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## **BOOMERANG**

It all comes back to us

## **COMMENDATION**

Give some, get some

## **THE GAS PEDAL AND THE BRAKE**

Don't compete, complement

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## PERSONALLY SPEAKING

A team of songwriters, musicians, and singers had worked well together on various projects over the space of several years. They were a rather motley crew and had had their share of ups and downs, but had always managed to hang together somehow. So when nearly everyone's inspiration level hit an unprecedented and inexplicable low at the same time, the couple leading the team was naturally concerned. They were Christians who depended a lot on prayer, so they asked God to show them what had gone wrong and how to turn things around.

The answer they received was short and simple: "You've been cutting corners on love." Everyone had gotten so wrapped up in their work that they'd all stopped taking time to show one another love and appreciation—the very things that had made them such a good team in the first place.

The couple explained that to the rest of the team, and together they drew up a list of all the special little things they'd stopped saying or doing for each other. Then at the end of the meeting they all prayed that Jesus would help them take more time to show love. It wasn't long before the team produced its best music ever. They had found the secret to staying close as a team and keeping the inspiration level high. It was in little daily deeds of kindness and caring.

We're not all songwriters, musicians, or singers, of course, but there is hardly a person on earth who isn't part of at least one team—a family, a marriage, a business partnership, a staff, a work crew, a sports team, a club, or a circle of friends. "No man is an island." We all need others, and we all have an opportunity to better the people and situations around us. Love and communication are the keys, and, as always, God wants nothing less than the best for all of us. As you help Him bring out the best in others, He'll bring out the best in you.

Keith Phillips  
*Keith Phillips*  
For Activated

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# Real Friends

BY THERESA LECLERC

**WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER**, I thought I knew it all. I was full of insecurities, but I was also full of opinions—strong ones! Looking back, I feel sorry for my parents. I'm sure I wasn't an easy child to raise, especially as a teen. I didn't like the fact that I had stricter parents than some of my friends did, and I pulled away from my parents, as many teens do. I was sure they didn't understand me, and I was right—they didn't! None of my older siblings were anything like me. I questioned everything and had trouble keeping the rules. I have to admit, I wasn't very deep. My main goal in life was to have fun. My mom and dad were loving parents, but I wasn't sure I wanted to follow in their footsteps as a full-time Christian volunteer. I was tough on the outside, but on the inside all I ever wanted was to find someone who truly understood me.

One day I found myself at a gathering where I was the only teenager. While the adults talked in small groups, I sat off in a corner by myself, watching, until a woman

named Joy came over and struck up a conversation. Eventually I opened up and told her about all my troubles. I half expected her to lecture me, but instead she just listened. She cared about me, and I could feel that. Never once did she put me in my place or try to change my opinion; she simply tried to understand me.

That conversation was the beginning of a friendship that continued for seven years, until Joy passed away. She stuck by me through thick and thin. We took long walks together and would sometimes write notes to each other about things that were harder to say in person. Even after she moved to a distant city, we

kept in touch by phone and mail. For much of those seven years, Joy was so sick that she could have died at any time, but I never heard her complain. She was always bubbly and had a passion for people.

Joy taught me something important—that it was okay to be myself. And in the process, she also taught me to try to understand people in a deep way, to look beyond appearances and sometimes even beyond what they say, to accept them for who they are, and to show them unconditional love. Though we all seem so different, we're all made from the same stuff, and we all need love, understanding, and acceptance. When someone sees our need and fills it, we blossom. •



THERESA LECLERC IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SOUTH AFRICA.



# boomerang

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

**W**HEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I went to my first circus. There, before my awestruck eyes, were three rings in full action—performing animals in one, and acrobats leaping and flying through the air in another. What interested me most, though, was taking place in the third ring. A girl and a boy were flinging brightly colored missiles, which, after they had crossed the ring, turned and returned to the very hands that had flung them. No matter which direction they were thrown, the things curved and came back swiftly to the young performers, who would catch and fling them again.

I watched in amazement. What made those things change their course and circle right back to where they began? “They are boomerangs,” someone beside me said. It was the first time I had ever heard the word, and I tucked it away in my young mind.

I’ve heard the word many times since, of course, and I’ve also seen the principle

behind it play out in life. In fact, life itself is a boomerang. Everything we do comes back to us, some-time, some-where. God’s Word says, “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”<sup>1</sup> Every word or action we fling out comes back some day.

It is uncanny how a boomerang circles and returns to the one who threw it out, and that is the way it is with the spiritual law of retribution. Whatever a man throws out into the world, the same shall return to him. If he throws out the bread of kindness, kindness will come to him; if he throws out a curse, a curse will come upon him. Whether good or bad, it

will return to us, and it often gains momentum as it does.

