

Free and Equal in God's Sight

The year 2023 saw the city of Savannah, Georgia, rename a town square for a courageous, faith-filled Black woman: Susie King Taylor. In fact, this was the first time a Savannah square had been specifically named after a woman and a person of color.

Born to enslaved parents in 1848, Taylor learned to read and write through an underground system due to Georgia's severe restrictions on educating slaves. When taken into custody by Northern soldiers during the Civil War, she became an Army nurse, who also organized schools to teach emancipated slaves how to read and write. Taylor later wrote a memoir, titled *Reminiscences of My Life*, detailing her experiences as an African American woman during the war.

Taylor's grandmother gave her a religious education and spiritual foundation as a child. Those lessons stayed with her throughout her life. Taylor wrote, "God is just; when He created man He made him in His image, and never intended one should misuse the other. All men are born free and equal in His sight."

Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action. (Acts 7:22)

Lord, may we learn from the mistakes of the past to create a more unified future.

Bus Driver Chose to Spread Goodness

Govan Brown used to begin his days at 2:45 a.m. in Bay Shore, Long Island, to make it to work by 6:30 a.m. as a New York City bus driver. Over a period of 20 years, he logged 220,000 miles, enough to go to the moon.

If you rode his bus, you'd hear him say, "I'd like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you a nice day. Keep warm in spirit, and may God bless you in each and every way." Such was Brown's trademark. He is remembered for spreading cheer on Route M101.

The general manager of the Manhattan bus division said in an interview with *The New York Times* that Brown had "so mastered being happy with himself, happy with life, and happy with people that nobody can touch him."

Brown retired in 1988, but his approach to life continues to provide lessons for us all. Every day, we can choose how we respond to a situation, what we want to contribute, how we can make a difference. If we respond out of our goodness, we can guide ourselves and others down a route towards happiness.

**A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance.
(Proverbs 15:13)**

Holy Spirit, lead me in spreading goodness to all I meet.

How Other People Pray

Many years ago, *Catholic News Service* asked people, “When do you pray? How do you pray? Where?” The answers were featured in a newspaper column. Here are a few of them:

- “When I obey warmhearted impulses, I am praying, and also when I graciously let someone help me. When I smile and cause another to smile, I am praying.”
- “Out on a teeming highway with its risks and dangers, prayers for the safety of all in transit become second nature.”
- “I pray whenever I need to express my feelings, whether they may be gratitude or the need for comforting. It never matters where I am when I pray; what does matter is that I do.”
- “My life is a prayer, moment by moment. I use images, a statue in the window above the kitchen sink, a prayer taped to the mirror.”
- “I’m a quadriplegic. I can’t do anything for myself. But I can pray for others.”

Prayer is both a natural impulse and a learned habit. It can be spontaneous or deliberately planned. Draw strength and consolation from the knowledge that God is always listening.

Pray without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Lord, hear my prayer.

Tech Boy Initiative

High school freshman and comic book author DeJuan Strickland recently gave his former school, McCurdy Elementary in St. Louis, Missouri, a generous parting gift: a check covering the “school lunch debts of every student.”

Strickland’s generosity was featured on *KMOV4 News*, and his thoughtful donation proved to be an inspiration to many. One Missouri resident, Yolanda Duncan, was so moved by this youngster’s actions, she decided to present him with a personal check matching what he gave to his elementary school.

“Sometimes a kid’s only meal they eat during the day is at school,” Strickland pointed out. “[As a kid], I didn’t even know what could... be my next meal...and it definitely was a struggle.”

That’s how Strickland came up with the “Tech Boy” initiative, named after his 2021 comic book. It includes a *GoFundMe* page, created with the sole purpose of paying “lunch balances every year for different schools in the area.” Strickland concluded, “I am only one person, but when everyone starts coming together...it will spark some change.”

If you offer food to the hungry...your light shall rise in darkness. (Isaiah 58:10)

Messiah, may we strive to be a shining example to others.

