

Modern-Day Parable of the Talents

Remember the gospel story about the king who gave 10 talents to his servants and told them to invest the money while he went on a journey?

Many years ago, Rev. Richard Morris of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Lakewood, Ohio, brought this story to life in his own way. He gave each of his parishioners a \$10 bill and asked that they return the money with interest. The investment of \$2,200 brought \$8,575 in return.

One young man bought a bag of fertilizer with his \$10. He cared for a neighbor's lawn, cut it all summer, and brought back \$100. Another man spent \$9.80 on bus tickets and contributed to the church the money he saved on gas for his car. And one woman hired a helper with her \$10, made a quilt, and raffled it off, giving the \$80 proceeds to St. Peter's.

"We did very well," said Rev. Morris. "But I'm also happy that people have had a good time and got to know each other a little through this."

That sounds like an extra special Return on Investment.

Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much. (Matthew 25:23)

Remind us, Holy Spirit, that it is in giving that we receive.

The Luckiest Man

In baseball stadiums around the country, June 2nd is celebrated as Lou Gehrig Day in honor of one of the greatest players (and Yankees) in the history of the game. That date was chosen for several reasons.

As related by Robert L. Dilenschneider in his book *Character: Life Lessons in Courage, Integrity, and Leadership*, June 2, 1925, was the day when Yankees' first baseman Wally Pipp sat out the game due to a headache and was replaced by Gehrig, who quickly became the regular first baseman.

June 2, 1941, was the day Gehrig died of ALS, a debilitating neurological disorder that still plagues people today. Even in the midst of his illness, Gehrig remained a model of good sportsmanship, humility, and gratitude for his blessings, earning praise from all who knew him. He famously declared himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth."

Dilenschneider sees two key lessons in Gehrig's life: "1) Life isn't fair. It takes courage to count your blessings despite bad breaks. 2) Humility in the face of success will inspire others to admire and follow you."

**Give thanks in all circumstances.
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)**

Help me to count my blessings during dark times, Savior.

Sister Reflects Lumen Christi, Part 1

A mission trip to Ecuador during her college years brought Mary Lisa Renfer into contact with abused and suffering children. Her whole life changed as a result. She earned a degree in osteopathic medicine at Michigan State University, became a doctor, and joined the Religious Sisters of Mercy.

Today, Sister Mary Lisa serves as medical director of St. Mary's Legacy Clinic, "which provides health care to uninsured patients in rural eastern Tennessee," reported The Catholic Extension Society. The Society honored her with their Lumen Christi Award, given to individuals who reflect the "light of Christ" to those they serve in their communities.

Sister Mary Lisa observed, "People come with their heads hung low, often with a certain amount of shame because of the circumstances that they come from. So our goal is to bring that love of Christ to them so that they know that they have dignity and they are worthy of excellent medical care. They are worthy to be treated as a whole human person because of just who they are as a child of God."

**Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord,
and will be repaid in full. (Proverbs 19:17)**

*Help me affirm the sacred dignity of each
person, Creator.*

Sister Reflects Lumen Christi, Part 2

In receiving the Lumen Christi Award from The Catholic Extension Society, Sister Mary Lisa Renfer noted that the poor and uninsured people who St. Mary's Legacy Clinic serves are not predominantly Catholic. In fact, many "have not met a Catholic before, much less a Religious Sister," she said. "So, this is their picture that they get of the Church. It's coming out to meet them where they're at with the love of Christ."

Patients at the clinic are deeply appreciative. Carolyn Dunaway told of having a kidney removed due to cancer, while losing her job and health insurance. She found follow-up care at the clinic and credits the staff with saving her life. "It makes me feel a little closer to God when I speak with them," she said.

Everyone is treated with that same kind of special attention. Sister Mary Lisa recalled one patient who thought her problems were too complicated for the clinic to treat. But Sister Mary Lisa insisted they review them, noting, "You could see her sigh of relief [because of] someone listening to her and saying, 'You are not a ball of complex medical conditions; you are a person.'"

**I will restore health to you...says the Lord,
because they have called you an outcast.
(Jeremiah 30:17)**

May Your light always shine through me, Jesus.