Sometimes it happens immediately, like the case of a mother who I overheard in a supermarket, speaking to her child in irritable, impatient tones. When the child railed back in the same tone of voice, I thought, *That mother’s boomerang is coming back to her.*

Other times it may take years. I once met another mother who asked me to pray with her for her grown son, whose life had gone all wrong. “At the time, it was so different,” she told me. “When he was small, I gave no thought to how

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 6:7

my actions were affecting his values. I thought I was just having fun. But when I heard prison doors close behind my boy, I couldn't help but think that what I was really hearing was the distant echo of my own life." Her child's life, like metal when it's molten, had flowed into the mold and hardened there. The boomerang had come back.

One morning I visited two women in the same hospital. One room was filled with flowers and cards and all sorts of beautiful little gifts from friends and acquaintances. The sufferer was surrounded by those thoughtful gestures of love and concern, kindness, and sympathy. That was a reflection of her life, for she had sown love and thoughtfulness into others' lives throughout the years, and now it was all coming back to her in her hour of need as she lay sick in that hospital room.

In a room down the hall, another woman lay alone. Bitterness, resentment, and suspicion were etched on every feature of her face. Selfishness had ruined her life. Still as self-absorbed, suspicious, and critical as she had always been, there she lay with her face turned to the wall—a wall as hard and cold and bare as the ones she had built around herself all her life. Now she was alone as she faced death.

Oh, what a difference there was in those two rooms! The boomerang had come back to both women, but in very different ways.

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom, for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."<sup>2</sup> Anyone who lives unselfishly, caring for and lifting the burdens of others, easing their pain, and helping to supply their needs, surely will see that boomerang come back in the form of blessings some day! •

<sup>1</sup> Luke 6:38

## how to find love

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

If you show people real love, you won't have a hard time winning friends. If you're sincerely concerned about others and you show them love, they'll be concerned about you and show you love. Love begets love. If you sow love, you're going to reap love. If you sow friendship, you're going to reap friendship.<sup>1</sup>

Love cannot fail. It makes no difference where it is bestowed, it always brings in big returns. You can't give without getting, you can't show true love and concern without receiving love in return—and the more you give, the more you get.

Many others around you are just as lonely, and they're longing for love as much as you are. They're probably just waiting for you to make the first move. Step out and try to make someone else happy, and you'll find a whole new world of love you've only dreamed of.

If you give love, you'll get love! That's God's system; that's God's rule. God will make you happy if you make others happy. It's that simple!

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 6:7





BY JOYCE HANCOCK SUTTIN

# Grandpa's Smile

**HE LAY COVERED IN WHITE HOSPITAL SHEETS, HOOKED UP TO A TANGLE OF TUBES AND WIRES.** As I approached, I barely recognized him—the pasty skin, the sunken cheeks—but when he opened his eyes and smiled at me, it was all I could do to keep from jumping into his arms like I always had. Grandpa, whom I loved more than anyone else in the whole world, had had a serious heart attack.

Grandpa had always been my best friend, as well as my confidant and counselor when I had had problems with friends or siblings. As the youngest child in my family, I was shy, gangly, and unsure of myself, but Grandpa had always known how to give me the boost I needed. If I needed a playmate, he joined me in my

games. If I needed a shoulder to cry on, I knew where to find one; Grandpa's big, warm hugs were the most comforting place on earth! If I needed correction, he gave it firmly but gently. He would reach deep into my heart and make me want to change for the better. He also prayed a lot, and was quick to remind me that prayer was the surest way to make good things happen.

I was 14 years old, just leaving childhood behind, when we were called to the

hospital. One by one, from the oldest to the youngest, we were allowed into Grandpa's hospital room to see him for just a moment.

After a smile and feeble but cheery, "Hello," Grandpa took my hand. "Joyce, you have always been my favoritest youngest granddaughter. I know that sometimes you have a hard time finding your place. You often feel like you don't know what to do, and you worry that you won't amount to much. But I want you to know that

God loves you and has a special plan for your life.”

Mom gently tapped me on the shoulder and guided me out of the room. “Grandpa is tired and needs to rest,” she said.

A couple of days later I saw Grandpa again. This time he was in his best suit, lying in a coffin. Almost overwhelmed by the scent of so many flowers, I had my final moment with him. This time his shiny blue eyes didn’t open. I shook with fear and emotion as I approached, but then I saw his face. His radiant smile told me that everything was okay. Grandpa had died like he lived—smiling. People talked for days about Grandpa’s smile. The undertaker said he had tried, unsuccessfully, to change Grandpa’s expression because he had never seen such a thing and thought it was a little eerie. Grandpa left us little in the way of money or possessions; his last will and testament was the smile of peace and satisfaction on his face.

