God: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9, NIV). If he does come back while you and I are alive on Earth, I have a feeling you won't even miss your old life. In fact, I believe we'll be so happy with our new lives in his presence that the lives we left here will pale in comparison.

Still, I understand that it's scary thinking that we might not get to finish what we've started here on Earth. I applaud you for being so honest and in touch with your feelings. So what should you do? Well, it sounds like you are planning on living your life to the fullest. That's great. Enjoy life. Make plans. Take advantage of all God gives you.

At the same time, prepare yourself spiritually. Stay close to God and read and think all you can about eternity with him. When a person has an "eternal perspective," I truly believe they not only will become more excited about spending eternity with the Lord, but they will have much more fulfillment and purpose in this life.



09-09-2004

THE WINNER OF "THE DISCIPLE" WILL GET TO GIVE UP ALL EARTHLY POSSESSIONS AND FOLLOW ME THROUGH ALL LEVELS OF HARDSHIPS



When I need a lift, God gives me a push.

My Weird Mom

All my friends thought Mom was real cool, but I sure didn't see it.

fiction by Sheri Cobb South

"Read chapter six, and do the questions at the end," instructed Mr. Walker, my chemistry teacher, snapping his textbook shut as the bell signalled the end of class. "Oh, one more thing: I'll be gone tomorrow, and I'm going to ask Mrs. Blakeney to be my substitute."

The rest of the class cheered. I cringed.

"Mrs. Blakeney" is my mom. And she'd been subbing at my school an awful lot lately. Lucky me.

I gathered up my books and tried to become invisible. My mom was making my life a misery. It's not that I didn't love her; it's just that she's, well, a little strange.

My best friend Rachel didn't give me much time to stew over it, though.

"Come on, Heather!" she called, waiting impatiently for me at the door.

Why can't my mom be more like Rachel's? I wondered as Rachel and I left the classroom together. Rachel's mother is a former Miss Teen America runner-up, and she's still gorgeous, even though she must be 40 years old. Rachel looks just like her mom, but she's more interested in basketball than beauty pageants.

"I'm glad your mom is gonna sub for Mr. Walker tomorrow," Rachel said. "By the way, how did her court date go?"

I grimaced. Was there anybody who didn't know about Mom being arrested for disturbing the peace?

"The judge threw it out of court," I said. "He said there's no law against singing while you do yard work, as long as it's not too loud. Besides, if you want to get technical, it was really Mr. Mitchell's Labrador that disturbed the peace. How could Mom know it was her singing that made the stupid dog start howling?"

We'd reached Rachel's locker by this time, and as she spun the combination lock, I caught a flash of purple glitter.

"Hey, I like your nail polish," I said.

"It's not bad," she said, giving her shiny purple fingernails a cursory glance. "Mom bought it at Mais Oui."

I gave a sigh of pure bliss. "French cosmetics! I can't wait for your birthday! We *are* still going to Mais Oui for your birthday, right?"

Rachel, shoving books around in her locker, didn't look up. "Heather, would you be devastated if we didn't?"

"*Not go?*" I whined. "After your mom promised to take us for beauty makeovers?"

"Never mind," she said, slamming the locker door shut.

"You're so lucky to have a mom like her. Hey, speaking of moms, could you talk to my mom? You know—sort of discourage her from subbing at school so often?"

Rachel's expression grew thoughtful.

"Me, talk to your mother. Hmm. That might not be a bad idea, now that you mention it. I can catch her after class tomorrow, unless ... what if she doesn't sub for Mr. Walker, after all?"

"Oh, she'll be here," I predicted gloomily.

And I was right.

"Guess what, Heather?" Mom greeted me with disgusting cheerfulness when I got home that afternoon. "Mr. Walker called. He wants me to sub for him in chemistry class, and he said the class was really excited about it!"

"It's no big deal, considering that Mr. Walker's other choice was a retired Army drill sergeant," I said, unimpressed.

Mom got this faraway look in her eye. "I always wanted to teach, but your grandparents couldn't afford to send me to college, so I thought I'd lost my chance. But since I've been subbing, well, sometimes I think maybe that's what God has called me to do."

My heart sank. Just try talking somebody out of something once they're convinced God is on their side!

If you ask me, turning my mom loose in a chemistry lab sounds like a recipe for disaster. Mr. Walker must have thought so, too, because he left a nice, safe film for the class to watch. Leave it to Mom to go him one better.

"What's a movie without popcorn?" she asked the class. After instructing everyone to light their Bunsen burners, she passed out packages of popcorn—you know, the kind in a long-handled foil pan that blows up like a balloon as the kernels pop.

"This is so lame," I muttered. Not that I had to worry about Mom hearing me. The noise from all that popping corn was so loud that the teacher next door had already pounded on the wall twice.

"I think it's fun," Rachel said, tossing a fluffy piece of popcorn into the air and catching it in her mouth.

Apparently Mom thought so, too. In fact, she was having such a good time that it seemed almost a shame to discourage her. Still, there was a reputation at stake here—*mine*. And so when the final bell rang, I gave Rachel an encouraging nudge in Mom's direction.

"I'll wait for you in the hall," I whispered. "Good luck!"

At first I couldn't hear anything over the sound of 30 students stampeding for the door, but gradually the noise died down, and I could pick out a few of Rachel's muffled words.

"She wants me to ... I know she doesn't mean to ... But I don't know how to break the news ... "

I felt a little twinge of guilt. I didn't want to hurt Mom's feelings, and I hadn't realized what an awkward position I'd put Rachel in. Mom said something I couldn't understand, then Rachel spoke again.

" ... embarrassing her. She's completely hung up on appearances."

What?!? All those guilty feelings vanished, driven away by anger. How dare Rachel make me out to be the bad guy? By the time I heard her footsteps approaching the door, steam was practically coming out my ears.

But before I had a chance to say anything, Rachel said, "Oh, Heather, you were right!" Her face practically glowed. "Your mother says Mom will listen to me if I just tell her how I feel without going ballistic. And I'm really going to try. I do love Mom, even though we're so different."

"You mean you were talking about *your* mother in there? I thought you were going to talk to her about *my* mother and her constant subbing!"

"Well, I meant to but ... " Rachel said. "Heather, I really just wanted to talk to her about *my* mom—you know, about her wanting to give me that makeover when all I really wanted for my birthday was a week at basketball camp. That's what I love about your mom, Heather. She's so easy to talk to."

I must have said something to Rachel, but I can't remember what. My mind was reeling. Rachel had her own "mother problems," but I'd been so worried about *my* image that I hadn't even noticed. Maybe what she'd said about being hung up on appearances had hit me so hard because it fitted.

An almost-forgotten Bible verse came back to me, something about people looking at the outward appearance, but God looking at the heart. So I looked it up—1 Samuel 16:7. While I'd envied Rachel and her beautiful, sophisticated mother, my mom had seen straight into Rachel's heart. Maybe God *had* called her to this job, after all.

"Heather? Were you waiting for me?" Mom looked surprised to see me still standing in the hall.

"Yeah. How about stopping on the way home for ice cream? My treat."

Her eyebrows rose. "What brought all this on?"

"Nothing," I shrugged as we started down the hall together. "Just—I love you, Mom. Just the way you are."

"I love you just the waaay you aaaaaarrrre!" she sang, draping her arm across my shoulders.

I threw my head back and gave my best impression of Mr. Mitchell's Labrador.



**Why do people with closed minds always open their mouths?
I'm multi-talented: I can talk and annoy you at the same time.**