HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!

While we're all in the midst of preparations for Christmas, here's a little story from another babe; this one came through the Internet. We'll never again be able to think of Christmas the same way we have.

THE TALE OF TWO BABIES

In 1994, two Americans answered an invitation from the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics (based on biblical principles) in the public schools. They were invited to teach at prisons, businesses, the fire and police departments and a large orphanage.

About 100 boys and girls who had been abandoned, abused, and left in the care of a government-run program were in the orphanage.

They related the following story in their own words:

It was nearing the holiday season, 1994-time for our orphans to hear, for the first time, the traditional story of Christmas. We told them about Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem. Finding no room in the inn, the couple went to a stable, where the baby Jesus was born and placed in a manger. Throughout the story, the children and orphanage staff sat in amazement as they listened. Some sat on the edges of their stools, trying to grasp every word.

When we had completed the story, we gave the children three small pieces of cardboard to make a crude manger. Each child was given a small paper square, cut from yellow napkins I had brought with me. Following instructions, the children tore the paper and carefully laid strips in the manger for straw. Small squares of flannel cut from a worn-out nightgown, which an American lady was throwing away as she left Russia, were used for the baby's blanket. A doll-like baby was cut from tan felt we had brought from the United States. The orphans were busy assembling their mangers as I walked among them to see if they needed any help.

All went well until I got to the table where little Misha sat—he looked to be about 6 years old and had finished his project.

As I looked at the little boy's manger, I was startled to see not one, but two babies in the manger. Quickly, I called for the translator to ask the lad why there were two babies in the manger.

He crossed his arms in front of him and, looking at his completed manger scene, the child began to repeat the story very seriously. For such a young boy, who had only heard the Christmas story once, he related the
happenings accurately, until he came to the part where Mary put the baby Jesus in the manger. Then Misha started to ad-lib.

He made up his own ending to the story as he said, "And when Maria laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told Him I have no mamma and I have no papa, so I don't have any place to stay. Then Jesus told me I could stay with Him. But I told him I couldn't, because I didn't have a gift to give him like everybody else did.

"But I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift. I thought maybe if I kept him warm, that would be a good gift. So I asked Jesus, 'If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?' And Jesus told me, 'If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me.' So I got into the manger, and then Jesus looked at me and he told me I could stay with him-for always."

As little Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed full of tears that splashed down his little cheeks. He put his hand over his face, his head dropped to the table, and his shoulders shook as he sobbed and sobbed.

The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon nor abuse him, someone who would stay with him-FOR ALWAYS.

REFLECTIONS FROM YVONNE'S CORNER

It's the last month of the year and the holiday called Christmas. What does that really mean to us as followers of Christ? Does it mean gifts, parties, and a busy month with everything going down to the deadline?

God is so good He gives us a choice. For a moment let us reflect back to when Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall: Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all; Hearken! What means the sudden call, "What will you do with Jesus?"

Will you evade Him, as Pilate, tried? Or will you choose Him, whate'er betide? Vainly you struggle from Him to hide, What will you do with Jesus?

What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be;

Someday your heart will be asking, What will He do with me?

Don and I both pray that at this time of year we may all stay focused on Christ.

SOMEONE CARES UNDER THE TREE:

We are again proud to report ending the year in the black with a massive job ahead in 1999. We prayerfully ask each of you who has had any part of Someone Cares to continue as you have. If you are a Prayer warrior, please continue. If a Pen Friend, keep that Paper Sunshine going. If not a Pen Friend, become one. If you supported us financially, please do so again. We are at a point where we must hire someone to help us. We would ask 100 of you not supporting us now to commit to $25 a month for one year. Or, if you are already a supporter, to increase by whatever you can. The person we hire will take over the Pen Friend Program under our supervision. May 1999 be the year Jesus returns so we can stop the appeals and instead all meet under the Tree Of Life to celebrate. God Bless each of you. Because Of You Someone Cares
IF I HAD A SECOND CHANCE

I'd stop looking and start seeing, And treat everyone as a human being.
I'd take my eyes off my watch and watch with my eyes, To notice the trees and the beautiful sky.
I'd stop criticizing and show more love, Be less forgetful and give thanks up above.
I'd give more encouragement and a lot more praise, And do a lot less judging for I too have lost my way.
I'd get my priorities in order and straight, Better now than never Lord, I'm just a bit too late.
I'd find my way back to the Lord's humble grace, With a vow never again to lose my place,
I'm changing my life and I've made a stance, Oh Lord, what I wouldn't give for a second chance.

IT'S NOT WHAT WE?

It's not what we eat
but what we digest
that makes us strong;

not what we gain
but what we save
that makes us rich;

not what we read
but what we remember
that makes us learned;

and not what we profess
but what we practice
that makes us Christians.

