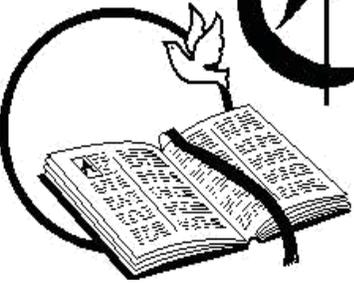


THE GOOD NEWS FREE

Just Keeps Coming



“...GO HOME TO YOUR FRIENDS, AND TELL THEM WHAT WONDERFUL THINGS THE LORD HAS DONE FOR YOU AND HOW MERCIFUL HE HAS BEEN.” MARK 5:19

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Non-Denominational, Non-Church Affiliated

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4 Critical Reasons to Not be the Lone Ranger

When I first entered the world of travel and speaking, I was giddy with the fact that I was now in control of my own life. It was such a rush knowing that I would never have to attend board meetings or answer to any committees again.

I took offense when I met a friend at the airport one day and he asked me this question. “To whom are you accountable?” With a defensive pride I answered, “I am my own boss. I am accountable to no one!” Before the plane reached 30,000 ft my pride had turned to fear. And within just a few years my Lone Ranger style of living my life almost led to disaster.

Here are 4 critical reasons not to live or lead like the Lone Ranger.

1. As a lone ranger we will always be tempted to forget where we are going. In College I submitted to the friendship and authority of a professor who cared about me. One day he called me to his office and admonished me for failing a test. He reminded me of my spoken commitment to be everything God wanted me to be and pointed out that my lazy lifestyle and sloppy preparation were not consistent with that commitment.

I will never forget how difficult it was to hear the caring words he spoke as I left his office. “You are capable of passing any test I give you. Live up to the potential God gave you and don’t ever fail one of my tests again.” I never

failed another one of his tests. And although I have failed several tests in life since then, I have always been drawn back by my professor’s challenge to keep my commitment. “Be everything God created you to be.”

2. As a lone ranger we will easily be discouraged.

Trusting others to keep you accountable in life can also bring great benefits during the difficult times of life. When tragedy strikes or the road gets difficult every one of us needs someone to encourage us to keep going.

Several years ago I found myself near the top of a mountain, totally exhausted. Lightning was striking all around me. We had been hiking for hours and I could not find the strength to make it to safety.

When I finally crumpled to my knees and cried out that I could not go any further, my friend and adviser Danny de Armas, pulled me up by my arm. “You can do it Ken,” he shouted over a clap of thunder. “One step at a time Ken, one step at a time.” The fact that you are reading these words is proof that, because of his encouragement, I made it.... one step at a time. When discouragement paralyzes, supporting friends can help you take the next step.

3. As the lone ranger we will always have to wear the mask.

One of the benefits of growing older is that I no longer want to wear the stupid mask. I don’t want there to be an unrea-

sonable gap between my public image and my personal reality. Some gaps will always exist because the perception of the public differs from reality.

Spotlights, pulpits, platforms, microphones, and fame all tend to

blur what is real. But every man and woman needs to have friends and associates who know what they look like without the mask. Everyone must have at least one friend that practices tough love, challenges them to be stronger where they are weak and a friend that celebrates your strengths.

4. As the lone ranger we will be vulnerable to the one who seeks to destroy. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil prowls, around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

On several occasions throughout my life I have ridden at a full gallop down some side trail that led away from my calling. Some of those trails were leading to places of disaster and shame. Every time... every single time... it was the painful intervention of friends or caring associates that saved me and got me back on the right trail.



I ride with more confidence today than ever before because I have a posse that rides with me. Still today they occasionally point out behavior or distractions that do not fit my ultimate goals in life. It is still as uncomfortable as it was decades ago, and it is still just as valuable.

More importantly, I can enjoy the ride because whether my posse is working hard to keep me on the main trail, or celebrating a victory at full gallop, I know I am not riding alone. So I toss my mask to the wind, throw back my head and with a hearty shout of “High Ho Silver!” I ride toward whatever adventure God has for me today.

