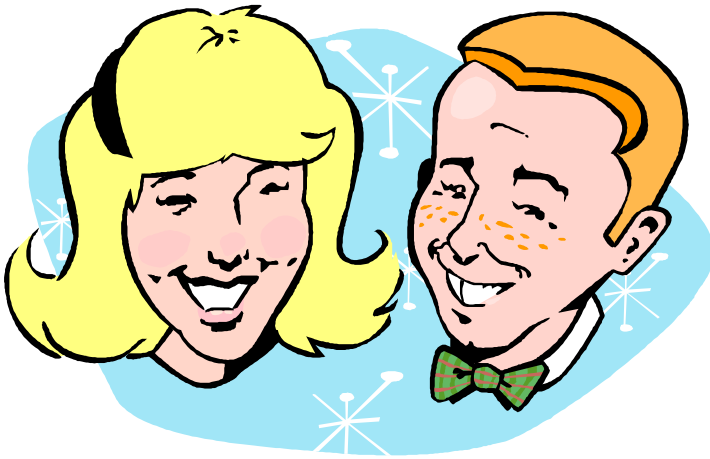


Booklet 18

# Helps for Young People



**No Dad to Call**

**Three Cheers...For the Other Team**

**Am I A Total Failure, God?**

Compiled by Hervey Bay Gospel Chapel for its young people

## No Dad to Call

*Everyone was digging through their pockets and purses in search of coins for the pay phone. Everyone except me.*

by Heather Bermingham | posted 06/05/2003

**M**y youth group was hundreds of miles from home, on a mission trip in New Orleans. We were piled in the van on the way back to the motel when someone yelled out, "I get the pay phone first!"

"Why?" another kid asked. "Who do *you* need to call?"

"It's Father's Day, dork!" came the reply.

Father's Day. I hadn't thought about that in years. As everyone scrambled for coins and planned out a calling schedule, I stared blankly out the window of the van.

My dad had died from a heart attack when I was 4, and I remembered so little about him. As for Father's Day, it was a holiday I had pretty much pushed out of my mind—until today.

Back at the motel, I wandered around by myself while everyone else scurried for the phones. I felt so sad, and so alone. Sure, I had my mom and my three brothers. But who was I supposed to call today? As the day went on, my sorrow turned into anger. Why did I have to be left out of today's celebration? Why couldn't God have taken someone else, some bad parent? My dad was a good guy. He loved his wife and kids. And just before he died, he had committed his life to Christ. He could have been doing great things for God—if God hadn't taken him away. Away from me.

I thought about all the things I'd missed. I never had a dad to cheer for me at softball games. I had to find a substitute for father-daughter events. By the time the sun set on that Father's Day, I was convinced I had been wronged in a horrible, unforgivable way.

In the days that followed, we spent our mornings putting on a Bible school for the local kids. Then in the afternoon, we volunteered at a youth centre. I was still feeling sad and angry,

but I kept my feelings to myself, convinced no one would understand anyway.

Working with the little kids during the day wasn't so bad. In fact, there were times it was a lot of fun. But at our nightly Bible study, I tuned out. As my friends shared special moments of each day, lessons God had taught them, I crossed my arms and mentally blocked out their voices. I wasn't in the mood for happy God-talk. I just wanted this mission trip to be over.

And it almost was. With just a few days left, I found myself at the youth centre, helping 6-year-old Devin with his craft for the day. By that time we all had our favourite kids. Devin was mine. He had been given a few cruel nicknames by the other kids at the centre—"Devin Devil" was the most popular—and it wasn't hard to understand why. He was loud, defiant and angry. He wore a constant frown. I loved trying to make him laugh, and every once in awhile he'd drop the tough guy act just long enough for me to see there was a pretty sweet kid in there somewhere.

"Not quite so much glue," I advised as Devin squeezed what seemed to be half the bottle onto his construction paper. He scowled at me, but put the bottle down. He picked through the pieces of coloured tissue paper that were piled in the middle of the table. "Are you gonna be here for a long time, Heather?" he asked suddenly. His words and face were emotionless—he was playing it cool.