NFL Star Helps Save Woman on Airplane

Baltimore Ravens tight end Mark Andrews has Type 1 Diabetes. As a result, he wound up helping a woman experiencing an emergency on a Southwest Airlines flight from Maryland to Phoenix, Arizona.

When a woman on the airplane started losing consciousness, a nurse and doctor were summoned by the flight attendants. As they were trying to figure out what was wrong, Andrews, who was sitting behind the woman, said, “Could her blood sugar be low? I have a diabetic test kit.”

Andrews showed the medical staff how to use the kit, and after giving the woman some orange juice, she felt better.

Andrews said in a statement to *WJZ TV*, “In addition to the fast-acting flight attendants, the real heroes are the nurse and doctor who also happened to be on the plane. Thankfully, they were able to provide the woman the quick assistance she needed.”

**The mind firmly resolved after due reflection
will not be afraid in a crisis. (Sirach 22:16)**

Jesus, help me to think and act wisely in a crisis.

Christian Bale's Foster Care Mission

Actor Christian Bale is known for roles such as Batman in *The Dark Knight* trilogy, but now he's playing a real-life hero by creating foster homes to keep siblings together.

Sixteen years ago, Bale heard that Los Angeles County had one of the largest numbers of foster children in the country, and that many brothers and sisters were separated in the system.

Bale, the father of a three-year-old daughter at the time, couldn't imagine his child in that situation. He vowed to do something, thinking it would be a simple process. But, as he told the *Associated Press*, he learned it was quite complex: "These are people's lives. And we need to be able to have them land on their feet when they age out. There's so much involved in this."

Bale persevered and, 16 years later in 2023, he broke ground on what will become a dozen homes for foster children and a community center in Los Angeles. Bale hopes this will inspire similar projects to help more children in the future and keep siblings in foster care together.

**Let Your steadfast love become my comfort
according to Your promise to Your servant.
(Psalm 119:76)**

Loving Lord, bless all children who are in the foster care system, and please keep families together.

Firefighter Reunited with Boy He Rescued

When their Dorchester, Massachusetts house caught on fire 45 years ago, three-year-old Umar Fox and his sister were rescued by a firefighter. In 2023, Fox reunited with that firefighter who saved his life.

Fox, now 48 and a father of three with two stepchildren, managed to locate retired Boston firefighter Joseph Gilmore and arrange an in-person meeting. Gilmore remembered rescuing Fox from that fire, but had no idea that his act of bravery had saved so many others.

During the meeting, Fox revealed that he saved someone from drowning as a teen, and later managed to talk two people out of suicide while working as a recovery coach. As reported by *The Boston Globe*, Fox told Gilmore, “We wouldn’t be here [without you]. What you did, in turn, saved other people’s lives and brought more into the world.”

One life truly can make a difference.

**Yes, Father, for such was Your gracious will.
(Matthew 11:26)**

God, thank You for all first responders, and please watch over them and keep them safe.

The Saint of Schio, Part 1

During World War II, the town of Schio in northern Italy endured several bombings. This happened even after the overthrow of Mussolini due to the Nazi occupation. But in the bombings of Schio, not a single death was recorded.

The townspeople credited this to Mother Josephine Bakhita of the Canossian Daughters of Charity, who was living amongst them and had already been identified by many as a saintly figure. She was canonized in 2000 by Pope John Paul II, and today her image hangs over the front door of the Church of the Holy Family, adjacent to the Canossian convent in Schio.

Born in Sudan, Africa, Bakhita was kidnapped into slavery as a child and endured years of abuse. She was eventually sold to an Italian consular agent stationed in Africa. While this man and his family treated her in a kindlier manner, they still maintained an unjust sense of ownership over her. Nevertheless, when the family was returning to Italy, Josephine requested to go with them, so they brought her along as their servant. Italy is where her life changed for the better.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord rescues them from them all. (Psalm 34:19)

Save victims of modern day slavery, Holy Spirit.