My family had always attended the same church in a country town so small that it doesn’t even show on a map of the northeastern United States. Every

Sunday, Grandpa had arrived at least 20 minutes late. And every Sunday, a band of as many as 30 children had trailed in behind him. That had been his little ministry, rounding up the children from poor families who lived in the hills and bringing them to church.

Years later, in a bank in a nearby city, a young businessman overheard my dad tell someone his name.

“Hancock?” the young man asked. “Are you by any chance related to Ed Hancock?” He went on to explain that when he had been a boy growing up in the hills, my grandpa had always made sure he got to church.

“That was nice, but what really changed my life was when he told me, ‘I know you come from a poor family and sometimes worry that you won’t amount to much, but I want you to know that God loves you and has a special plan for your life.’”

Throughout my teen and college years, faced with atheistic professors and skeptical friends, I struggled with my faith and sometimes wondered *what* I believed. But even at my lowest point, I had proof

“[People] may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.”—

*Carl W. Buechner*

of God’s existence in the memory of my grandpa’s smile and faith.

I decided 36 years ago to give my life to God and see what He could do with a nobody like me. I have since worked in 10 countries, doing volunteer work, sharing God’s love with others, and introducing people to Jesus. I overcame my shyness, have spoken to large groups, run seminars, and taught hundreds of children, teenagers, and young adults. I have done *lots* of things that the shy, awkward 14-year-old Joyce Hancock never dreamed she could.

As I remember the faces of those I have prayed with to receive God’s wonderful gift of salvation, I can’t imagine a more wonderful or worthwhile life. Still God continues to bring special ones across my path. I see their fear and timidity, and take their hands. Without thinking, the words pour out. “I know you sometimes feel like you don’t know what to do, and you worry about what you will become. But God loves you and has a special plan for your life.”

JOYCE HANCOCK SUTTIN IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S. •

# Commendation

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG



## JESUS PRAISES PEOPLE FOR THEIR GOOD QUALITIES AND GIVES THEM CREDIT WHEN THEY DO WELL.

In the parables He told, He commended the servants who had invested their master's money well,<sup>1</sup> and He even commended the unscrupulous servant for dealing shrewdly.<sup>2</sup> He said of Nathanael that there was no deceit to be found in him.<sup>3</sup> God commends lots of people throughout the Bible. He said of Job, "There is none like him on the Earth,"<sup>4</sup> and He apparently told the prophet Samuel that young David was a man after God's own heart, because Samuel said as much when he singled out David to be the next king of Israel.<sup>5</sup>

All the way through the Bible God commended people for their good works, and He promises to reward us for our good

work. It has nothing to do with our salvation. We get salvation as a gift of His love and mercy and grace, but He still commends and rewards us when we do the right things with the right motivation.

When we look to Jesus in prayer and ask Him to help us, He does. He helps us do things we couldn't do on our own, but even then we nearly always need to do something—our part—to bring about the desired result. When we do, Jesus gives us credit. That's apparent when you

consider all the scriptures about rewards and crowns in Heaven and so forth.<sup>6</sup>

He gives us credit when we do the best we can with what He's given us. It's like the story of the farmer who gave a visitor a tour of his farm, and the visitor said, "What a lovely farm God has given you!" "Yes," the farmer replied, "but you should have seen it when *God* had it!" In other words, before the farmer had done all the hard work of clearing the land, plowing the fields, and caring for the crops. Even the Garden of Eden had to have somebody to take care of it, and God gave Adam that job when He put him there.<sup>7</sup>

That principle applies to our natural abilities and talents, our bodies and looks, and all the rest. God gives us the basics to begin with, and He wants to see what we're going to do with them. To be all we can be, we've got to work with what

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 25:14-23

<sup>4</sup> Job 1:8

<sup>6</sup> Daniel 12:3; Matthew 6:19-21; 16:27; 25:21; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2

<sup>2</sup> Luke 16:8

<sup>5</sup> 1 Samuel 13:14

Timothy 4:7-8; Revelation 2:10

<sup>3</sup> John 1:47

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 2:15



He's given us, and when we do, He commends us.

And that's the way God wants us to be with others. People ought to be commended, and it needs to be genuine. There's a difference between genuine praise and flattery. Almost everybody needs encouragement. Most people are not conceited or stuck on themselves. In fact, I think most people feel insecure or inferior in one or more areas, and they tend to get discouraged with themselves. That's why encouragement is so important.