Above the Call of Duty

In early 2025, off-duty Salinas Valley State Prison Correctional Officer Grady was driving with his faithful K-9 partner, Anna, when he saw a Honda CRV in front of him “lose control and crash off the highway.” According to the *CDCR Weekender*, the “car rolled multiple times before colliding with a power pole...[then] landed on its side, finally coming to a stop.”

Officer Grady wasted no time in assisting the car’s occupants, two teenage girls, who were “conscious but trapped.” After calling 911, Grady helped the girls exit the smoking vehicle through its “open sunroof.” He then led them to his furry companion, Anna, whose gentle “kisses and cuddles” brought them comfort.

This was not the first time these rescuers had lent a hand in a high-stress situation. Their primary job at the California prison is to serve as “mental health support for staff.”

“I thank God every day for blessing us with Officer Grady and Anna,” one of the young crash survivors concluded. “They are true heroes.”

The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial. (2 Peter 2:9)

Abba, we thank You for the timely arrival of “true heroes.”

The 98-Year-Old Flower Girl

When Katie Lopus was planning her walk down the aisle to marry Jon “J.C.” Ball, she knew exactly who she wanted to be her flower girl: her 98-year-old grandmother.

“A flower girl spreads petals and sets the stage for love, growth, and commitment, which my grandma has done for me my whole life,” Katie told *People*.

On the day of the outdoor ceremony at The Lodge at Montana’s Whitefish Lake, Katie’s grandmother, Frances Lopus, happily created a path of white rose petals as she strewed them down the aisle from a basket attached to her walker. The heartwarming sight brought some guests to tears.

Frances felt grateful to be a part of the ceremony. She said that being the flower girl for her granddaughter’s wedding made her feel like she was “in seventh heaven.”

Look...at the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.

(Song of Solomon 3:11)

Lord, may we try to live each day feeling young at heart and always be willing to incorporate our elders into our special occasions.

Rest Helps You Regain Your Strength

Hannah Brencher has made the choice to practice one day of sabbath every week. For 24 hours, she unplugs from all media and work, allowing herself to rest. It is her way of saying, “God, You’re bigger than me. Your ways are higher than mine. Therefore, I’m taking a break and releasing everything I’m responsible for stewarding well into Your hands.”

In her book *The Unplugged Hours: Cultivating a Life of Presence in a Digitally Connected World*, Brencher observes, “We tend to think that if we leave the race for just a moment, we’ll lose our footing and be unable to keep up... But when we leave the race to embrace rest, we step back into the bustle with new strength. Otherworldly strength.”

Practicing sabbath not only recharges Brencher’s mind and spirit, but her body as well. In fact, it benefits her as a whole person—and she hopes to encourage others to learn from her experience. She concludes, “You don’t have to be afraid to rest. Rest isn’t weakness—it’s the secret to so much strength you’ve yet to tap into.”

**Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is a sabbath of complete rest.
(Leviticus 23:3)**

Father, remind me to rest and recharge.

From Burger King to College Dream

After watching her daughter, Daisy, graduate from Mills Creek High School last May, Maria Mendoza made a quick late-night run to a Burger King in Dacula, Georgia. What she observed that night truly touched her heart—a young man “still wearing his graduation stole and medals,” hard at work.

“He was so kind, so polite,” Mendoza recalled to *11 Alive News*, “radiating joy, even after such a big day. His dedication and quiet strength really moved me. I felt called to do something to recognize that.”

Maria posted a TikTok video of the teen, who was identified as fellow Mills Creek high school graduate Mykale Baker. Maria also created a GoFundMe page with the goal of helping him “pursue his college dreams.” In less than two weeks, Mykale’s GoFundMe had exceeded its original “\$60,000 goal.”

“I never thought this would happen to me,” Baker wrote under the follow-up TikTok video, showing him receiving “the thousands of dollars raised” from Mendoza herself. He said he plans to use the money to pay for technical college. “I’m very thankful,” he concluded.

Your work shall be rewarded. (2 Chronicles 15:7)

Abba, bless the efforts of hardworking youth everywhere.

Norm Says Goodbye

Actor George Wendt became famous for playing everybody's favorite barfly, Norm Peterson, on the sitcom *Cheers* for 11 seasons. The character's affable personality and dry wit seemed to fit Wendt well.

