

A publication of
Genuine Joy Ministries

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- There are many “unlovables” in this world out looking for God (though not knowing it) and maybe never able to find Him.
- We all have the opportunity to make a difference.
- Will you be God’s vessel or will you just walk away?

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The Hard Questions

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Answers to Life’s Hard Questions— Are You Ready?

We’re departing from our usual format this month to tell you a story that when we heard it we were so captured by it we couldn’t just walk away.



The Hitchhiker

Clad in the uniform of the young—blue jeans and sweat-shirt—she stood before the mirror in the truck stop restroom when I saw her. There was nothing about her that stood out or was appealing. I barely noticed her. But when she spoke to me, she got my attention.

“How’re ya doing?” she said.

I looked at her then, really looked at her. She had long, thick, dark hair surrounding a round face which sat above a chunky body. She was not attractive; her eyes were dark and vacant. No doubt she was strung out on something.

“I’m okay,” I replied. “How are you doing?”

“Okay. Do you have a car?” she asked out of the blue.

Wary, I said, “I have a car, but it’s not here.”

She regarded me in the mirror. “You should be glad you don’t have to hitchhike.”

“Oh, you’re hitchhiking. Why

are you hitchhiking?”

“Well, I don’t know,” she looked puzzled as though she’d never considered the question and wondered why I would ask. She lit a cigarette slowly and carefully, then said, “I have to.”

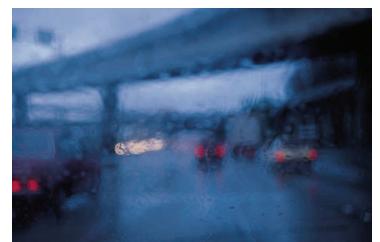
I said, “It’s a dark and rainy night to be hitchhiking.”

On this particular dreary evening in September I was on one of my rare trips with my trucker husband. When we left our home in Montana, we planned to arrive back with plenty of time to drive our daughter to college—her freshman year and first year away from home. We **needed** to be there for this momentous occasion.

Truckers find it hard to stay on schedule at times because of traffic conditions, loading difficulties, and a myriad of other issues and sure enough we were behind schedule. This particular trip we’d been plagued with trouble—a broken fuel line in Nebraska, locked-up brakes in Kansas, an overturned trailer in Wyoming which resulted in long sewer pipes

strewn over the highway. The frustration and anxiety made us both tense and nervous. We spent most of that day fighting a clogged fuel filter as we drove over two ten thousand foot mountain passes in Colorado. The going had been slow and exhausting putting us further behind schedule.

I knew my first priority upon arriving at the truck stop in Denver, our destination for the night, would be a call to our daughter advising her to find another way to school. When I called she was out; I would have to call back in an hour. We ate then I retired to the restroom to prepare for bed. The girl, about seventeen, was at the mirror fussing with her hair, her back to me. My mind whirled around our family dilemma and the anticipated disappointment of our daughter in Montana. Then the girl in the mirror spoke to me.



“You don’t think I’m worth much, do you?”

Startled and groping for a reply, I stalled, “Why do you say that?”

Ezekiel 1:28

²⁸ Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him.

This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.



In reply to my comment about hitchhiking on such a dark and stormy night she replied, “I know,” then paused. Then, “You don’t think I’m worth much, do you?”

Startled and groping for a reply, I stalled, “Why do you say that?”

“Oh, straights never think much of hippies—or whatever.”

Praying desperately I took a deep breath and spoke slowly and deliberately while trying to establish eye contact with her. I said, “I think you’re worth every bit as much as I am. Just because you don’t believe I do doesn’t mean it’s not true. You are as worthwhile a person as I am and you can believe that or not.”

Suddenly tears glistened in her eyes; frightened, she backed away from me and said, “Be careful there.” Her voice quivered and I suspected long-suppressed feelings were surfacing and threatening to break through her studied indifference.

As I slowly, trying to gain time with her, put my things away I prayed, Lord, what can I say to help her; what can I do to help her? Can I help her? I reminded Him of my complete dependence on Him for the right words—and actions.

She, in the meantime, had retreated to a corner after this last exchange and stared out at me with those strange eyes while nervously puffing on her cigarette.

I need to leave; my husband would be wondering where I was; we needed to call our daughter. Our daughter—her face flashed through my mind. There was no physical resemblance to this young woman sharing a dingy truck stop restroom with me, but what if it were my daughter, strung out, alone, hitchhiking on such a dark, rainy night? I couldn’t leave her just like that. Searching for a way to leave her I went to her, touched her elbow and said, “I want you to remember something for me. Can you remember?”

I caught an almost imperceptible nod of her head.

I got her attention and stared straight into her eyes. “God loves you and I love you, too. Will you remember that?”