"Not really. Just for a few more days," I told him.

"Oh." For a second, he actually looked disappointed. "What do you have to leave for, anyway?"

"I don't live here. I live in Alabama. I have to go home."

"I don't *ever* want to go home," Devin declared fiercely.

"Why not?"

He picked up a piece of tissue and smooshed it down. "Because no one there loves me." His voice had lost all emotion again.

That was not the answer I was expecting. And I was shocked at the way he said it—like it was no big deal.

"Devin, that's not true."

"Is too."

I started to argue but stopped, remembering what David, the youth centre director, had told us. These kids did not lead easy lives. Most were from broken homes. Some were being raised by grandparents because their parents were in jail or had abandoned them. A lot of them saw drug use everyday. Who was I to tell Devin that everything was really just fine at his house?

"There are lots of people here who love you," I finally said. "And God loves you an awful lot, too."

He shrugged. He stuck a few more pieces of tissue paper down and then held up his creation. "Look—I made a stained glass window." He grinned from ear to ear. I'd never seen him do that.

"Great job, Dev."

He grabbed a marker, and I watched as he carefully wrote his name across the top of his paper, his knuckles turning white from the effort. And suddenly, I felt terribly ashamed. I had spent so much time that week pouting about what I didn't have that I'd completely forgotten about all the really good things in my life. I was going home to a house full of people who loved me. So maybe one of them wasn't my dad. Right then, my family was looking pretty great.

A couple days later I said goodbye to Devin. He gave me a big hug, looked a little sad, but said he'd only "probably" miss me.

It's been a few years since then, and I still think about Devin.

I pray that someday he'll feel secure in someone's love.

I still think about my dad too, and sometimes it makes me sad to think of all I've missed. But when those moods come, I try to remember Devin and his difficult life. No matter how much I may think I'm missing, there's surely someone out there who would consider me very blessed.

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## **Three Cheers for ... The Other Team!**

**-by Mark Moring**

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As I write these words, Roberto Alomar, a big-league baseball star, faces a suspension for spitting in an umpire's face. Alomar's infraction was the latest in a rash of crass acts by professional athletes. These incidents are on the sports pages almost daily.

But fortunately, all the news isn't bad. Sportsmanship is still alive and well. Especially at Benton Central High School in Oxford, Indiana, which holds a unique sportsmanship banquet at the end of every school year.

True, sportsmanship awards have been given out at sports banquets for years. But Benton Central takes the idea further, giving out sportsmanship awards to its opponents! Yeah, each Benton Central varsity team selects an athlete from an opposing school who they believe has shown outstanding sportsmanship. Those athletes are invited to be honoured guests at Benton Central's banquet, where each of them is given a plaque commemorating his or her selection.

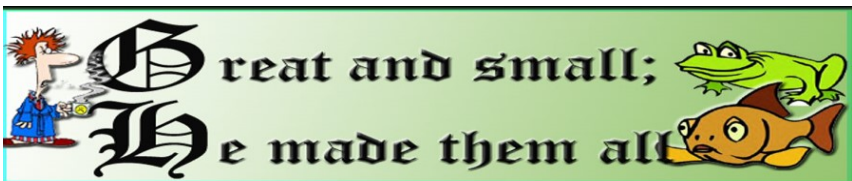
"It's difficult to explain the great feeling of sportsmanship at this banquet," says Benton Central's athletic director. "And our own athletes are encouraged by this to show good sportsmanship in the future."

I'm encouraged too. This is one of the best ideas I've heard in a long time.

Why not share this idea with your own coach or athletic director? After all, it'd be a great way to show that sportsmanship is alive and well at your school, too!