GOD'S DAY OFF

What if, when the alarm clock goes off tomorrow morning you discover, to your dismay, that there is no sun in the sky and all the clouds seem to have blown away? And what if, when you go outside to start your day, you discover that there is no gentle breeze to help wake you from the last of your morning sleep? What if you discover that God has simply taken the day off?

What would be your first reaction? Would it be anger?
Frustration?
Disbelief? Fear?
Would you wonder why God would just decide He needs to rest for awhile before continuing about His business, knowing all the while that so much is depending upon Him?

Now you know how He feels.

We seem to have taken the day off ourselves. We seem to have become so used to the things that God does for us every day, that we no longer think it is necessary to thank Him in small ways as well as in big ones. We ride through good neighborhoods on our way to church and smile at the people walking their dogs or washing their cars and we think, "that's nice" before we go on our way. But we wrinkle our noses at the little dirty children we see playing alone and talking to no one in particular, and we think, "that's a shame" as we hit the power locks on our cars.

Do you know that every time you offer a kind word to someone you offer it to God? That every time you do something good for someone you are doing it not so much for the recipient but for God?

If we, as Christians, want to win our world, we must first show some compassion for the people in it. It may involve some of us stepping out of the comfort zone which has become our lives, rolling up our sleeves, and getting our hands a little dirty. But it could be as simple as offering a kind word to the people you pass on the street every day. We must start somewhere.

I think that God sometimes wonders why we have taken the day off. Why do we feel that we don't have time to do His word instead of just reading about it in the Bible? Tomorrow, when you wake up and discover that God hasn't taken the day off, but is there for you as usual, remember to thank Him in the small ways. Do something kind, even a small act of kindness, for someone you don't know. Shake someone's hand, or smile at a perfect stranger. You may discover something in that other person's face that you never expected...the face of God smiling back at you.

May God Richly Bless You, Jacqueline M Jones from Proseuche No. 27 via the Internet

WHAT IF ...

What if...GOD couldn't take the time to bless us today because we couldn't take the time to thank Him yesterday?

What if...GOD decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we didn't follow Him today?

What if...we never saw another flower bloom because we grumbled when GOD sent the rain?

What if...GOD didn't walk with us today because we failed to recognize it as His day?

What if...GOD took away the Bible tomorrow because we would not read it today?

What if...GOD took away His message because we failed to listen to the messenger?

What if...GOD didn't send His only begotten Son because He wanted us to be prepared to pay the price for sin.

What if...the door of the church was closed because we did not open the door of our heart?
What if...GOD stopped loving and caring for us because we failed to love and care for others?

What if...GOD would not hear us today because we would not listen to Him yesterday?

What if...GOD answered our prayers the way we answer His call to service?

What if...GOD met our needs the way we give Him our lives?

What if...We failed to send this message on???

Mary Davis, via the Internet

LESSONS FROM NOAH'S ARK

- Plan ahead... It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
- Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, someone might ask you to do something REALLY big.
- Don't listen to critics—do what has to be done.
- Build on high ground.
- For safety's sake, travel in pairs.
- Two heads are better than one.
- Speed isn't always an advantage. The cheetahs were on board but...so were the snails.
- If you can't fight or flee—float!!
- Take care of your animals as if they were the last ones on earth.
- Don't forget that we're all in the same boat.
- When things get really deep, don't sit there and complain - shovel!!!
- Stay below deck during the storm.
- Remember that the ark was built by amateurs and the Titanic was built by professionals.
- If you have to start over, have a friend by your side.
- Remember that the wood-peckers INSIDE are often a bigger threat than the storm outside.
- Don't miss the boat.
- No matter how bleak it looks, there's always a rainbow on the horizon.

UPDATE ON STEVE

No news is hopefully good in this case. His wife was also allowed to speak at the parole hearing, as we prayed for her to have holy boldness. As of this writing, there has been no word from the parole board, and many of those at that day's hearings have been turned down. Your prayers help! Pray without ceasing. God's will be done.

FOR GOD SO LOVED...

I am looking at a pile of inmates' requests for Pen Friends; we call it Paper Sunshine. This is a risk-free letter writing ministry where all the mail is funneled through our PO Box so you never give out your real address. We would like to match all these men and women before Christmas. We ask each of you to ask your pastor to put the following in your Church Bulletin; also we have a need for Christmas cards to give to inmates.

PEN FRIENDS NEEDED: Someone Cares Prison Ministry has a risk-free letter writing ministry to inmates...
around the world. Your address is kept confidential and The God Squad screens all mail coming to you. Please contact Don & Yvonne McClure at:

Someone Cares
Box B
Ivanhoe, Calif 93235
or check our web page at
www.someone.cares.org

Next month we'll try to list some of the good web sites out there that are inspirational, funny, or simply better than coffee to kick-start your day. Once you sign on, all are free, and come in your Email when you log in. Send your favorite address to:
jeanius@lni.net
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