People thrive on praise. Any wise parent or boss will tell you that. It's more important to praise a child for good work and good behavior than it is to scold for bad behavior, and the same holds true for grown-ups. If you want to bring out the best in people and succeed in your relationships with them, always accentuate the positive.

One of the worst things you can do is to dwell on people's shortcomings, belittling, nagging, and finding fault. That sort of thing will sabotage relationships faster than almost anything, and it's been responsible for many failed marriages. It reminds

me of the story of a woman and a divorce court judge. She simply couldn't live with "that man" one day more, the woman told the judge, and she enumerated her husband's faults. On and on she went.

Finally she paused to catch her breath, and the judge asked, "Well, why did you marry him in the first place? You must have liked something about him then. What was it?"

"Well," the wife said, "he was a good man, a hard worker, and a faithful provider. He was also kind to children, and he was loyal."

"Isn't he still all those things?" asked the judge.

"Well, yes," the wife replied in a huff, "but..." And she started to repeat her grievances. "He's terrible! He throws his clothes on the floor. He never puts anything away. He's always late for dinner. He's hard to get up in the morning. He picks his nose in public. He fusses if I burn the toast. ..." All were relatively insignificant offenses.

"Very well then," said the judge, "here's my preliminary ruling: Go home and think about those good qualities for which you first loved him,

"The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives."—

*Anthony Robbins*

and try not to think about the things he does that peeve you. If after 30 days you still want the divorce, come back."

The judge never saw the woman again.

We create a problem when we dwell on people's weaknesses and bad traits. "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."<sup>1</sup> Try that the next time you get frustrated or impatient or upset with someone. Remind yourself of his or her good qualities, and try not to think about the bad things.

Don't you appreciate it when people show you that kind of consideration? And doesn't it spur you on to give your best when someone shows you appreciation for a job well done? It's part of living the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.<sup>2</sup> •

<sup>1</sup> Philippians 4:8

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 7:12

# BE AN BY RICHARD JOHNSTON icon



**THE GREEK WORD TRANSLATED “IMAGE”** in most English versions of the Bible is *eikon*, from which we get the word “icon.” It is used in the Bible both literally (e.g., Matthew 22:20, where Jesus asked whose image was on the Roman coin), and figuratively (e.g., Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 1:3, in which the apostle Paul says that Jesus is the express image of the invisible God). The Septuagint, which was the first standard translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, called Adam the “*eikon* of God.”

The sculptures, paintings, and carvings in orthodox churches are called icons—the anglicized rendering of *eikones*. So are people who are greatly admired or considered so good at what they do—entertainers, sports stars, entrepreneurs, etc.—that they have practically become synonymous with their area of expertise. No sooner were computer screens invented, it seems, than they began to get cluttered with little pictures that are called icons. Some have even taken on a life of their own, like the yellow smiley face and its dramatic derivatives, which are called *emoticons*.

Some people also use the word “icon” to explain the Christian’s role in the world. We are to strive to be images of Christ by doing as He did, or would do today. That’s not a bad idea. If we can

apply that to our fellow believers—if we can see *them* as images of the Lord—it engenders brotherly love and respect. Mother Teresa took that concept a step further. “I see Jesus in every human being,” she said. “I say to myself, ‘This is hungry Jesus, I must feed him. This is sick Jesus. This one has leprosy or gangrene; I must wash him and tend to him. I serve because I love Jesus.’”

Few of us will ever attain to the level of selfless love that Mother Teresa came to symbolize, but we can and should strive to be more like Jesus. We do that by spending time with Jesus, getting to know Him and His Word, and prac-

ticating what He preached and lived. “We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