Upon Wendt's death in 2025, *NPR's* Scott Simon remembered an evening they spent together in New York while working on a project. At a restaurant for dinner, many patrons exclaimed "Norm!" when they saw Wendt. Each time, he responded, "How ya' doin', pal?" and raised his beer glass to them.

Simon asked Wendt if he ever got tired of being so associated with one role. He answered, "It's a good life. People don't know me, but they like me." He then jokingly added, "But I am a little disappointed that when people ask, 'Who's the next James Bond?' my name never comes up."

Kelly Leonard, an executive who worked with Wendt at The Second City, noted, "He treated you the same whether you were the dishwasher or the producer—I know, because I was both—and George Wendt didn't discriminate by title."

**He will yet fill your mouth with laughter.
(Job 8:21)**

*Thank You for people who make us laugh,
Creator.*

Miracle Millie

When Millie Longhenry was born in Florida three years ago, she was not expected to live beyond a few months because she had “a rare and severe congenital brain disorder called alobar holoprosencephaly.”

Despite the bleak prognosis, her parents, Meg and Bill, along with her big brother, Theo, brought the girl home for hospice care. A friend suggested they take Millie to renowned neurologist Dr. Brandon Crawford, who saw “huge potential” for her recovery without the use of heavy drugs or surgery.

Her treatment was progressing beautifully until last April, when the Longhenrys faced the possibility of halting their daughter’s therapy due to “lack of funds.” At Crawford’s insistence, however, they came in for her next session, certain that God would somehow provide the means for it. And lo and behold, a former patient of Crawford’s was so moved by Millie’s story, she decided to cover her bill that very morning.

“We serve such a big God that He is greater than our biggest fears,” Meg told *Fox News Digital*. “He is the greatest physician, and He aligns us where we need to be.”

**I bless the Lord who gives me counsel.
(Psalm 16:7)**

Abba, grant healing to those who need it.

Soccer Grannies, Part 1

In 2010, when the FIFA World Cup was being held in South Africa, a human interest story in the province of Limpopo gained international attention. A group of women, ranging in age from their 40s to their 80s, had started playing soccer a few years prior to improve their health. Dubbed the “Soccer Grannies”—and led by a humanitarian nicknamed Mama Beka—they exuded joy on the pitch and demonstrated that getting older didn’t mean your life had to go downhill.

Their story came to the attention of Jean Duffy, a mom in Lexington, Massachusetts, who had started a soccer team for women in their 40s after watching her daughters play the game. Jean then got in touch with Beka, which led to a life-changing trip to the U.S. for her team and an opportunity to learn about the selflessness, faith, and community that motivated these grandmothers to take up sports in their later years.

Jean turned this story into the Christopher Award-winning book *Soccer Grannies: The South African Women Who Inspire the World*, and she discussed it on *Christopher Closeup*. More tomorrow...

Gray hair is a crown of glory. (Proverbs 16:31)

*Guide us toward thriving in our golden years,
Abba.*

Soccer Grannies, Part 2

Beka Ntsanwisi is the heroine of *Soccer Grannies* because of her caring spirit, noted author Jean Duffy: “Even as a young girl, she saw kids walking long distances...to get to school, watched them study all day with nothing to eat, and then start their long walk home. And so, young Beka went to her parents’ larder and took some food to share with those students.”

“As an adult, Beka hosted a talk show on national radio, and people would call in with their problems, perhaps requesting a wheelchair or assistance to conduct a proper funeral for a relative. Beka would coordinate the resources needed to assist.”

“Over the years, she helped the impoverished in her community in many ways. The AIDS epidemic hit South Africa very hard, and women lost adult children...to the disease. These women found themselves responsible for eight or 10 or 12 grandchildren. They needed to clothe and feed and house them, so Beka collected donations to help them out. Beka also helped fund the education of young adults, helping them to find jobs.”

More tomorrow...

Let us not grow weary in doing good, for we will reap...if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9)

*Foster compassion and selflessness within me,
Creator.*

Soccer Grannies, Part 3

Beka Ntsanwisi's good works did not protect her from personal hardship. But even then, she turned it into a way to lift others up.

After being diagnosed with colon cancer at age 35, Beka needed treatment in the hospital. There, she saw many older women "suffering from heart disease, diabetes, and various mobility issues."

Rather than focusing on her own suffering, Beka asked the doctor how she could assist these women. He responded that their conditions were largely caused by stress, and that exercise would improve their health, just as it would Beka's health as she recovered from chemotherapy treatments.