The Saint of Schio, Part 2

In Italy, Josephine Bakhita had the opportunity to learn about Jesus through the Canossian Daughters of Charity. They also lobbied for her to be granted freedom, which she won in a court case, enabling her to devote herself to learning the faith.

In 1890, Bakhita received baptism, confirmation, and first communion from the patriarch of Venice, who had been instrumental in helping her attain freedom. In 1902, she made her profession as a Canossian Daughter of Charity and was asked to serve in the town of Schio.

Over the next 45 years, Bakhita became known for her devout prayer life and the tremendous mercy she showed to others. She contributed to her community through simple tasks of cooking and sewing, her artistry as an embroiderer, and her selfless service to the many visitors they received.

As she grew older, the future saint began to suffer physical pain, but she was known for the joy she displayed even amid her suffering. She died in 1947, but the people of Schio maintain a permanent exhibit dedicated to her memory.

**For freedom Christ has set us free.
(Galatians 5:1)**

*May I use my freedom to be of service to others,
Jesus.*

Fun from The Toy Lending Library

Children checking out books from their local library has been a common experience for many years. But recently, the idea of lending out toys in the same manner has become increasingly popular. The Toy Lending Library of South Dakota, which was founded in 2015 by Anelis Coscioni, offers just one example.

The Library allows families who can't afford toys to offer their children something fun and educational. The nonprofit collects donated playthings for kids, ranging in age from newborn to five years old. The toys are then sanitized, packaged with a book, and sent to different locations, such as regular libraries, where parents can check out the box and take it home for their kids to enjoy for a few weeks.

Coscioni told *Costco Connection* magazine that they have “900 toy boxes in circulation,” and interest is increasing. And in 2023, the Toy Lending Library established a headquarters at First United Methodist Church in Sioux Falls, which rents them space for one dollar a year because the church wanted to partner with a ministry that is making a positive difference.

The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. (Zechariah 8:5)

*May children enjoy the pleasures of playtime,
Father.*

Wood That Would Last

Some people might think that the age of 85 is too late to start a new chapter in your life, but Maurice Clifton of Boise, Idaho, has proven them wrong. Clifton spent 14 years working as a bank executive, and the next 45 years as a real estate broker.

Once he retired, he found time to devote to his hobby of woodworking. He told *Costco Connection* magazine, “I work with ancient olive wood that comes from Jerusalem, and new, sustainable wood, cultured and grown recently.”

Soon, woodworking wasn’t just a hobby for Clifton, but a new business called Wood That Would Last. He explained, “I make jewelry/keepsake boxes, furniture, and everything in between. The goal I have is to make a tree have a life past its growing years.”

Clifton also teaches woodworking to young people so they can acquire a useful skill they might not have considered developing. His message for people of all ages: “If you have a hobby or anything that has sustained you in body and spirit, go for it!”

**A skilled woodcutter may saw down a tree...
[and] make a useful vessel. (Wisdom 13:11)**

Jesus, may we seek to develop talents at every stage of life.

X Marks the Kiss

The custom of using Xs in letters to represent kisses had an unromantic origin. It grew out of a legal practice.

When legal agreements were signed in medieval times, the signers put a cross—the sign of St. Andrew—under their name as an indication of their honesty and good faith.

The cross was often a little tilted and resembled an X. As a further guarantee that they would honor the agreement, signers were required to kiss the document.

In time, after the practice was no longer observed, the X came to be associated with the kiss.

This shift in association seems a natural one. Honesty and good faith in all our dealings are signs of our love for others.

Let us live honorably. (Romans 13:13)

Holy Spirit, guide our conduct so that it will reflect our faith.

Paralyzed Bride Surprises Groom

Chelsie Hill always dreamed of walking down the aisle on her wedding day. But that dream seemed impossible after a 2010 car accident, caused by a drunk driver, left her paralyzed from the waist down.