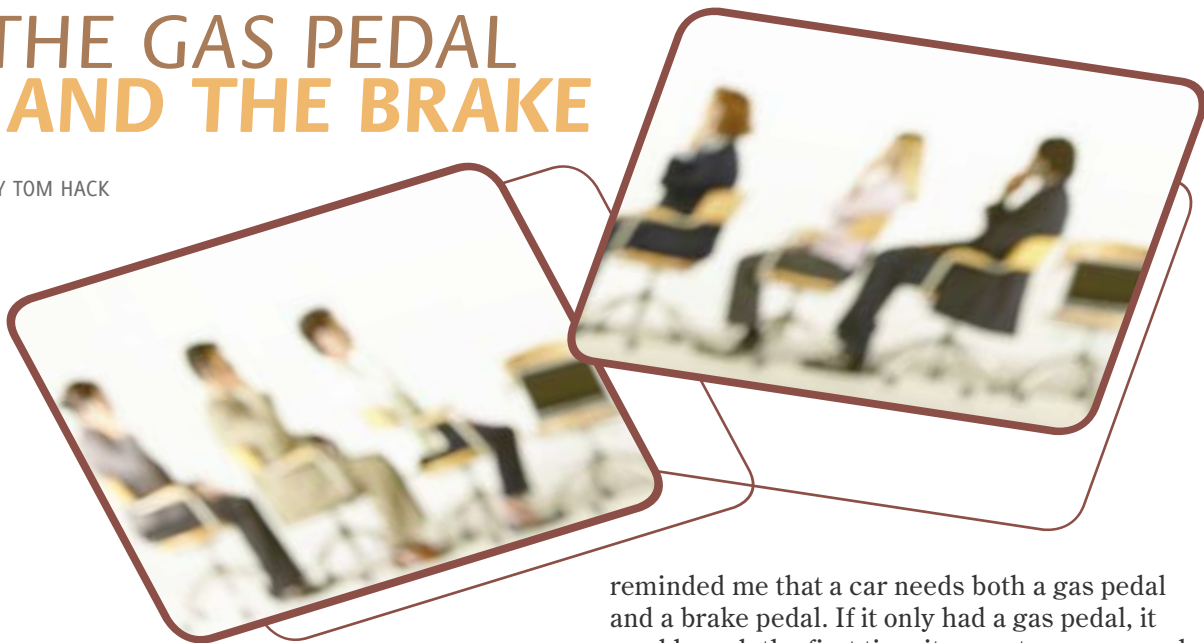
That transformation begins the moment you receive Jesus as your Savior and invite Him into your life. If you haven’t already, you can do that right now by praying this prayer:

*Dear Jesus, thank You for coming and dying for me so I can be forgiven my sins, experience Your love here and now, and have the promise of eternal life in Heaven. I open my heart and invite You in. Amen. •*

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18

# THE GAS PEDAL AND THE BRAKE

BY TOM HACK



**I HAVEN'T ALWAYS BEEN THE EASIEST PERSON TO WORK WITH.** In fact, in the past some people have wanted to work with me about as much as they wanted a pet porcupine.

Part of the problem was my overly competitive nature, and I'll give you an example of how that undermined my working relations with others. I was sharing executive responsibilities with a high-powered co-worker. Paul was a quick thinker, moved fast, was very organized, and could get a lot done in a day, whereas I naturally move slower and am cautious and analytical. I used to say, "I only have two gears—low and reverse." Working with Paul, I felt like I was always a step behind, and that brought out the competitive spirit in me. I soon determined that I would outdo Paul in every area. If he was going to get to work a half hour early to get a jump on the day, I would get there an hour early to get a jump on him. If he was going to focus on a certain problem, I would have already studied the problem from every conceivable angle. Well, that just about ruined our effectiveness together.