So, Beka invited these grandmothers to start an exercise program with her. At first, that mainly involved taking walks. But one day, some boys playing soccer let the ball get away from them, and it rolled over to Beka's group. They started kicking it around and truly having a good time. Beka noticed this, and the Soccer Grannies were born. More tomorrow...

Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:4)

Remind me that in improving the lives of others, Lord, my own life and spirit also benefit.

Soccer Grannies, Part 4

The South African Soccer Grannies faced some challenges in their early days. Many in their community reacted negatively to grandmothers engaging in sports, believing that their proper place was taking care of grandchildren at home. The Grannies were having too good a time to give up, however, and eventually they won over the naysayers. They also achieved their goal of improved health.

Jean Duffy, author of the Christopher Award-winning book *Soccer Grannies*, explained, “Their blood pressures were lower. Their cholesterol was reduced. The doctors were surprised. Some of the grannies boast they don’t take any medications now, and they have better movement.”

“This team formed a new circle of supportive friends. If someone misses a practice, they call or check by the house to make sure everything’s okay. If they’re hitting one of life’s rocky periods, they help each other out. They pray together, they sing and dance together... Physically, emotionally, and socially, they’ve benefited from the game.” More tomorrow...

**Health and fitness are better than any gold.
(Sirach 30:15)**

Teach me to care for my body and soul, Savior.

Soccer Grannies, Part 5

When soccer mom (and player) Jean Duffy of Lexington, Massachusetts, read about Beka Ntsanwisi and the South African Soccer Grannies in 2010, she immediately got in touch with her.

Jean invited Beka and the team—whose name is Vakhegula Vakhegula, F.C., which translates to “Grandmother, Grandmother”—to come to the U.S. for the Veterans Cup Tournament in Massachusetts. Arranging that trip and the money for it is a story in itself, told by Jean in her Christopher Award-winning book, but it all eventually worked out, allowing international friendships to be formed.

At the heart of all the Soccer Grannies’ lives is their faith. Jean recalled, “[Beka] once said that helping people is a God-given talent...She takes on ambitious projects that, to others, might seem impossible, but she states her dreams with such conviction, and accomplishes great things as a result of voicing her vision and sharing it. I believe that her trust in God is fundamental...She knows that He’ll help make it happen.”

More tomorrow...

**I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13)**

*Increase my trust in You, Lord, so I can do
Your will.*

Soccer Grannies, Part 6

The Christian faith of the Soccer Grannies has been a constant source of guidance, strength, and comfort for them during hardships. For instance, Jean Duffy explained, “Granny Nora talked about hunger at different parts of her life. She said...that when she has difficulties...she kneels down, prays, and reports her problems to God, and that makes her happy.”

“Granny Khune had two sons die and was very worried about her grandchildren. She talked about how if someone was a believer and they had tough problems, [people] would say, ‘Tell your knees.’ By this they meant, get down on your knees and pray. Attending church gave her the hope that her kids would be under God’s care and they would be okay.”

“Despite all these struggles the women have faced,” Jean continued, “they now have a senior pension from the government...They have beloved family, whether that’s near or far. They have this team forming a new circle of friends. They’ve taken control of their health, and they have their faith. As Granny Nora says, ‘My soul has settled.’ What a gift [that is] at this time of their life.” More tomorrow...

Devote yourselves to prayer. (Colossians 4:2)

Settle my soul through prayer, Messiah.

Soccer Grannies, Part 7

Since 2011, the Soccer Grannies movement has spread far and wide. Christopher Award-winning author Jean Duffy said, “That team and Beka have inspired over 240 teams of grannies across South Africa and other African countries as well. If you think about it, that’s thousands of older women who are healthier, more confident, feeling empowered, and with this additional community of support.”

In 2023, another one of Beka’s dreams was realized: hosting a Grannies World Cup. Jean recalled, “The South African women hosted the first ever Grannies International Football Tournament, bringing together 16 teams of women over 50 from across Africa, the U.S., and Europe, all with a shared passion for the game.”

“It was an amazing experience, parading through the town with our teams behind the flags of our nation and marching into a packed stadium. It’s amazing how far these women have come [from] when they were told they belong at home. Now, they’re heroes filling the stadium with an international event.”

