On November 18, 1995, Itzhak Perlman, the violinist, came on stage to give a concert at Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center in New York City. If you have ever been to a Perlman concert, you know that getting on stage is no small achievement for him. He was stricken with polio as a child, so he has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of two crutches.

Perlman walks painfully yet majestically across the stage to his chair. He sits down slowly, puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the braces on his legs, tucks one foot back and extends the other foot forward. Then he bends down and picks up the violin, puts it under his chin, nods to the conductor, and proceeds to play.

That November night, however, something went wrong as Perlman began to play. Just as he finished the first few bars, one of the strings on his violin broke. You could hear it snap—it went off like gunfire across the room. The audience thought that he would have to get up, put on the braces again, pick up the crutches, and limp his way off stage either to find another violin or else to get another string for the violin he was using.

But Perlman didn't leave. Instead, he closed his eyes for a moment, then signaled the conductor to begin again. When the orchestra began, he began too. And he played with a passion and power and purity that the audience had never heard before. Anyone knows that it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings. I know that, and you know that. But that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that. You could see him modulating, changing, recomposing the piece in his head. At one point, it sounded like he was de-tuning the strings to get from them sounds that they had never made before.

When Perlman finished, there was an awesome silence in the room. Then people throughout the auditorium rose. We screamed and cheered, doing everything we could to show how much we appreciated what he had done.

He smiled, wiped the sweat from his brow, and raised his bow to quiet us. Then he said, not boastfully, but in a quiet, pensive, reverent tone, "You know, sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."—By Jack Riemer, Signs of the Times, August 2002.

Quote: "It takes more filling than a college and seminary can give a man to make a preacher of him."—By Benjamin M. Adams, Signs of the Times, March 11, 1903.
Christianity really means to be like Christ. It has much to do with an individual's inner experience.—By Charles L. Paddock, Our Times, February 1947.

Quote: "A bank is the thing that will always lend you money if you can prove that you don't need it."—By Joe E. Lewis, Our Times, August 1950.

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During times of crisis a few simple sentences of instruction can provide invaluable guidance. Bobbie, a 49-year-old woman with multiple sclerosis had a wonderful family and a successful career. But at times she wondered if MS would force her into a disability retirement.

During a flare-up of her illness, she was finding it impossible to get her clothing in place after using a restroom at work. Overcome with frustration, Bobbie began to sob. Just then a younger co-worker came into the restroom and asked Bobbie if she could help. "Go away!" Bobbie cried. "I'm too much of a burden. People get tired of helping someone like me."

But the woman walked over and began to assist, saying gently, "Never turn down assistance or hesitate to ask for help. Remember, your need is someone else's opportunity to give."

That woman's wisdom has echoed in Bobbie's mind many times over the ensuing twelve years. "Even today," Bobbie says "that young woman's profound understanding still reminds me that kindness willingly received is a kindness given in its own right."—By Victor M. Parachin, Signs of the Times, November 1997.

Quote: "I can live for two months on a good compliment."—By Mark Twain, Signs of the Times, November 1997.

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Two friends were walking through the desert. As they journeyed, they began to argue, and one slapped the other in the face. Without saying a word, the one who had been slapped bent over and wrote in the sand: "Today my best friend slapped my face."

The two continued their journey together, and, coming upon an oasis, they decided to bathe in the pool of water. The one who had been slapped sank so deeply in the miry bottom that he began to drown, but his friend rescued him. After he had rested a bit, he found a large, flat surface on the sandstone cliff near the oasis. There he carved the words: "Today my best friend saved my life."

His friend said, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand. But when I saved your life, you carved on a stone. Why?"

He replied, "When someone hurts us, we should write the injury in sand so the winds of forgiveness can blow the memory away. But when someone blesses us, we must engrave the record in stone so no wind can ever erase it.

Learn to write your hurts in the sand and to carve your blessings in stone.—Unknown, Signs of the Times, April 2003.

Quote: “Neighbors are not measured by miles, but by influence.”—Unknown, Signs of the Times, October 26, 1904.

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In Tim Gautreaux's short story, "Welding With Children," an old man suddenly realizes that his grandchildren are headed into the same shiftless future that has trapped his daughters and himself. It's time for a change, he decides, and so he finds a little book of Bible stories and begins to read to the children.
As he starts with the story of Creation, six-year-old Moonbeam reaches into the book and places her hand over the beard on the picture of God. “If He shaved, He’d look just like that old man down at the Pak-a-Sak!” The grandfather protests. “You mean Mr. Fordyson? That man don’t look like God.” But the children argue back, “You just said God made us to look like Him.” While we, like the grandfather, may find it difficult to think of God as resembling anyone we know, it’s true that the Bible says “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Just what does our creation in the image of God mean? “I’m not sure that the rest of us understand it much better than Moonbeam did. Theologians have debated the meaning of the *imago Dei* (an old Latin term referring to God’s image reflected in us) down through the centuries, but I doubt that we’ll ever completely understand it this side of heaven. Yet it is one of the most important doctrines of Christian belief because what we do know about it tells us where we came from, why we are here, where we are going, and how we are to live.—By Carmen Seibold, Signs of the Times, May 1998.

Quote: “God cannot open the windows of heaven very wide for the man who keeps his Bible shut.”—Unknown, Signs of the Times, September 3, 1896.

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For what it’s worth:

Josh Billings was asked, “How fast does sound travel?” and his idea is that it depends a good deal upon the noise you are talking about. “The sound of a dinner-horn, for instance, travels half a mile in a second, while an invitashun to git up in the morning I have known to be 3 quarters uv an hour goin up 2 pair of stairs, and then not hev strength left to be heard.”—Signs of the Times, September 3, 1896.

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