Ken Davis
Franklin, Tennessee

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Lifestyle Change

I did not have anything big or famous about myself other than my love for God, life and my family. I am the wife of a wonderful husband, the mother of two beautiful school-aged girls and one phenomenal college-aged daughter. I had been punching a time clock for over 21 years just like everyone else. All that changed in August 2011 when I suffered a back injury at work.

During the final testing for preparing me for back surgery, I suffered a spinal cord injury that left me with total paralysis from the waist down. I have irreversible nerve damage and a condition called clonus which has affected my left arm and right leg causing me to develop drop foot on my right side. The doctors were very forward and direct as they told me of their uncertainty if I would ever be able to walk again. My perfect life suddenly took a turn down a road that I never thought I would ever have to travel.

The ability to experience a drastic life change without a moment's notice did so much more than leave me in shock to the unthinkable way of life that I was now forced to embrace. Losing total control of what was a somewhat normal American dream brought me to a place in my life to discover that I did not experience a disaster when I suffered this spinal cord injury, but it simply allowed my inspirational journey to begin.

I was transferred to TIRR Memorial Herman in the Houston medical center for aggressive rehabilitative therapy and to prepare for my new life on wheels. During my stay, I met so many different people that all left special places in my heart. One of the patients I met is a young lady that actually made history for being the first patient at TIRR to give birth while being an inpatient. Meeting her was a very hum-

bling experience. I am in my 40's and have given birth to three beautiful children. I was able to nurse each of them, teach them to walk and take them to school. These are things she would never be able to do. I realized how fortunate I am through it all and even if things could be better, they could also be a lot worse.

I found myself trying to uplift others to get my mind off of my own issues while striving on to any part of normality possible. Even though I had to face the scary fact of going home in a wheelchair, I was blessed enough to eventually get out of the wheelchair with lots of hard work and physical therapy.

There's that other major factor during recovery of trying to embrace my femininity, first in a wheelchair then later with the use of a walker and eventually a cane. That seems to be one thing that is forgotten when females have a major life change. I made it my personal duty to encourage that aspect of womanhood whenever I visit patients or run into them while doing day to day activities. I firmly believe that if you were particular about your looks and jazzy with the way you dress the day before your journey, why can't you still look that way the day after? I believe that if you look good, this will help you to feel good, and if not good, then maybe just a little better. My new found ministry is trying to help injured males and females see that they have simply had a lifestyle change that might have left them disabled but they are not defeated!

I encourage people to allow their faith in God to kick in and always receive the kindness He constantly gives us. One of the Bible verses I rely on daily is Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV), "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor

forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

This year I started making jewelry sets and special charm bracelets for the female patients to help them embrace their femininity during their journey. God has inspired me to return to TIRR every Christmas morning with my family. We rise and shine early to open our Christmas gifts, eat a little breakfast and off by 9:30 to TIRR with care bags for every single patient and their care giver on the same floor I was on just 3 and a half years ago, the fifth floor of the SCI unit.

I walk in each room without any assistance (something the doctors thought I would never be able to do, but I've learned nothing is impossible for God). I get assistance from the unit support to make sure that the care gift bags are gender specific and that there are enough to go around. I visit with each one of them and make it a point to say that I too was right where they are just 3 and a half years ago and here I am now. It is possible with hard work, a positive attitude, and God's help to achieve anything.

I offer tips of advice and caution them of falling into depression. I encourage them to encourage others as good therapy while being an inpatient. I give hugs and words of comfort, hope and inspiration. I encourage them to



2011 Christmas at TIRR Memorial Hermann Hospital as a inpatient.

reach out to God and reassure them if the feeling of complete aloneness consumes them, God's promise is He will never abandons us, not even in our darkest hour!

I have written two inspirational books. One is a parenting book to help children deal with changes in life they might face when a parent returns home just a little different than they left, This book is titled *Mommy's Coming Home A Little Different*. I pray this book will not only assist back and spinal cord injury patients but will also be used for our returning veterans, wounded warriors with missing limbs and other inju-

(CHANGE continued on page 4)

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Innocent Eyes

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.