Still, as Hill's wedding to her fiancé, Jay Bloomfield, approached in 2021, she yearned to make her dream a reality. The 29-year-old, who founded the Los Angeles wheelchair dance team the Rollettes, told *Business Insider*, "I want to stress there's nothing wrong with sitting down in your chair. But for me growing up, I always imagined myself walking down the aisle."

On the day of the wedding, Hill used leg braces and a walker to surprise Bloomfield, who had his back turned before she entered the ceremony. When Bloomfield saw his bride-to-be walk down the aisle, his "jaw dropped" in surprise and elation! Together, the couple said their vows eye-to-eye.

"I just felt like that whole time, our souls were locked in on each other," Hill said. "I didn't see anybody else around me. I just saw him."

Put on the full armor of God, so...you may be able to stand your ground. (Ephesians 6:12-13)

Help me, Lord, to persevere and make my dreams a reality.

Couple Reaches Oak Anniversary

We know that a couple's 50th anniversary is called golden—and both the 60th and 75th anniversaries are dubbed diamond. But what about the 80th? It is a rare accomplishment, but for those who reach it, the designation is oak.

Leroy and Julia Kayser of East Hampton, New York, celebrated their 80th in 2024. They met as teens and fell in love right away, never even dating anyone else. The Kaysers survived the Great Depression, World War II, and the ordinary challenges of life. They had two children and are now great-grandparents.

What are some of their secrets of both living and staying together for so long? Leroy told *CBS 2 News's* Jennifer McLogan, “We plagiarize from an old Johnny Mercer song: ‘Accentuate the positive; eliminate the negative.’ That’s our goal... [And] we are not couch potatoes. We do get outside and get our old bones moving, with rakes and shovels.” They also volunteer in their community.

Their motto is, “Compromise. Loyalty. Communication.”

Clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Colossians 3:14)

Lord, help couples practice compromise, loyalty, and communication.

A Path Toward Racial Healing, Part 1

John Blake and his brother, Pat, grew up in an African American neighborhood in inner city Baltimore during the late 1960s/early 1970s. Their father, who was Black, worked as a merchant seaman and was away from home most of the year. As a result, the boys often found themselves in foster homes because their mother was not around. All they were told was that she was White, her name was Shirley, and her family hated Black people.

For John, the hatred went both ways. Though no one in his community specifically told him he should hate White people, “it was just something I absorbed like the humidity,” he explained. “It’s the conversations I overheard. It’s what I saw.”

John’s perspective evolved significantly in later years because he experienced radical changes in himself and other family members from both sides of the Black/White divide. He shared his powerful story in his Christopher Award-winning memoir, *More Than I Imagined: What a Black Man Discovered About the White Mother He Never Knew*. More tomorrow...

**Whoever says, “I am in the light,” while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness.
(1 John 2:9)**

*Inspire us to move past hate toward love,
Creator of All.*

A Path Toward Racial Healing, Part 2

During John Blake's childhood, one person stood out as a shining light: his paternal Aunt Sylvia. During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, he said, "She was an unmarried woman who never had children. She worked as a secretary. To the eyes of the world, she was perhaps nobody...but she was like my lighthouse in the sea of chaos... that surrogate mom who helped me believe in myself, who taught me the value of books and faith."

Faith became an important part of John's life, but he wasn't a willing churchgoer in his youth. With Aunt Sylvia, however, he didn't have a choice: "She took us to a Black church, but it's more like we were drafted," he reminisced.

"Outside of Sunday, a lot of [the people in church] were considered nobodies: blue-collar workers who were dealing with discrimination, who grew up in Jim Crow. But when they came to church, they had this dignity and love of God that, even as a kid, I could sense. So...my Aunt Sylvia and some of those people I met in the Black church made God more tangible."

Set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
(1 Timothy 4:12)

May my love for You, Jesus, make Your love more tangible to others.

