

Compiled by Jan Nelson

I am living in temporary housing ...
My house gets a little grayer and more wrinkled every year ...
Outside my door is a backyard called the Universe.

And at the border...is a hedge.
The hedge is a veil, a barrier that traps me
in the aloneness of my backyard and cuts me off
from some larger Presence ...

The hedge is my finitude, my aloneness,
my blindness to sin ...
Some people are convinced there is Nothing
behind the hedge...
But the whispers and rumors of the Presence are
curiously stubborn.



There seems to be in the human race an irrepressible instinct
that Something lies beyond the hedge ...
So people keep poking and digging around the backyard...
and saying prayers to Someone behind the hedge.

(God is Closer than You Think / John Ortberg)

**Remember to give thanks for the person who led you to the truth behind the hedge.
Do your best to open the hedge just enough that you can lead someone else to see...**

Hey, Ladies –

Remember our discipleship challenge from January? I'm still working on these, so I thought we could all use a refresher:

DISCIPLESHIP CHALLENGES FOR 2013

(choose one or two or as many as you dare)

January 10, 2013

- **Turn the other cheek.** Accept accusations, blame, exclusion, and suffering as a badge of discipleship.
- **Give no occasion for stumbling or offense:** Find ways to speak the truth in love in every situation, while not offending, or turning people away from Jesus.
- **Pray without ceasing.** Take time for deliberate daily prayer but live each moment with a heart listening and an ear tuned to God's desire in your life.
- **Nourish your soul, feed on the living word:** make time each day to read, think about and digest at least one passage of the Bible
- **Pursue a path of truth.** Eliminate falsehood and shading of the truth to make yourself look better or less guilty.
- **Seek humility.** Follow the example of Jesus by not saying or doing anything that draws undue attention or a compliment to you. Let others get the credit, even if you did it.
- **Surrender to Trust:** relinquish your need to manipulate or control people or situations.
- **Carry your cross and refuse to be a victim.** Genuinely pray for people who are wrongfully accusing you and bringing pain in your life.
- **Do everything without complaining or arguing:** Determine to have a positive attitude and reaction when you don't get your way.
- **Be Still and Know that He is God:** Adopt the virtues of talking less and listening more.
- **Open your heart to revelation:** Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal a new truth about a long held belief or interpretation of scripture.
- **Be more giving:** Give more love, more encouragement, more grace, more tolerance, more money, more help, more service, more benefit of the doubt, more mercy, more patience, more hope, more light in dark situations, more compassion, more focus to the person in front of you, more of yourself.
- **Love the church as Christ does.** Sacrifice your desires for the good, the unity, and the growth of this church family.
- **Obey Jesus' command to disciple.** This year, be intentional about bringing at least one person to faith in Jesus. (Go, baptize, and teach).

Wisdom from Lila ...

In my reading this morning I came across a little story that is sort of an analogy and since I am an animal lover it caught my attention and was a reminder that I, like the cat, had no hope of life if I hadn't had "I.P." written on my card by Jesus, who rescued me at great expense to Himself and His Father. (and Heaven, for that matter.)

A lady named Gina Lee told of going to the animal shelter and seeing the cat and immediately they seemed to bond and she told the attendant she wanted the cat. But there was a 3 day wait. The last one she had picked out she didn't get at the end of the 3 days because it had gotten ill & been put to sleep. When a cat got sick there it was put to sleep right away, so it wouldn't infect others. Afraid they would do this before the 3 days were up again; she said she wanted the cat even if it was ill. The attendant said no problem and wrote on the card attached to the cat's cage "I.P." explaining that meant 'interested party'. Those animals with I.P. on the cards were treated by the vet and not put to sleep.

She finishes the story like this..."Such a simple act--two little letters on a card, and the cat would live. I named her Gilah, which is Hebrew for 'joy.' She picked her up at the end of the waiting period, at the shelters hospital, as she had become quite ill. But because of the "I.P." on her card she was allowed to live and be treated.

Eleven years later she is still my joy!!

We all have a least one "Interested Party" (I.P.) ---Jesus Christ. He cared enough to write "I.P." on our cards ---only He wrote it not in ink, but in blood. He is willing to do whatever it takes to save us. He is the one who offers us life eternal. Because there is an "I. P.", we have a future and a chance for something more -- to become Christ's "joy"!!