They still bring forth fruit in old age, they are always green and full of sap. (Psalm 92:14)

Remind us to support and celebrate our elders, Abba.

Actor Embraced Fatherhood

Actor Michael Keaton starred in major movies during the 1980s and 90s, such as *Batman* and *Mr. Mom*. You'll also recognize him for his later work, including *Birdman* and *Spider-Man: Homecoming*.

In 2024, Keaton revealed to *People* magazine that he could have worked a lot more over the years, but he turned down roles so he could better focus on being a present and active father for his son, Sean Douglas.

Keaton even earned the nickname “Dr. No” because of all the parts he declined to play. But the actor has never second-guessed his decision. In fact, he describes it as a “no brainer...[Childhood is] only going to happen one time—he’s only going to be a kid [for a bit].”

Keaton added, “That’s not to say if I’ll see a movie that I didn’t do, and I go, ‘Oh, boy, that turned out to be a good movie.’ But the choice was always the correct choice. I always wanted to be a dad.”

**Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord.
(Psalm 127:3)**

Abba, instill all fathers with the love and commitment they need to be good parents to their children.

A Father's Approach to Farming, Part 1

For James Rebanks of Matterdale, England, being a sheep farmer runs in the family. Writing for *Plough*, he recalled watching his grandfather rule the farm like a “biblical patriarch,” an approach that made their business successful.

As an adult, however, James came to see that his grandfather's success came at the expense of his family. “Just as an oak tree crowds out its own saplings from the light, making them stunted dwarf trees,” he noted, “so too can humans shrink their children's spirits if they overshadow them and deny them experiences that allow them to grow.”

When James himself became the boss, he adopted a more humble approach by including his own four children in the process of running things. His 17-year-old daughter, Bea, displayed the most natural interest in, and aptitude for, farming, so she has worked alongside him in learning new methods of soil ecology and breeding strategies. “That girl of mine is going to start her farming life knowing more good stuff than I knew when I was 40 years old,” beamed the proud father.

Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray. (Proverbs 22:6)

May fathers prepare their children for the future, Abba.

A Father's Approach to Farming, Part 2

James Rebanks is doing everything possible to help his daughter, Bea, thrive as a farmer. She has even become better than him when it comes to working with cattle, a new avenue they are pursuing beyond just sheep farming. The bull that Bea had been working with earned first prize in a local competition, earning her the respect of other farmers in addition to her dad.

James feels good about his leadership style. Writing at *Plough*, he explained, "I no longer want to be the kind of patriarch my grandfather was. I don't need, or want, to rule my world like that. I have finally come to see such authority as limiting and more than a little selfish."

"You can rule a family, or even a country, with fear, but to me that seems a pitiful kind of authority. When we lift up the people around us, below us, and younger than us, we build a whole that is greater than what was there previously. We are growing true wealth: happier and healthier humans and a community around us that is full of love. What other wealth is there that means anything?"

Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant. (Matthew 20:26)

Father, teach me to be a servant leader.

‘From a Dad, to a Dad’

Being a parent automatically means being a role model for life. Little did 41-year-old father of three/emergency room physician Dr. J. Mack Slaughter know he would be singled out as a positive example by a fellow dad.

One morning, another father, who wished to remain anonymous, saw Slaughter interacting with his wife and three young children at Mimi’s Café in Fort Worth, Texas. According to *SWNS*, this stranger felt inspired to pay for the Slaughter family’s breakfast and left the following message:

“Thank you for being a great dad! From a dad, to a dad. Thank you for being the dad they need you to be, regardless of who’s watching. We need more men like you. Thank you for letting us all see your love for them all.”

“I immediately welled up,” Slaughter concluded. “It was just \$85 to [the stranger]—but to me, it was so much more...I see some of the most terrible things...This reminded me that complete strangers can do miraculous...things... They remind us despite all the bad in the world, there’s so much good, too.”

**Work for the good...of the family of faith.
(Galatians 6:10)**

Abba, thank You for fathers who love and lead by example.

A Nurse is Never Off Duty

Jennifer Gentry of Edmond, Oklahoma, is used to saving lives in her job as a Cardiac ICU nurse at Integris Baptist Hospital. But there was one day when her quick thinking and action while off the clock kept two people from dying.