A Path Toward Racial Healing, Part 3

At age 17, John Blake's life changed when his father asked him if he wanted to meet his mother. Three days later, John and his brother, Pat, were driven to Maryland where they entered "a menacing red brick building. It's the saddest place I've ever been," he recalled in an interview about his Christopher Award-winning memoir, *More Than I Imagined: What a Black Man Discovered About the White Mother He Never Knew*.

"I could feel the misery, but I couldn't quite put it together. I'm hearing people moan in pain in the background, while others are just laughing hysterically...[I learned] we were in the waiting room of a...notorious mental institution called Crownsville, and they were known for abusing patients. They would chain them to beds, subject them to medical experiments."

A hospital orderly brought a thin White woman into the room. Her eyes lit up, and she exclaimed, "Oh, boy! John and Pat, it's so good to see you!" It was their mother, Shirley. She hugged her sons, but John felt awkward, having never even used the word "Mom" before. Despite the discomfort of the situation, that meeting resulted in several epiphanies for John.

**Can a woman forget her nursing child?
(Isaiah 49:15)**

Reunite separated families, Abba.

A Path Toward Racial Healing, Part 4

After learning that the White mother he never met had been locked in a mental institution for years, John Blake was shocked and experienced several revelations.

During an interview with The Christophers, the *CNN* correspondent explained, “No one told us that our mom had this severe form of mental illness called schizophrenia. We didn’t make that discovery until that day in the waiting room. People didn’t talk about mental illness.

“What was [also] significant about that meeting...is that before I met my mom, I didn’t think that any White person could understand or empathize with what it meant to be Black, to grow up in a poor, violent neighborhood like I did, to be looked down upon because of nothing that you have control over.

“But when I met my mom, I thought, ‘Wow, I’ve never seen a Black person suffer like that.’ She began to shatter these assumptions about White people that I had in that meeting, without even saying a word. That was the first time that I developed empathy for a White person.”

There is no longer Jew or Greek...for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

Remind us we are all part of one human family, Creator.

A Path Toward Racial Healing, Part 5

Before John Blake left that visit, his mother made one request of him. She asked him to send her a St. Jude prayer book. At the time, John didn't know who St. Jude was, but he soon learned he was the patron saint of hopeless causes for Catholics like his mom. She considered herself a hopeless cause and relied on St. Jude to help and guide her.

As he shared in his Christopher Award-winning memoir, *More Than I Imagined: What a Black Man Discovered About the White Mother He Never Knew*, John developed a good relationship with his mother, and he believes St. Jude helped improve her condition and life in the ensuing years.

Beyond that, John also saw St. Jude's effectiveness in other areas. For instance, some might consider those who hold racist beliefs, such as his mother's family, to be hopeless causes. But John soon discovered that the power of human relationships can genuinely change people's hearts and minds—and that Christian faith can serve as the motivating force for acting with mercy and humility.

**The hope of the righteous ends in gladness.
(Proverbs 10:28)**

*Be my guiding light when hope seems lost,
Jesus.*

A Path Toward Racial Healing, Part 6

Despite the racial strife in the U.S., CNN's John Blake believes that healing can be found, based on his own experiences as a Black man getting to know the White half of his family.

During an interview about his memoir *More Than I Imagined*, he explained, "I've spent a lot of time covering the worst racial upheavals in this country...[but] I have never seen such pessimism about racism in this country [as now]. There's so many people who believe that racism is a permanent part of being American, that we won't ever get past our racial divisions. One guy told me that racism is embedded in our DNA."

"I have not seen that to be the case," John continued. "I've seen people in my mother's family who denied they were racist...even though they used the N-word...I've seen them change... There's a Scripture...in the New Testament where Paul talks about, we're all new creations in Christ."

"I do wonder, though, if a lot of Christians still believe that. But I have seen it. People can change. Racism is not embedded in our DNA. That's one of the things I try to show in my book."