Lord, I feel as though we belong together--You and I. I want You for my Forever Master. I praise You for being my 'Interested Party' -- I have no other future. You are my hope for today and forever. Praise God!!

"IN THIS THE LOVE OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED TOWARDS US , THAT GOD HAS SENT HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON INTO THE WORLD, THAT WE MIGHT LIVE THROUGH HIM...." / JOHN 3:9

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE." *JOHN 3:16*

Have a beautiful day...knowing you had "I.P." written on your card by God and Jesus....so you could be treated and have life eternal!!! Be thankful and give Him Praise!!

Today I was reading Jane Rubietta's book 'Between Two Gardens' (Eden and Gethsemane) and she talked about something that caught my attention along the same line as what I have been reminded of before...living in the moment and being aware of all that's going on around me, so I don't miss the blessings God provides. She called it a "Joy Watch." Look for the "joy moments" that are there, everywhere. Something I often do without really realizing it but I need to make a concentrated effort to see and enjoy these "joy moments" God gives me every day.

"In an airport, wrapping up a major project, an uncertain future, and exhausted, she says that especially in weariness, despair leans close and confessed to both a fear of the future and dimming of joy. Then, hearing a child's squeal, she saw a toddler, about two years old moving away from his mom, hands outstretched and reaching, eyes alight. His smile beamed. She moved so she could see what he saw and watched him head straight for a puppy. The scene brought her joy back even in her weariness. She looked around and most of the others present missed the whole thing, cell phones, laptops and file folders occupied their eyes and minds. They missed a moment in a million. She began looking around and decided to watch for

other moments of joy, so she wouldn't miss them..... a young girl with a back pack, talking animatedly with her parents as they walked, a dad carrying a baby, a tall father exclaimed, picked up a preteen girl off the people mover, kissed her loudly and pressed her to his chest, as he listened intently to what she was saying to him. Hearing girlish screaming and watching as two friends hurled themselves into each other's arms and laughed and cried to see each other again....and we could go on....but in these seemingly mundane moments she felt as if the Holy Spirit was filling her, flooding her with a joy that had been dormant, like a tree in winter suddenly greeting the sun with billions of blossoms."



There are so many things that I will find joy in if I am watching for the many things that God has going on around me, and keep myself aware of the moments He is giving me to feel joy and be blessed!! I have a book that is called *10,000 Things to Thank God for* and it lists many things that will bring joy and delight that we do not usually even consider, but take for granted. (I could make my own list too!!!) :-)
Maybe I will write my own list that will remind me of all the little blessings God provides.

AT CHRISTMAS

"THESE THINGS HAVE I SPOKEN UNTO YOU, THAT MY JOY MIGHT REMAIN IN YOU AND THAT YOUR JOY MIGHT BE FULL." *JOHN 15:11*

Have a beautiful day, may it be filled with moments of joy and blessings from God. (Watch and recognize them when you encounter them!!)

Today the reminder the Lord gave me was short and to the point. It came in the form of a list entitled 'He is Able', in a book I was reading titled Lists to Live By. The reminder that He is able, regardless of the circumstances, time, place, or any other factors. I am not, but He is not only able but willing. The question is will I trust Him and let Him handle my life?

"He is able to do ... for He is neither idle, nor inactive, nor dead.

He is able to do what we ask, for He hears and answers prayer.

He is able to do what we ask or think, for He reads our thoughts.

He is able to do all that we ask or think, for He knows it all and can perform it all.

He is able to do more than all we ask or think,
for His expectations are higher than ours.

He is able to do much more abundantly than all that we ask or think,
for He does not give His grace by calculated measure.

He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,
for He is a God of superabundance."

"NOW TO HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDINGLY ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKS IN US, TO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS TO ALL GENERATIONS, FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN" *EPHESIANS 3:20-21*

Have a blessed day...being reminded like me that God is able, way beyond what we can even think or ask or imagine...what an awesome God we have who loves and is always there for us!!

Holiday Greetings

I AM STILL READING THE BOOK I MENTIONED EARLIER ... AND AGAIN MY REMINDER FOR TODAY COMES FROM SOME OF THE WORDS THEREIN. I AM SO AMAZED AT WHO I AM TO GOD AND HOW HE VIEWS ME...THERE ARE MANY VERSES TELLING US WHO AND WHOSE WE ARE AND HOW GOD THINKS OF US AND HOW HE SEES US...WHICH IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR ME TO REALIZE AS IT MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE AND HOW I VIEW AND RESPOND TO EVERYTHING. I AM SO THANKFUL FOR THESE REMINDERS...AM SHARING JUST A FEW TODAY...BUT WILL BE MAKING MY OWN LIST TO REFER TO OFTEN, OF VERSES FROM HIS WORD THAT DESCRIBE HIS VIEW OF ME AND ALL HIS CHILDREN!