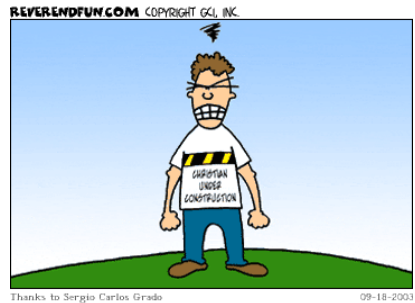
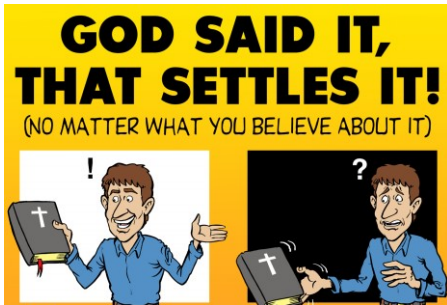
Last fall, the government decided to ban use of tobacco brand names in sports sponsorships. That's big news in auto racing, where cigarette brands dominate the scene. The big racing circuit is even called The NASCAR Winston Cup. One driver's car has Joe Camel plastered all over it. Due to lawsuits, the new rules might not go into effect for years, but I say, the sooner the better.

If auto racing wants to be perceived as a real sport, it shouldn't associate itself with a product that's clearly detrimental to being a top-notch athlete-and is sometimes ultimately fatal. So I say, Drop the butt ads, auto racing, and go find another sponsor.



## Puck-er up!

Can you imagine getting hit in the face with a hockey puck flying through the air at 75 mph? Jacques Plante could. Jacques, an NHL goalie in the late 1950s, got so sick of puck facials one year that he moulded some plastic into a scary-looking mask and, voila, the goalie mask was born. Within a few years, most goalies were wearing masks, and today, of course, they're required.



### *Overcoming Hurdles*

Born with spina bifida, club feet and a cleft palate, Jean has overcome her share of obstacles. At the age of 14, she lost her ability to walk with braces. But when she made the women's wheelchair basketball team at the University of Illinois, Jean realized she might have a future in wheelchair sports. Today, she trains six days a week, up to five hours a day; she puts in 130 training miles every week.

### *On a Roll*

If Jean wins in Boston again, she'll probably quote one of her favourite Bible verses, Romans 12:12, which says, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." Jean says that when she races, "God gets the glory. These victories aren't mine. They're his."

Source: *Christian Reader*

# Am I a Total Failure, God?

-by Christy Simon

When the teacher handed my test back to me face-down, I immediately noticed those telltale red-ink squiggles showing through the back of the paper. As I stared nervously at the back of the test, the butterflies in my stomach were doing the Macarena double time. Eventually I gathered up my courage, said a quick prayer, then flipped over the test. Well, the good news was I didn't get every problem wrong.

But that wasn't much consolation. I'd very rarely received a test grade that low. And it wasn't like I had blown off the test, either. I'd spent hours studying for the exam. I'd studied by myself and with friends. I'd studied in the library, in the study lounge, in my room. While the teacher returned the rest of the tests and answered questions about the exam, my imagination veered out of control.

I thought of all the people I'd let down with the grade now etched permanently in bright red ink at the top of my paper. This is definitely not the best way to make a good impression on a new teacher, I thought as I watched him explain a test problem to a classmate. Across the room, I saw my study buddy chatting with a classmate. She's so smart. I bet she did a whole lot better than I did. And my heart plummeted when I thought of my parents. They're always so proud of my grades. What will they think? And maybe worst of all, I'd let myself down. I felt ashamed, embarrassed and just plain miserable. I'd done my best on the test, but that wasn't good enough. Or was it?

A question floated through my thoughts: Does God really care that I did poorly on the test? The answer I came up with: No. He accepts me for who I am, not for the grades I receive. It doesn't matter whether I received an "A" on that test or an "F." His love is constant.

There's another test coming up this Friday. I'm sure I'll go into it with butterflies in my stomach, clammy hands and a throat as dry as the Sahara. But I'm determined to do my best. And no matter how I do, I know God loves me just the same. And that's all that truly counts.