**If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.
(2 Corinthians 5:17)**

Open our hearts to the possibility of positive change, Lord.

Caregiving Made Actor a Better Man

Actor Brennan Elliott has starred in many *Hallmark* movies, including the Christopher Award-winning *The Gift of Peace*. In real life, his most important role has been caregiver for his wife, Cami, who has endured several diagnoses of cancer.

In 2022, Cami learned she had stage four gastric cancer, leading to more surgery and treatments for her—and even more anxiety for their family, which includes two children. Elliott would share periodic health updates with his fans on social media, and his fans continued to pray for Cami’s healing.

In March 2023, good news finally arrived. He revealed that Cami’s latest pathology report showed no cancer. Elliott added, “It’s been such an impossible journey, but today is a day to rejoice in God’s mercy and grace. From the bottom of my heart, thank you to every one of you who has prayed for us and encouraged us along the way.”

“To care for, love and support my better half through this dreadful disease, as difficult as it has been and continues to be, it has made me grow to being a better man, husband and father.”

**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.
(Ephesians 5:25)**

Bring strength to families dealing with cancer, Lord.

Surprise Gift for Security Guard

James Mogaji, an overnight security guard at Providence College's Raymond Hall, is originally from Nigeria. Members of his family remain there, but he had not been able to travel to see them in more than 10 years.

When students heard about this problem, they set out to fix it by setting up an online fundraiser without Mogaji's knowledge. One week later, they had collected \$3,000 and presented it to him. A video of the gift's presentation showed a surprised Mogaji falling down in shock, joy, and gratitude.

Daniel Singh, a resident assistant at Raymond Hall, told Mogaji that students there support one another: "As long as I've been here, they've done that for me, and we've done that for each other, so now we're doing it for you."

Student organizer Brandon Reichert told an interviewer that Mogaji "is just the kindest soul anyone has ever met in this building. He means so much to us."

Because a campus community responded to a call for donations, there's a family that no longer has to wait to see their loved one.

**It is more blessed to give than to receive.
(Acts 20:35)**

Teach us, Jesus, to respond to the needs of others.

Retirement Doesn't End Divine Compassion

The Sisters of the Divine Compassion devoted their lives to sharing God's kindness and love through their work as teachers, principals, spiritual counselors, therapists, and more. And they didn't stop in retirement!

A number of the nuns live in community at Wartburg (a senior facility in Westchester County, New York), notes the Sisters' 2023 Annual Report. Many continue to share their charism of compassion with residents, staff, and visitors.

The Sisters may help with special events, shopping, gardening, visiting memory-care patients, and leading prayer groups. "Our Sisters bowl, sing and dance, walk, practice Tai Chi, and so much more," the report states.

Retiring from a full-time work schedule can often mean more time to share spiritual and other gifts with others. The Sisters continue to find meaning in their lives in their senior years, and hope to inspire others to do the same.

Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life and honor. (Proverbs 21:21)

Lord, may we value the contributions of our elders.

Shirt-sleeve Solutions

Back in the 1970s, Bill Lindsey went to Fort Lauderdale as a VISTA volunteer. VISTA, now a part of AmeriCorps, is the domestic equivalent of the Peace Corps. Lindsey's job was to work with poor people in their neighborhoods.

A decade later, Lindsey became executive director of the Fort Lauderdale Housing Authority. Urban planners from around the country came to see him because he had done something few had been able to accomplish. He rehabilitated slum areas.

How did he do it? Well, when he first went to Fort Lauderdale, Lindsey lived with the people, and he continued doing so. He knew them and the problems they faced. And he learned what to do about them by rolling up his shirt sleeves.

There's nothing like first-hand knowledge in solving problems.

God gave knowledge and skill. (Daniel 1:17)

Redeemer, we need Your wisdom, as well as first-hand knowledge, to solve pressing social problems.

