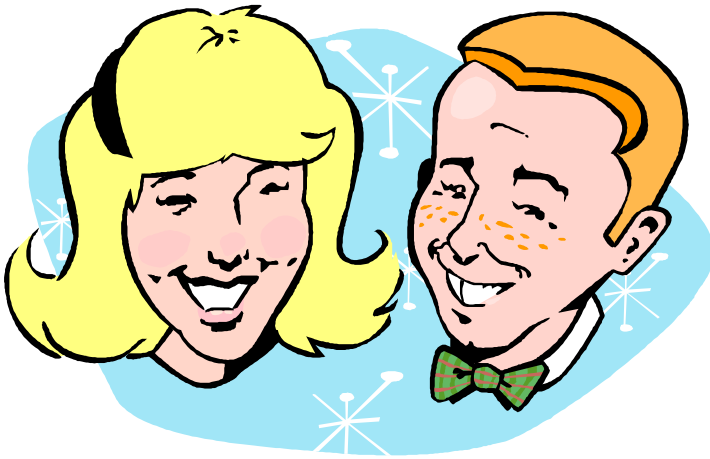


Booklet 7

Helps for Young People



A Slap in the Face

Radiant Rodents and other stories

When I Feel Lonely

Not excited About God

Compiled by Hervey Bay Gospel Chapel for its young people

A Slap in the Face

"Aren't you going to slap me back?" The words rang in my ears. Not only was I dazed, I had no idea why Connie had just slapped me.

Only minutes before, a group of us girls—including Connie—had been sitting on the gym bleachers. Now we were all in the girls' locker room. That's when Connie approached me, her eyes full of anger.

She was the star of our school's basketball team, towering above the rest of us. And she was mean. But while she'd pushed others around, for some reason she'd always left me alone.

Until now.

She glared at me and hissed, "I don't think I like you."

I swallowed the lump in my throat. Beads of sweat popped out on my forehead. Then she slapped my face. Next, in front of all my friends, she asked me that question: "Aren't you going to slap me back?"

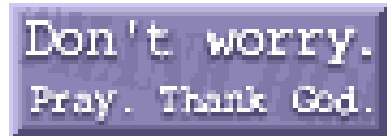
I stuttered and finally got out an answer. "N-n-n-n-o. I don't have any reason to be mad at you."

She stared at me, called me a coward, then walked away. Angry and embarrassed, I wondered if I should have hit her back. And I wondered why, without warning, I had become her enemy.

Sometime later I found out that Connie's father often beat her. It was little wonder, then, that she'd strike out at others. When you're hit for no reason at all, you really don't need a reason to hit others. The look

of anger etched across her face that day in the locker room was a mirror of the face that often glared angrily at her.

Looking back, I'm glad I didn't strike back at Connie. She certainly didn't need any more physical pain in her life. I also learned an important lesson through the experience: When I'm treated wrongly by someone, I need to look a little deeper. I need to try and put myself into that person's shoes, then try to respond by doing what Jesus would have done—to fight anger with compassion, battle bitterness with a smile, take a deep breath and turn the other cheek.



Radiant Rodents

We've seen all sorts of glow-in-the-dark stuff through the years—key chains, golf balls, jewellery, and even phosphorescent Frisbees.

But now we've seen it all:

Glow-in-the-dark mice!

Scientists in Japan developed the mini-mutants recently, injecting DNA from a species of jellyfish that glows underwater. The result: some really radiant rodents! They glow bright green under ultraviolet lights.

Whoa, that's cool! you say.
But WHY??

For research, of course. Scientists can use the technique in a number of ways, including watching the movements of stuff inside the mini-mammals. For instance, for cancer research, they can

watch white blood cells moving around without having to cut the critters open.

That's what I call a bright idea!

Scientists say they can use the technique on other lab animals too—like rats, monkeys and rabbits.

But I'm thinkin', Why stop there? Just imagine the possibilities. You could open an entire zoo with all kinds of luminescent life.

Beaming buffaloes!
Florescent flounders!
Shining sheep!
Iridescent iguanas!
Radiant rhinos!

I could go on, of course,
but you get the point.
You've, uh, seen the light.

Mixed Messages

Check out these signs found in Great Britain:

- In a safari park: "Elephants Please Stay in Your Car."
- On a pamphlet: "If you cannot read, this leaflet will tell you how to get lessons."
- At a repair shop: "We can repair anything. (Please knock hard on the door—the bell doesn't work.)"
- In a health food store window: "Closed due to illness."
- At a dry cleaner's: "Anyone leaving their garments here for more than 30 days will be disposed of."
- In a department store: "Bargain Basement Upstairs"

Postcards from Beyond the Edge

OK, OK, so peanuts are No. 1 in Georgia. But a 20-footer? The folks of Turner County, home of this mega-nut, say it's "a daily reminder where our roots come from." Can you dig it?



The Chicken That Wouldn't Shut Up!

Kay Martin was talking to a friend at home one day when they suddenly heard a chicken squawking. They went outside to find the boisterous bird, but couldn't find anything. When they returned to the house, they realized the squawking was coming from Kay's kitchen—from her *oven*!

A half hour earlier, Kay had put a chicken—a dead one, that is!—into the oven to roast. Steam built up inside and came up the neck and through the vocal cords, raising a ruckus!