Proverbs 17:22



A lady who was speeding had an officer pulled her to the side of the road.

She didn't have her seat belt on so as soon as she stopped, she quickly slipped it on before the officer got to her window.

After talking to her about speeding, the officer said, "I see you are wearing your seat belt. Do you believe in wearing it at all times?"

"Yes, I do, officer," she replied.

"Well," asked the officer, "do you always do it up with it looped through your steering wheel?"



I have a friend who filled his car with gas at a self-service gas station. After he had paid and driven away, he realized that he had left the gas cap on top of his car. He stopped and looked and, sure enough, it was lost.

Well, he thought for a second and realized that other people must have done the same thing, and that it was worth going back to look by the side of the road since even if he couldn't find his own gas cap, he might be able to find one that fit. Sure enough, he hadn't been searching long when he found a gas cap. He tried it on, and it went into place with a satisfying click.

"Great," he thought, "I lost my gas cap, but I found another one that fits. And this one's even better because it locks..."

Walking through the hallways at the middle school where I work, I saw a new substitute teacher standing outside his classroom with his forehead against a locker.

I heard him mutter, "How did you get yourself into this?"

Knowing that he was assigned to a difficult class, I tried to offer moral support.

"Are you okay?" I asked. "Can I help?"

He lifted his head and replied, "I'll be fine as soon as I get this kid out of his locker."



When a guy's printer type began to grow faint, he called a local repair shop where a friendly man informed him that the printer probably needed only to be cleaned.

Because the store charged \$50 for such cleanings, he told him he might be better off reading the printer's manual and trying the job himself.

Pleasantly surprised by his candor, he asked, "Does your boss know that you discourage business?"

"Actually, it's my boss's idea," the employee replied sheepishly.

"We usually make more money on repairs if we let people try to fix things themselves first."

That Still Small Voice

God just taught me a good lesson that I thought might be good to share with others that might have a similar problem.

I had been telling everyone that I am the only person I know without a problem. Then one night I woke up to go to the bathroom and was so dizzy I had to crawl to the bathroom. I got up in the morning and was still dizzy. It just happens I had a VA appointment and my good friend Oscar was picking me up to take me. He helped me to the car and when we got to the hospital he got a wheelchair and pushed me to my appointment and to every other place to find out what was wrong with me.

After all the testing, the doctors could not find anything medically wrong with me. The hospital finally issued me a walker and we

went home. The dizziness still continued but only at bedtime. I was still dizzy when I went to bed. In the morning I got up and I was back to my original condition.

Still puzzled by the dizziness, I asked God what was going on. In that still small voice of His, I heard, "Maybe in the future you will give me a little credit when you don't have a problem." Now I still tell people I'm the only person I know without a problem, and it's all because of God's grace and love for me."

Yours in Christ,

Russell Gilbert
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(CHANGE continued from page 2) ries. This is a very special book that could help a difficult situation be a little easier. There are special notes to the parent in the very back of the book offering tips and strategies I used to maintain that parent/child interaction and to help re-enforce that special bond during their journey.

The other is an inspirational, self help book for adults that give a very candid look at what I, as a spinal cord injury patient really experienced without ever being negative. I suggest ways to embrace and customize things to maintain their lifestyle with tons of positive encouragement. If a full recovery isn't possible then a customized readjustment to their lifestyle is always a second option. This book is called, *Just A Little Back Talk...A Journey of Faith, Femininity and Fortitude*. These books are both in the production stage with the hopes for them being released in mid April 2015.

April is the perfect month for the release of my books because of Easter and the signification of a new beginning not only for me but for others experiencing their journey. To me, the first 45 days is the most critical when the newness is still there and the shock of "What do I do now?" is one of the most important question they have. My



Christmas morning 2015, bringing care bags to all spinal cord injury patients on the 5th floor.

long term goal is to one day soon, form a non-profit organization for newly transitioning patients and care givers to receive assistance with unpaid utilities within the first 45 days of their journey based on income and need.