Port in a Storm

A devastating storm in Far Rockaway, New York, completely destroyed Salome Williams-El's barber shop. Initially, she started a GoFundMe site to raise money to open a new shop, but she quickly realized she needed to do more.

That's when a unique idea popped into her head: Williams-El decided she would cut people's hair on a New York City subway platform. She spoke with the New York City Police Department about where to put her temporary work space in the subway system, and they worked out a plan.

Williams-El's longtime patrons came by to help in whatever ways they could. They handed out fliers, cleaned up hair clippings, and sat for haircuts so passersby could see her work. "Of course, I was compelled to come out and help her," Donny Bellmon told *NY1 News*. "She's the best barber I know."

Instead of charging clients, Williams-El asked them to donate to her GoFundMe. In time, she hopes to have a new shop that's convenient for everyone. She also demonstrates that when we get tossed by life's storms, it is possible to find safe harbor.

**Rescue me...from the deep waters.
(Psalm 69:14)**

*Guide me through life's storms to safe harbor,
Abba.*

Because We Exist

Sister Julia Walsh realizes that “Gospel living is messy,” and certainly not easy, so she created the blog *Messy Jesus Business* to explore “the struggle of faith.” The idea of putting our faith into action is a common theme in many of her posts.

In one reflection, Sister Julia noted, “We are commissioned to serve, to give, to be people of joy, light, salt: we are meant to share the Good News. When we look around at the suffering and injustice in our communities, neighborhoods, and ecosystems, it is obvious we have work to do.”

Sister Julia then issues a call to action, a call to recognize the inherent dignity of everyone created by God: “It doesn’t matter who you are, or what you did, or how you live—all of us are completely worthy of love and care because we exist...We do this by what we teach, speak, and how we are with people and all of creation; by the sharing of food, space and care. Every person is worthy of honor and respect because they are an image of God.”

In the Lord you are light. Live as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8)

*May I see Your image in everyone equally,
Creator.*

A Runaway's Return, Part 1

Manndi DeBoef was fed up. She can't recall what exactly she was fed up about because she was only six years old at the time, but she decided to run away from home. She took her mother's red overnight bag, packed a few items, then told her mother she was leaving. "My mother didn't seem overly concerned," DeBoef wrote at *BustedHalo.com*. "She said she would miss me and hoped I would visit."

DeBoef walked to the end of her street, then sat down on the red suitcase, hoping her mom would come after her. She didn't. Frustrated, the six-year-old finally returned home, where she was greeted by her mother, who knelt down and said to her:

"Manndi, I watched you from the bedroom window. You were never out of my sight. Do you really think I would let my precious little girl run away? I gave you some space. But I am very happy that you came back home."

Those words taught Manndi that no matter where she went, her mother would always welcome her back. That incident also taught her a truth about God. More tomorrow...

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you. (Isaiah 66:13)

May children gain wisdom from their parents, Paraclete.

A Runaway's Return, Part 2

After Mandi DeBoef ran away from home at age six, her mother welcomed her back with “open, loving arms.” Over the course of her life, DeBoef—now a mother of two herself—has found the same holds true with God.

Writing at *BustedHalo.com*, she recalled that she experienced dark spiritual times following two miscarriages, an unwanted divorce, and the death of a loved one. But God gave her space and welcomed her back when she was ready.

DeBoef wrote, “No matter how much we screw up, how long we stay away, and how deeply our faith has fallen, [God] truly desires each of His children to come home; whether for the first time or the 10th. Each time I have faltered or faced what I felt was bitter defeat, I found grace, peace, and healing when down on my knees in heartfelt prayers.”

“In much the same way my mother served as an example of Christ’s never-ending love for me as a young child, I am hopeful that my two sons know...that no matter how far they wander, roam, and explore, their mother’s love will not only go with them, but be...waiting for them to find their way back home.”

God has welcomed them. (Romans 14:3)

May I welcome the lost with open, loving arms, Paraclete.