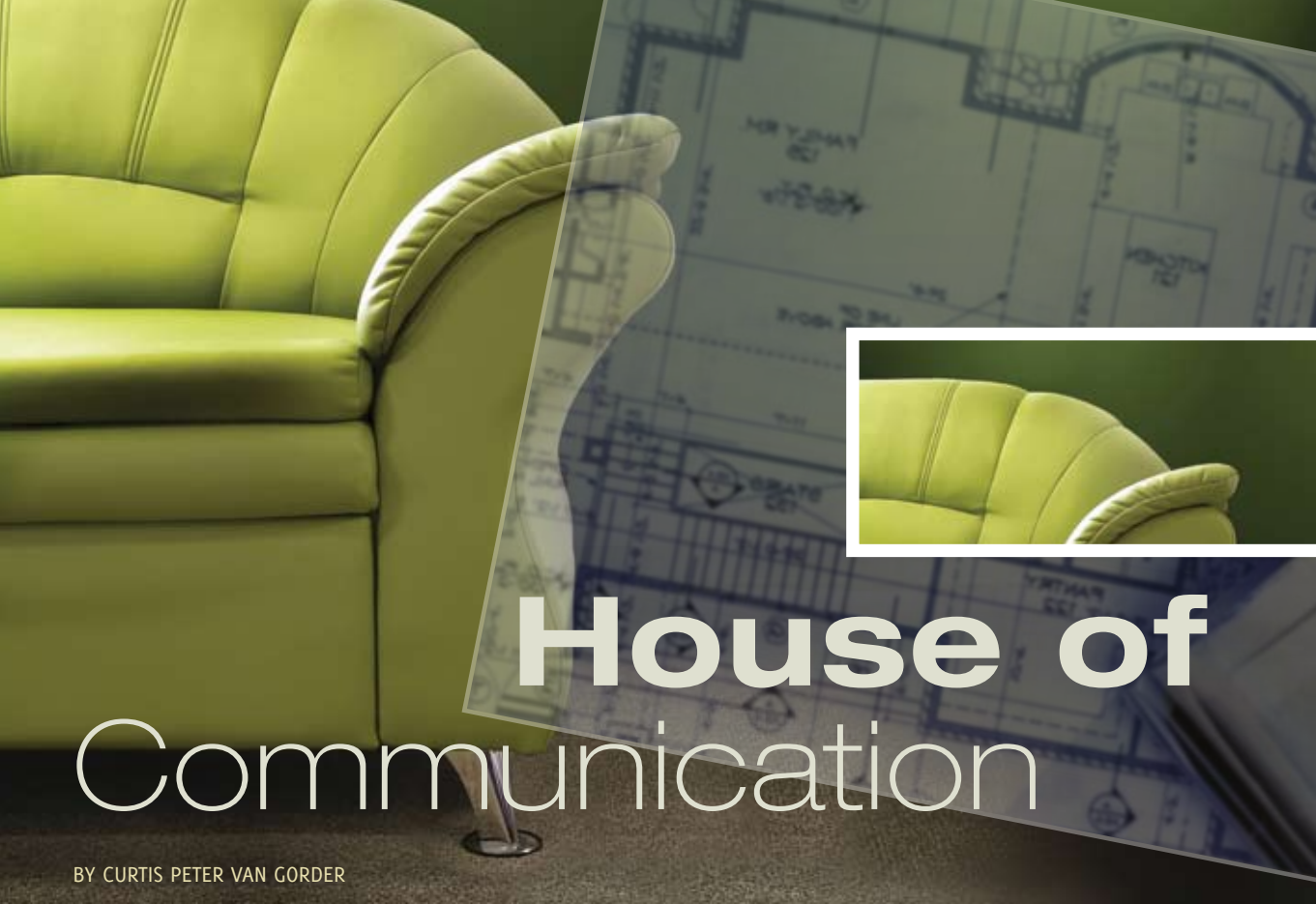
I prayed about that, and Jesus gave me a little analogy. He told me that we were like a car, and

reminded me that a car needs both a gas pedal and a brake pedal. If it only had a gas pedal, it would crash the first time it came to a curve and was going the slightest bit too fast. And if it only had a brake pedal, it would never get anywhere. To make forward progress and stay on the road, it needs both a gas pedal and a brake working together in proper balance.

What that meant for me was clear: First of all, I needed to realize that what I considered personal weaknesses were actually strengths. The fact that I move slower, for example, helped our executive team to be more thorough and to think and pray things through before we acted. Second, instead of viewing others' strengths as a threat and getting competitive about it, I needed to learn to let others I work with excel at the things they were good at and to look for ways to use my own strengths to complement theirs.

The happy ending is that I adjusted my thinking, and Paul and I went on to work quite well together. I'm now a few more years down the road, and the "don't compete, complement" principle has proven to be effective in all sorts of relationships.

TOM HACK IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN NORTH AMERICA. •



# House of Communication

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

**I WAS GOING THROUGH A ROUGH TIME IN MY RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS.** Instead of “winning friends and influencing people,” as the title of the famous book by Dale Carnegie suggests, I was losing friends and putting people off. It was time to get some help. I picked up my prayer telephone and dialed Jeremiah 33:3—“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”

Jesus picked up right away. After the usual affable greetings, our conversation went something like this. ...

“I am having a big problem saying things I shouldn’t, and sometimes people take what I say the wrong way. Either way, things can get as sticky as fly paper! It is not how I want it to be. I want to get along

with people well, even fabulously. Please help me out with some advice here. How can I improve my communications skills?”

“Look around.”

“Is there something You want to show me?”

“Yes, a *lot* of some-things.”

I was puzzled, but desperate enough to try anything. “You mean I should look around the house? Okay, can do—but what exactly am I looking for?”

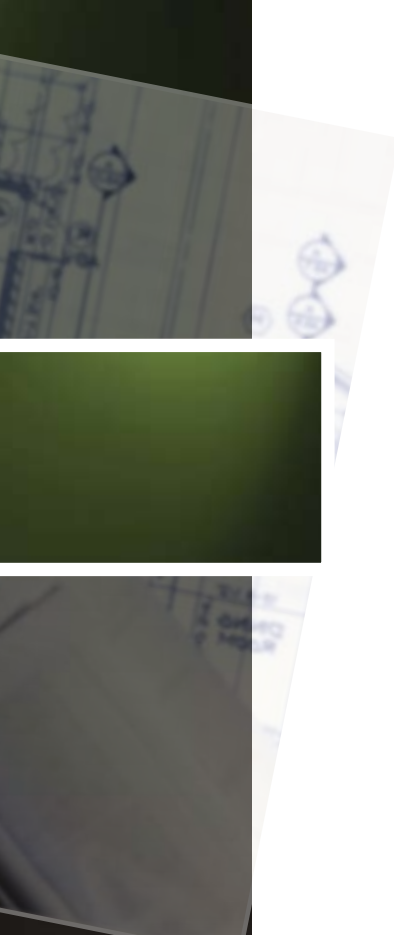
“Just keep your eyes and ears open. Like I promised,

I will show you ‘great and mighty things.’”