The tears started and soon streamed down her face and dripped off her chin. “I know He does,” she responded, but unspoken between us lay—but I don’t know if you really do.



I tried again. “I don’t know you but God knows you. He loves you and I do, too.”

She took a tentative step toward me. I put my arms round her then and held her. She was grubby and smelled awful but God loved her and I knew in that moment that I truly loved her, too.

She repeated, “I’ll remember,” as she returned my embrace.

Reluctant to leave her without a promise of further contact, I said, “I’ll be around the truck stop tonight and probably tomorrow. If you want to talk to someone, I’m available. Okay?”

“Okay,” she replied and a little smile teased the corners of her mouth.

I left reluctantly, wanting to take her with me, wanting to protect her, wanting her to reach out to me but acutely aware that I couldn’t help her until she wanted my help.

I made the phone call to our daughter and worked out the arrangements. I lingered in the gift shop, in the coffee shop, looking, looking for her, trying to be available. I never saw her again. I pray she’s well; I pray she really knows God loves her; I pray I didn’t fail her—I didn’t even know her name. But those dark, lonely eyes still haunt me.

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The “unlovables”... there are many in this world like this young girl, who was probably a run-away child, out looking for God (though not knowing it) and maybe never able to find Him. This young girl at least had a brief encounter with Him through the woman who befriended her. This just may have been the monumental turning point in this young teen’s life. What if the woman in the restroom had looked at her in disgust and just walked away?

We all have the opportunity to make a difference.

I wonder, after hearing this woman's story, if we are challenged to do something about young people like this. This kind of thing happens every day in every city across our land. Do you know that prostitutes hang around truck stops, luring truckers into illicit sex? The truckers call them derogatory names but still pay them a nominal fee for sex. After an encounter with a cooperative trucker, the prostitute leaves him, slinks under the truck trailer, and solicits the next trucker. It is a sordid life but one these women have a hard time getting out of.

Some have STDs, some even have HIV or full-blown HIV-Aids. These diseases the unsuspecting man takes home to his wife or partner who then contracts the disease. It's an ongoing problem and the biggest losers are these young women who believe in their heart of hearts that it's the life they were born to lead. Even young women who hitchhike like the girl in the story, usually trade sexual favors for a ride on down the road. This should not be. We have a generation of throw-away young people in our land. Many have been ignored or abandoned by their parents as their parents pursue their own interests, change partners frequently, and leave their teens to fend for themselves. I've known quite a few like this.

One in particular I remember. He was about fifteen when his mom left his dad for another man. She didn't take him with her so he lived with his dad. Then not too long after this his dad decided to move to Texas and since the teen wanted to stay in Colorado, his father left him with good wishes and hoped he'd find someone to take him in and off he went to do his own thing. The teenager did find a concerned family who offered him room and board but he stole things, attended school only sporadically and generally messed up his life. He then bounced back and forth from Texas to friends in Colorado, never having a stable home life. When he got into enough trouble that the authorities threatened to jail him unless he chose the military, he joined the army. I lost track of him after that. He may have been sent to Iraq; he may have died there, I'll never know.

I do know that our children are our future. So many times they are just thrown away. And what about the other unlovable people around us? Aren't we all unlovable at times?

When your next opportunity comes will you be God's vessel or will you just walk away?



2 Corinthians 5:17-18

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

¹Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come.

²It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.

Luke 17:1-2

Resources & Info

Websites:

[Teen Questions—Christian Answers](#)

[Focus Adolescent Services](#)

Books:

Parenting Teens With Love And Logic by Foster Cline & Jim Fay

Loving People: How to Love and Be Loved by Dr. John Townsend

When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, "I used everything you gave me."

~Erma Bombeck

Note: *The Hitchhiker*, as told to Beverly Ann Bender. Used by permission from Beverly Ann Bender.

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Helping you find genuine joy!

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Sometimes you come up with really hard, tough questions that you don't have the answers to.

At times you're too embarrassed or uncomfortable to ask your friends and family... and when you are brave enough to ask the questions, even they don't always have the answers.

You don't think you have anyone that you can talk to... well now you do.

Genuine Joy Ministries is dedicated to helping

Just for Fun

As an airline ticket agent I receive lots of questions about traveling. Last week one of our Congresswomen called. She needed to know how it was possible that her flight from Detroit left at 8:30 a.m. and got to Chicago at 8:33 a.m.

I explained that Michigan was an hour ahead of Illinois, but she couldn't understand the concept of time zones. Finally, I told her the plane went fast. She bought that.

Maybe we're in bigger trouble than I thought.



"In the book of life, the answers aren't in the back."

~ Charlie Brown

If you know someone who would be interested in or needs to see this newsletter, you can easily add their email address to our mailing list.

Just send a quick email to: info@genuinejoyministries.org