While working out at her local YMCA, Gentry saw a man collapse. When she rushed to check on him, he no longer had a heartbeat, so she began chest compressions. After a shock by a defibrillator and more compressions, the man thankfully regained consciousness.

Three hours later, on her way to lunch, Gentry spotted a woman nursing her baby in a car. The baby struggled to breathe and was turning blue, so Gentry quickly intervened.

She gave the child some back slaps, successfully dislodging whatever was blocking his airway. The baby's mother expressed her deep gratitude to Gentry, telling *ABC News*, "She saved my son's life. It really, truly felt like God sent Jenny to be our guardian angel that day."

I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak. (Ezekiel 34:16)

Divine Physician, thank You for nurses who serve as angels in our lives.

From New Jersey to the Camino

For 46 days, Kinnelon, New Jersey's John Minardi left his wife, adult children, and job behind to walk the 490-mile Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in France and Spain. Though the journey was physically exhausting, it also felt spiritually exhilarating.

As reported by *The Beacon's* Michael Wojcik, Minardi got the idea after watching the Christopher Award-winning Martin Sheen movie *The Way*. "I had a calling to increase my faith for whatever happens later in life," he explained.

Sometimes, Minardi trekked the pathways by himself; other times, he was with fellow pilgrims who were "Catholics, non-Catholics, or questioning their beliefs." All the encounters were enriching. And for a man whose mind usually races, Minardi found himself practicing silence for the first time in a long time.

"I never went to so many Masses or spent so much time praying," he concluded. "It strengthened my faith and prayer life. There's a saying: 'You travel the El Camino de Santiago to discover who you were before society changed you.' I want to spend more time with family like I did growing up."

**The Lord has made my journey successful.
(Genesis 24:56)**

Lord, may I make time for spiritual renewal.

Now Hear This

The first rule of effective communication is to gain the attention of those with whom you wish to communicate. This principle was exemplified in a long ago issue of *The Anglican Digest*. In a small box was the simple heading, “Notice,” and this is what it said:

“You may have noticed the increased number of notices. We noticed that some of our notices have been noticed, and some of our notices have not been noticed. The response to our notices has been noticeably unnoticeable. This is to remind you to notice the notices, and to respond to the notices, because we do not want this notice to go unnoticed.”

God doesn’t want to go unnoticed either. Throughout history, He has sent us all sorts of notices through gifted writers, angels, prophets, and even through His own Son, Jesus. Even Jesus’ coming was preceded by a notice. John 1:6-9 states, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came...to bear witness to the light...The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.”

Did you notice?

**In Your presence there is fullness of joy.
(Psalm 16:11)**

Holy Spirit, alert me to the signs of God’s presence.

Hospital of the Popes

Rome's Gemelli Hospital has been tending to popes for decades. It was named after Agostino Gemelli, who began his life as an atheist. Born in Milan in 1878, "his family rejected religion entirely," writes *Aleteia's* Daniel Esparza.

While pursuing his medical degree at the University of Pavia, Gemelli was mentored by "Ludovico Necchi, a devout Catholic who influenced him not through preaching but through deep philosophical conversation and scientific dialogue." Slowly, Gemelli's mind and heart became open to the existence of God.

The pivotal moment for Gemelli came during World War I when a dying soldier with leprosy asked him, "If my mother were here, she would kiss me...Could you?" Gemelli kissed the man on the cheek and broke his own heart open to God's grace.

Not only did Gemelli convert to Catholicism, he was ordained a Franciscan priest, developed experimental psychology in Italy, and founded "the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart to form lay Catholic intellectuals." Its medical faculty opened Gemelli Hospital in 1964.

**Clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God.
(Ephesians 4:24)**

Break my heart open with Your grace, Savior.

The Road to Resilience, Part 1

Thirteen years ago, Army veteran Billy Keenan was at “the peak of his powers.” A music teacher who played multiple instruments, as well as “a competitive triathlete and surfer,” Keenan believed the sky was the limit when it came to what he could accomplish. But one fateful day, surfing at the Jersey Shore would change everything.

“I rode that wave, fell off my board, hit my head on the ocean floor,” Billy recalled to *CBS News* reporter and former student of his, Michael Roppolo, of his harrowing brush with death. “Everything faded to black.”