As I started looking around the house—this might sound crazy—it was like Jesus was my unseen tour guide.

As I passed through the first doorway, He said, “Remember what doorways are for. They connect spaces. You need to be open and honest in your communication with others if you want to connect.”

In the kitchen He said, “A few items here have special significance for us today. This knife sharpener



makes the blade clean and keen. Look how the knife now cuts this carrot with one smooth stroke. You might remember the proverb, ‘As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.’<sup>1</sup> Good conversation keeps you sharp. What is the opposite of sharp? You got it ... dull, or blunt. Those are two things you want to avoid in your interactions with others.

“These kitchen appliances hold another lesson. A lot of thought went into their creation.

Their makers were also thoughtful enough to put together instruction manuals to help you get the most out of the appliances and to spare you unnecessary trouble. Good communication is a lot like that. You need to be clear in your explanations, and to carefully listen to others’ explanations. Otherwise there are bound to be misunderstandings.

“Since we are here, how about a cup of tea? Put the kettle on. It will take awhile for the water to boil, so you will need some patience. That, by the way, is another trait that’s needed for good communication. Every person is unique, so no two people see any situation from quite the same perspective. It often takes patience to try to see things as others see them and to come to an understanding.

“A cup of hot tea warms you up, like love does. When you feel loved, it makes you want to respond with love, doesn’t it? So if you only remember one thing, remember to communicate in such a way that the other person feels loved. You can do that in lots of ways—some as simple as showing others that you value their opinion or enjoy being with them, or through a smile or sincere compliment.

“Now we’re moving into the hallway. Be careful, because the floor has just been mopped. Going too fast on a slippery floor can lead to a nasty fall, and being too quick to speak, especially in slippery situations, can lead to disaster.

“Feeling comfortable? Too hot or cold? Just right? That’s good. Here on our left we have an interesting device called a thermostat. It keeps the house at just the right temperature by turning up or down the heat as needed. In your communications with others, you need to keep the person you’re talking to in the comfort zone by being sensitive to his or her needs.

“See that wall clock over there? That should remind you how important good timing is in communication. Give people time to wake up fully in the morning, or time to cool down if you know they’re upset. And of course one of the best ways to know if it’s an appropriate time to say something is to take time to listen before you speak.

“If you get *real* quiet, you can hear that clock tick. There are times when you need to silence your own thoughts in order to hear how others ‘tick.’ When you listen that carefully to others, you’ll find that it has a couple of other benefits. People will feel more at ease communicating with you, and they’ll be more likely to listen to you. Did you know that people listen five times faster than they speak? That’s why so many people have a problem with interrupting others mid-sentence.

“On to the living room. A good living room is not too sparse and not too cluttered. Comfy sofas, a few tasteful paintings and decorations, and ambient lighting all say, ‘Welcome. Relax.’ That’s how people should feel around you—welcome to communicate.”

Just then the doorbell rang. Time to try out some of those tips. •

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 27:17

## Working Well with Others

**Q:** *I was recently promoted to a managerial position that I'd had my sights on for a long time, but now I'm not sure I'm cut out for this job. It seems that everything I say or do results in a misunderstanding between my fellow managers and me. Any advice?*

**A:** Misunderstandings are unpleasant under any circumstances, but especially so in the workplace, which is often already stressful. Add the pressure of learning a new leadership role, and it's no wonder you're discouraged. But don't give up just yet! Learning new responsibilities and building good working relationships both take time, so be patient. In the meantime, here are a few tips that should help.