I not only realize that being fortunate enough to learn to walk again is such a blessing, but I see that this is part of my new life, to share, inspire and encourage others in need and to let them know God is always there for them if they will just let Him into their hearts. No one ever has to be alone again.

**Valencia Dotson
Spring, Texas**

The Three Trees

Once there were three trees on a hill in the woods. They were discussing their hopes and dreams when the first tree said, "Someday I hope to be a treasure chest. I could be filled with gold, silver and precious gems. I could be decorated with intricate carving and everyone would see the beauty."

Then the second tree said, "Someday I will be a mighty ship. I will take kings and queens across the waters and sail to the corners of the world. Everyone will feel safe in me because of the strength of my hull."

Finally the third tree said, "I want to grow to be the tallest and straightest tree in the forest. People will see me on top of the Hill and look up to my branches, and think of the heavens and God and how close to them I am reaching. I will be the greatest tree of all time and people will always remember me."

After a few years of praying that their dreams would come true, a group of woodsmen came upon the trees. When one came to the first tree he said, "This looks like a strong tree, I think I should be able to sell the wood to a carpenter," and he began cutting it down. The tree was happy because he knew that the carpenter would make him into a treasure chest.

At the second tree the woodsman

said, "This looks like a strong tree. I should be able to sell it to the shipyard." The second tree was happy because he knew he was on his way to becoming a mighty ship.

When the woodsmen came upon the third tree, the tree was frightened because he knew that if they cut him down his dreams would not come true. One of the Woodsmen said, "I don't need anything special from my tree, I'll take this one," and he cut it down.

When the first tree arrived at the carpenters, he was made into a feed box for animals. He was then placed in a barn and filled with hay. This was not at all what he had prayed for.

The second tree was cut and made into a small fishing boat. His dreams of being a mighty ship and carrying kings had come to an end.

The third tree was cut into large pieces, and left alone in the dark.

The years went by, and the trees forgot about their dreams.

Then one day, a man and woman came to the barn. She gave birth and they placed the baby in the hay in the feed box that was made from the first tree. The man wished that he could have made a crib for the baby, but this manger would have to do. The tree could feel the importance of this event

(TREES continued on page 6)



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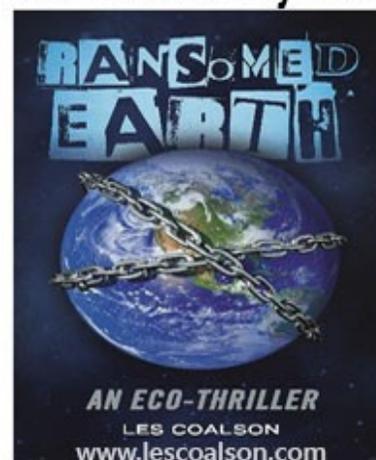
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Col. 1:16

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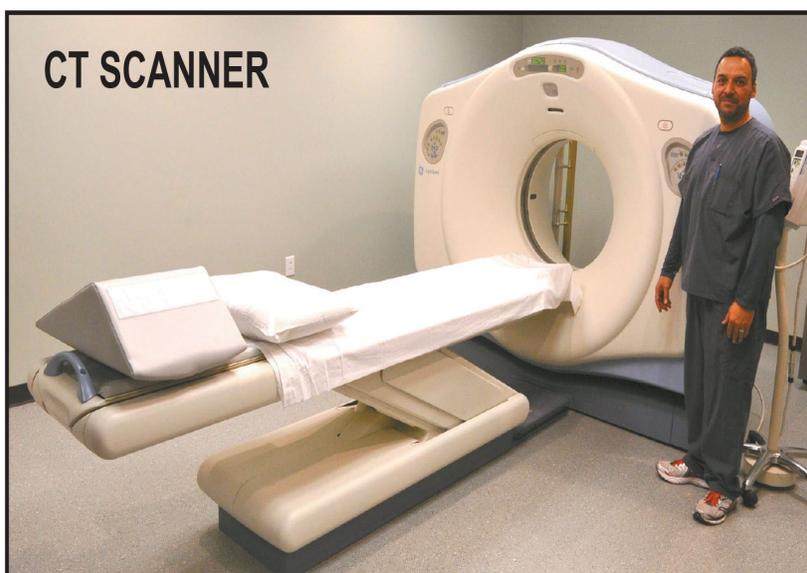
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Jesus Has Risen