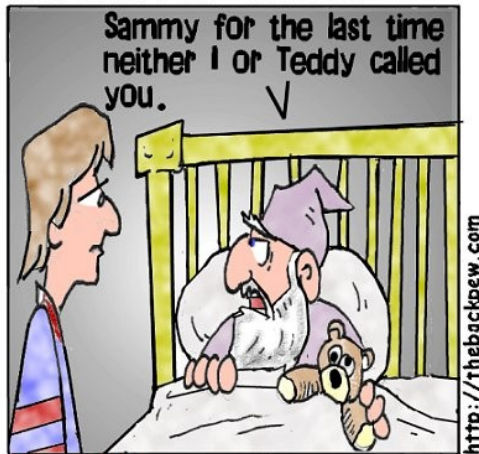
"It was as if it was shrieking at me from its grave," says Kay. "It was so bizarre I just froze."

But not for long. She opened the oven and removed the bird, which was still squawking loudly. As it cooled, the squawking died away.

Kay threw the bird away, and hasn't cooked chicken since then.

Good thing she wasn't cooking beef, eh? That would've been a *moo*-ving experience!

THE BACK PEW - Jeff LARSON



1 Samuel 3 - After a few sleepy chats with Eli, Samuel realizes God is speaking to him.

When I Feel Lonely

Loneliness. Now that's a scary word. And it's something I've been struggling with lately. It's kind of ironic that I feel this way. Because of my music career, I travel with a big group of people and can hardly get a minute to myself sometimes. I have parents who love me and show it all the time. One brother lives with me, and my other brother lives close by. My best friend works with me, and we have a great time together.

Basically, there's almost always someone around I can talk to and do stuff with. But it feels like there's always something missing, like a space I just can't fill.

Sometimes I think if I just buy something new, I'll be all happy inside. But whatever I buy gets old or breaks—or I simply get tired of it. Then there are times I think if I could sell more albums, I'd feel fulfilled. But no matter how many albums I sell, I always want to sell more. And it's tempting to try to fill my emptiness with a guy, but I know that even the best relationship would never completely fill this emptiness I feel.

As I try to find a way to deal with my emptiness and loneliness, I'm finally beginning to understand the solution comes down to my relationship with God. In fact, maybe God wants to use my loneliness to show me more about who he is and how much I really need him—more than anybody, more than anything.

The truth is, God created me and loves me so much more than I can ever understand. During the times I feel lonely, only God knows what I need. And I can trust him to use my lonely times to help me grow into the person he wants me to be.

I think of it this way: I guess God has left an open space in my life so he can enter it and fill it up. That means I need to keep my mind and my heart open to him and to his plans for me. Then when I feel the loneliest, I need to reach out and hang on tightly to him. I know he'll be there. And I know he'll never, ever leave me alone.

Not Excited About God

I sat in the back of the youth room and just went through the motions.
by Bill Kimball as told to Chris Lutes

I was at the back of the youth group room with a bunch of other freshmen. The worship band stood in the front of the room, singing their hearts out. I stretched my neck to see the seniors who'd gathered in the first couple of rows. They really seemed to be into it. Some of them had their eyes closed and arms raised in the air.

I couldn't help but wonder, *Why don't I feel excited about God? What do they have that I don't?*

I knew Christ had died for my sins, and I knew I was a Christian. But why didn't I feel it more? Even though our youth pastor told us not to live by our feelings, I still believed I was missing something. But what?

I went through my first two years in youth group like that. I sat at the back, and kind of went through the motions. I did sing, but it didn't seem to mean a lot to me. I also listened to what our youth pastor said in his talks. But it seemed like that's about all I did.

But I knew if I kept going to youth group, I'd keep growing in my faith, whether or not my feelings came along. So I kept going to worship, and I prayed silently as I sang the songs. I also decided to really get serious about reading my Bible and praying before I went to bed each night.

Then around my junior year, my life started to change. I can't point to any one day when the change took place. But through stuff like retreats and mission experiences, I could begin to see God at work in my life and other students' lives. I wasn't sitting at

the back of the room anymore, either, and I felt free to shut my eyes and raise my hands during worship. My singing was becoming a way to connect with God and praise him for his faithfulness. Worship was finally coming alive for me.

I could also sense that I had a different attitude toward the kids at school. During my freshman year, I saw a lot of the problems at my school. I'd bump into a guy who'd talk about the great bag of marijuana he just bought. I'd hear the guys telling dirty jokes in the locker room and think, Losers. I'm surrounded by losers.

But during my junior year, I started seeing people at my school differently. No longer were they losers, but they were opportunities to show God's love. Instead of looking down on those who took drugs, I would silently pray for them when I passed them in the hall. When someone would tell a bad joke, I'd try my best to turn the conversation in another direction. I wanted to do what I could to help make things better at my school, to help transform it for Christ.

Now that I'm in the final months of my senior year, I wish I'd changed earlier. And I have come to realize how important it is to get into God's Word daily, pray regularly, and use my gifts and abilities to serve others. The result of all this: I am so excited about living for God!

But the thing is, I now believe God was working in my life even during my freshman and sophomore years. He was using my youth pastor to teach me important spiritual truths. He was using my youth group to show me what it meant to worship, really worship. He was building up my faith, even at times when I didn't fully realize it (Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13). He was showing me that living for him really is exciting. He also showed me that faith often comes with good feelings. Not that my youth pastor was wrong. I can't base my faith on how I feel. But if I'm trying to get to know God better, and doing my best to live for him, those feelings will come.

That's why these days I'm standing near the front of the youth group room and singing with all my heart. It just feels right.