“I resembled a train wreck,” Keenan continued. Though hospitalized, he did not wake up until more than two weeks later: “I had a halo brace drilled into my skull to keep my head, neck immobilized. And I had a trach tube doing my breathing for me.”

During his days as an Army lieutenant and paratrooper, Keenan always challenged himself to complete difficult tasks: “I [never thought] I would need...that...resilience...when everything went wrong.” More tomorrow...

Blessed is anyone who endures. (James 1:12)

Redeemer, grant us resilience in times of struggle.

The Road to Resilience, Part 2

Following his surfing accident, one of the biggest realities Billy Keenan had to face was accepting that he was paralyzed from the shoulders down. But one day, the parent of one of his students offered him hope in the form of a phone call from Steven McDonald, a former NYPD detective who was also wheelchair-bound after being shot by a perpetrator in 1986.

McDonald had become “a public speaker preaching the importance of forgiveness,” *CBS News* reported. McDonald had these encouraging words to say: “When you’re better...you’re going to come back and contribute in a significant way. Don’t ever forget that in the end, there will be life.”

Keenan took McDonald’s uplifting advice to heart. With a lot of hard work and faith, he was able to return to teaching. Upon learning of Steven McDonald’s death in 2017, Keenan took up his mantle and became a motivational speaker. He concluded, “I try to be there as a steward and as a light of inspiration...Steven...was the messenger from God to save a terribly lost soul.”

**The unfolding of Your words gives light.
(Psalm 119:130)**

Lord, may I strive to be a beacon of light to others.

Old Tools, New Ideas

There were plenty of willing hands to perform the work that had to be done in rural Tanzania back in 1978. But what the village craftsmen lacked were tools to develop rural industries—not fancy power tools, but hand tools such as hammers and saws.

That shortage bothered Glyn Roberts, a UNESCO consultant from Portsmouth, England, who noted, “There were artisans in relative abundance, many of them with good skills and high motivation.” Roberts found the answer to the problem in his mother’s garden shed. There, unused, were most of the tools his father had accumulated before his death.

That led Roberts and students at the school where he taught to create the charity Tools for Self-Reliance. By going door-to-door to request old tools, they collected enough donations to equip a good village workshop with everything from chisels and pliers to planes, vises, and hand drills. Their work continues today and has expanded to other countries, creating a sense of community between peoples who live far away.

Like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation. (1 Corinthians 3:10)

Jesus, teach us to think in terms of the entire human family and the Father who links us all.

The Making of a Gentleman

Many years ago, Russell J. Fornwalt of New York discussed some of his experiences as a Big Brother, a member of the organization that tries to help young people. He told of a visit from a young man he hadn't seen since helping him obtain a job five years earlier.

This young man recalled the incident for Fornwalt this way: "You phoned the department store...and said you had a 'gentleman' in your office looking for a job...Frankly, I thought you were kidding. Me, a gentleman? Nobody ever called me that before. I was always called a 'bum' or a 'no account'...Anyway, you called me a gentleman, and it did make me feel good! In fact, that day I vowed I'd try to become a gentleman."

What is the spark that motivates an individual to raise his sights? Most of the time we never know. But we do know that people need to be treated with respect if they are to have respect for themselves. Try to do that in your own life. You might find that it generates respect in return.

**Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.
(Galatians 6:7)**

Help me to discover the great dignity in every individual, Father.

The Fishing Trip with Unexpected Results

Three teenagers from Louisville, Kentucky, decided they wanted to go fishing. What they ended up fishing out of the water, however, was completely unexpected.

When they arrived at the Greenwood Boat Ramp, the young men—Kenay Valdes, Abraham Cruz, and Jacob Cruz—spotted a car nearly underwater in the Ohio River.

As reported by *Spectrum News 1*, Kenay and Abraham jumped in to rescue the driver and attach a rope to the vehicle. From on shore, Jacob started pulling in the car.

“The quick and courageous actions of these young men are nothing short of heroic, and we are incredibly thankful for them,” stated LMPD Chief Paul Humphrey. “Their selflessness to save a stranger is an extraordinary example of bravery. They embody the spirit of community and compassion that makes Louisville strong.”

For their part, the boys felt good about helping out—even if they didn’t catch any fish.

I will make you fishers of men. (Matthew 4:19)

Remind us to respond to the needs of strangers, Christ.