- 1. One thing at a time.** Give the business at hand and those you are talking with your undivided attention.
- 2. Listen.** Hear your colleagues out before expressing your own thoughts and opinions, and never interrupt. This will not only help you benefit from their experience, but it is a way of showing respect, which wins respect.
- 3. Ask for more information or a clarification, if necessary.** A lot of communication problems stem from people being too proud to say they need more background information or don't understand the point someone else is trying to make.
- 4. Think things through.** Know what you want to get across before you start to speak. This will help you be clearer, more specific, and more direct in your presentation, and therefore less likely to be misunderstood.
- 5. Don't over-communicate.** As John Kotter, a professor at the Harvard Business School and author of the international bestseller *Leading Change*, put it, "Good communication does not mean that you have to speak in perfectly formed sentences and paragraphs. It isn't about slickness. Simple and clear go a long way."
- 6. Acknowledge your limitations.** Don't be afraid to say "I don't know."
- 7. Watch your unspoken communications.** Nearly everything you do communicates something to others. Punctuality communicates. Attentiveness communicates. Body language communicates. Your facial expression communicates. Your tone of voice communicates. Even silence communicates. Positive signals open lines of communication; negative signals hinder.
- 8. Be sympathetic.** To understand others, try to put yourself in their position. Why do they think or act the way they do? Be careful not to misread others' body language. If you're not sure, ask.
- 9. Strive for unity.** It's easier to work *with* people than it is to work when at odds with them. Avoid conflicts and personality clashes by looking for common ground and admirable qualities in those you work with.
- 10. Be positive.** Build team spirit by dwelling on jobs well done and progress being made toward your united goals. Focus on problems from the angle of "how can we fix this" rather than "who's to blame." •



# QUIET MOMENTS

A spiritual exercise

*“Trust ... in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”<sup>1</sup>*

The next time you feel flustered or overwhelmed, find a quiet spot and take five minutes to try this: Close your eyes and focus your thoughts on a restful scene. It can be as elaborate as a sandy beach with warm waves washing over your toes and a balmy breeze rustling the palm trees and your hair, or it can be as simple as relaxing in your favorite chair on your day off. Now picture Jesus joining you for the experience, happy, relaxed, and looking forward to a little downtime with you. Once you have that picture firmly in your mind, try to “be there” for a few minutes. Feel your body, mind, and spirit relax. When you return to the “real” world, you’ll feel more rested and be in a better state of mind for whatever the rest of the day may have in store for you.

## HOW TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD IN ONE SIMPLE STEP

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if everyone would simply do what Jesus said to do—love our neighbors as ourselves?<sup>2</sup> When people don’t treat others with much love, they’re going to have problems—and they do! It can safely be said that the root of all of the evils in the world today is a lack of love. But there’s a simple solution, even in such a confused and highly complicated society as that of the world today: love. If we love God, we can love and respect each other. We can then follow His rules of life, liberty, and the possession of happiness, and all will be well and happy in Him.

So let’s ask God to help us love our neighbors with *His* love. And remember, “neighbor” doesn’t only mean the one who lives next door. It is anyone who needs our help, regardless of race, creed, color, or nationality.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 6:17

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 22:39

### FEEDING READING

## Keys to Good Communication

*Keep it positive and uplifting.*

Proverbs 15:23

Proverbs 27:9

Ephesians 4:29

*Be informed before you speak.*

Proverbs 18:13

James 1:19

*Timing and tact are everything.*

Proverbs 10:32a

Proverbs 25:11

Ecclesiastes 3:7

Ecclesiastes 8:5

*Put yourself in the other’s place; empathize.*

Matthew 7:12

Romans 12:15

Philippians 2:3-4

1 Peter 3:8

*Put an end to arguments before they begin.*

Proverbs 15:1

Proverbs 17:9

Proverbs 17:14

Proverbs 20:3a

*Don’t gossip.*

Titus 3:2

1 Peter 2:1

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# build bridges not walls

**I**t's been said that people are lonely because they build walls instead of bridges. How true!

Most people tend to be a little selfish. It's human nature to "look out for number one," to put your own needs and desires before the needs of others. It's easy enough to get caught up in your own life and problems, but when you do that, you're creating a bigger problem by closing yourself off to many wonderful things in life and many wonderful people.

When you build bridges by reaching out to and connecting with others, it may add a few problems and complications, but it's worth the trouble because it also brings warmth, friendship, love, and other blessings into your life. It is a matter of give and take, and it does require some effort, patience, and perseverance. The bridge doesn't build itself, and sometimes others aren't so keen at first to see you building in their direction. But if everyone got stuck in the me-first mentality and built nothing but walls, the world would be a terribly lonely place.

Building a bridge begins with a prayer for love and understanding and for Me to help you change in other areas as needed. When you begin to think in terms of what others want and need, the framework is in place. Then that bridge grows a little stronger each time you give of yourself to that hard-to-reach person. It might take a little courage to cross that bridge the first time, when you're not sure how well it's going to hold or how you'll be received on the other side, but you'll be glad you did. I will bless every unselfish act, and honor every step you take to reach out to another.