ROMANS 8:17 tells me I am an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ!!

I CORINTHIANS 9:25 tells me I am eternal, like an angel ...
and have a crown that will last forever.

I PETER 2:5 tells me I am a holy priest.

EXODUS 19:5 tells me I am a treasured possession.

EPHESIANS 1:4 tells me I was chosen before the creation of the world.

DEUTERONOMY 20:19 tells me I was destined for praise, fame and honor.

I JOHN 3:1 tells me I am God's child.

THESE ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE THINGS I AM IN GOD'S EYES...PERHAPS YOU WANT TO JOIN ME TO SEARCH FOR ALL THOSE VERSES THAT DESCRIBE ME FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE...IT JUST MIGHT BE ENCOURAGING AND CHANGE YOUR OWN PERSPECTIVE...I KNOW IT WAS/IS A GOOD EXERCISE FOR ME!

PRAYING YOUR DAY WILL BE A GLORIOUS ONE. IT WILL BE WHEN YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU MEAN TO GOD & WHO YOU ARE TO GOD, WHAT HE DESIRES FOR YOU AND THE PLANS HE HAS FOR YOU!!

MOTIVATION

Albert Einstein said, "A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labors of other men living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received." As you think about what Einstein said, you will come to realize the completely unselfish wisdom of those words. First, we're indebted to our parents because they were responsible for bringing us into the world. Next, we are indebted to the doctors, nurses, aides, orderlies and other hospital personnel for the part they played in making our arrival a safe and healthy one.



We're indebted to the educational structure where we learned reading, writing and arithmetic which are critical to our lives. It's sobering to realize that yes; somebody did have to teach Albert Einstein that two plus two equals four.

We are in debt to all the ministers, priests and rabbis who taught us the essence of life by instructing us in those character qualities that are important to us, regardless of our chosen field of endeavor - athletics, medicine, education, business, government, etc.

We certainly owe a debt to those people whose messages have been encouraging and positive, as well as informative and instructional. We are deeply in debt to those public servants who committed their lives to service through appointed or elected offices in this great land of ours. This includes the postman who brings the mail, the press men and reporters who are

responsible for putting these words in print, and those workmen who build the highways upon which we move from one location to another.

The list is endless - which brings us back to Einstein and his quote. We do have a heavy debt and one way to repay that debt is to regularly express thanks and gratitude to the men and women who make our lives worth living. Think about it. Thank a lot of people and I'll SEE YOU AT THE TOP! Zig Zigar

We are MOST indebted to our LORD & Savior, Jesus Christ,
who gave his life freely that we might be saved.

From the Kitchen

Chocolate Toffee Bars

Ingredients:

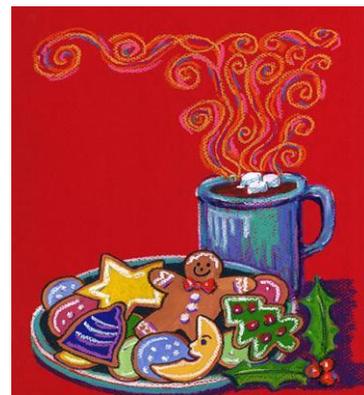
- 1 stick Unsalted Butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt
- 1 TB. Corn syrup
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. finely chopped almonds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla extract
- 12 oz. milk chocolate, melted, divided

Directions:

Butter a 9 X 13 inch rimmed baking sheet. In a heavy-bottomed pot, bring the butter, sugar, salt and syrup to a boil over medium-low heat, stirring constantly. Use a moistened pastry brush to brush down any crystals that form on the side of the pot. Once the sugar is boiling, stop brushing and stir occasionally while bringing the temperature to 300 degrees F. This may take up to 20 minutes, so be patient, keeping the heat on medium-low so the sugar doesn't burn. Every once in a while, rotate the pot to avoid hot spots on the burner. When the sugar reaches 300 degrees, remove it from the heat and stir in the almonds and vanilla.

Pour toffee mixture into the prepared pan and spread it to an even layer about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. Let set until firm, about 15 minutes.