After the **Sabbath**, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary **Magdalene** and the other Mary went to look at the **tomb**. There was a violent **earthquake**, for an **angel** of the **Lord** came down from **heaven** and, going to the tomb, **rolled** back the **stone** and sat on it. His **appearance** was like **lightning**, and his **clothes** were **white** as snow. ⁴The **guards** were so **afraid** of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for **Jesus**, who was **crucified**. He is not here; he has **risen**, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go **quickly** and tell his **disciples**: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into . There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

Matthew 28:1-7 NIV

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Lemon Torte

Crust:

1 ½ cups flour

7 Tbsp butter

2/3 cups chopped pecans

Combine flour and butter with pastry blender until crumbly; add chopped pecans and mix again. Press into square 9 x 9 inch pan forming crust. Bake at 350 degrees until brown about 20 minutes. Cool.



Fillings:

1 cup cottage cheese, well drained

1 pkg. (8 oz) cream cheese

¾ cup powdered sugar

1 carton (10 oz) Cool Whip, thawed

1 can Comstock lemon pie filling

Combine well-drained cottage cheese, cream cheese and powdered sugar. Add ½ of the Cool Whip. Mix and spread over cooled crust. Spread lemon pie filling over cheese layer and top with remaining Cool Whip. Chill in refrigerator at least 3 hours before serving. Note: Also good with cherry or chocolate pie fillings.

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(TREES continued from page 4)

and knew that it had held the greatest treasure of all time.

Years later, a group of men got in the fishing boat made from the second tree. One of them was tired and went to sleep. While they were out on the water, a great storm arose and the tree didn't think it was strong enough to keep the men safe. The men woke the sleeping man, and He stood and said "Peace" and the Storm stopped. At this time, the tree knew that it had carried the King of Kings in its boat.

Finally, someone came and got the third tree. It was carried through the streets as the people mocked the man who was carrying it. When they came to a stop, the man was nailed to the tree and raised in the air to die at the top of a hill. When Sunday came, the tree came to realize that it was strong enough to stand at the top of the hill and be as close to God as was possible, because Jesus had been crucified on it for the sins of all the world, was raised to life on this glorious first Easter to live forever. It was only through this sacrifice that everyone who believes that Jesus is the son of God, died for their sins on that cruel cross, on the third day was raised to life ever more to give all those who receive Him as their Lord and Savior will be given eternal life with Him for eternity.

The moral of this story is that when things don't seem to be going your way, always know that God has a plan for you. If you place your trust in Him, God will give you great gifts.

Each of the trees got what they wanted, just not in the way they had imagined.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)

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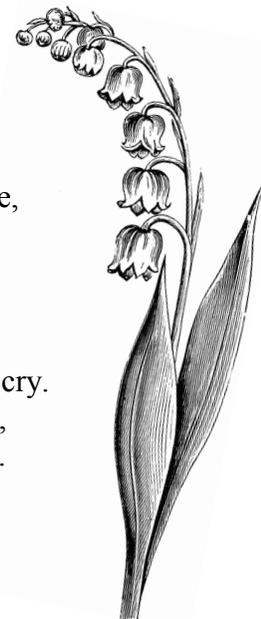
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Written By Eva Dimel
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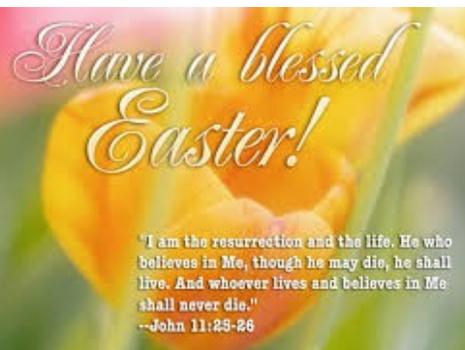
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