After the toffee has set, pour 4 ounces of the melted chocolate onto the cooled toffee and spread to coat. Put in a cool spot or the refrigerator to set, about 30 minutes. Once the melted chocolate has set the toffee, remove the toffee from the pan and slice into rectangles (don't worry if the pieces break; they will taste delicious). Place the bars, chocolate side



down on a large piece of waxed paper. Pour the remaining 8 oz. of melted chocolate over the toffee and spread to coat. Place in a cool spot (or refrigerate to set, about 30 minutes). These bars are gluten-free.

*From Real Snacks: Make Your Favorite Childhood Treats Without All the Junk
Lara Ferroni ©2012 by Sasquatch Books, Seattle*

**"A homemade gift says more than a store-bought gift.
It says you care enough to invest your time and skill in it.
It says this is a personal gift, not a generic one..."**
(Calvin, In Calvin and Hobbes / Bill Watterson)



Faith
Hope
Charity

In 1885, Vermont farmer Wilson Bentley took the first photo of a snowflake, which led him to hypothesize that no two are alike. But is his theory a cold, hard fact? Heaven only knows. Snowflakes are formed when specks of dust in the atmosphere gather moisture until they are surrounded by about a quintillion frozen molecules, which can be arranged in an almost infinite array of patterns. Either way, if they get school cancelled, it's cool. (Real Simple magazine – Dec. 2013)

Forces for Good

When something bad happens in the nation or in the world that is broadcast on the news, what can you do to help your children and provide some comfort? These tips are from a story entitled: "I read the news today. Oh boy."

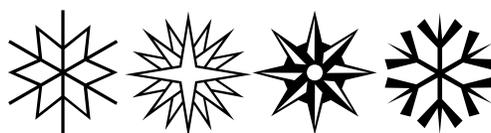
Can you help your kids feel hopeful instead of helpless? Yes – by encouraging them to make the world a better place, says psychologist Tamar Chansky. This is how some families responded to tragic news with positive action.

- ✚ Ask for donations – After the Moore, Oklahoma tornadoes last June, kids ages nine and six collected hundreds of stuffed animals from their own bedrooms and other kids and sent them to children who had lost everything. They're still seeking donations through their website, toycraneproject.com
- ✚ I took my kids, ages six and eight to buy backpacks and fill them with school supplies, pajamas, clothes toiletries and games after Hurricane Katrina. We mailed them to Houston, where so many people from New Orleans were taking refuge.
- ✚ A few weeks after Sandy Hook, my daughter, then nine, wrote a letter to President Obama and asked him to pass laws that would require people to be tested for mental-health issues before they were allowed to buy guns. We were proud of her for taking action.
- ✚ At age 15, my amazing niece joined a church group that headed out for a week in the Midwest to help rebuild houses that had been destroyed by tornadoes.
- ✚ I live in the town where the Boston Marathon bombing suspect was found hiding in a boat. Now, every time we pass a police officer or firefighter, my kids, ages three and five, wave and say hi as a way of acknowledging what they did to protect us.

Real Simple magazine –
Dec 2013

For those of us who like to make grand gestures during the holidays (but can't

afford to without using a credit card), remember the following options:



 Offer to babysit some children for an afternoon so their mom can be free to shop without their “help”.

 Bake cookies for neighbors and friends. Most people love getting home-baked goods, and if they don't want to eat them (if for instance, they are on a specific diet), they will have something to offer guests who drop by.

 Keep a small devotional book in your purse to read while waiting in the checkout line. It will keep your eyes from wandering to the candy and trinkets at the checkout line.

 If you have small children, keep a couple of new books set aside for them to look at while they're riding in the shopping cart. The libraries are a great place to purchase children's books that have been taken out of their collections, and most sell for 25-50 cents each. The main library on 5th & Grand Ave. has a wonderful variety of children's books for sale.

 Plan out a detailed shopping list of all the people you plan to buy for, and the amount you are willing to pay for each gift. Ask for the LORD's leading so you will not be tempted to go over your price limit. Think of the gift itself, and not how much it costs. Just remembering each family member is a joyous thing. Talk to your family this year about drawing names next year and setting a price limit for the gifts. Don't let money control you – it's not healthy. Money is not to be worshipped and not to be wasted. It's just a tool and a blessing. The scripture does not say "Money is the root of all evil", it says the LOVE of money is the root...

