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PEANUT BUTTER JARS - Men at the Cross Devotional

JULY 26TH 2011 BY STAFF WRITER

PEANUT BUTTER JARS - Men at the Cross Devotional

Reprint Compliments of Men At The Cross By Joe White

VIDEO OF THE DAY

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

7But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

I've got to break the routine today and lead a major cheer in your home **"I LIKE THIS BOOK WE'RE STUDYING TOGETHER!** This second Corinthians letter is full of God's greatest treasures!"

Speaking of treasures, there is not (nor has there ever been nor will there ever be) a treasure as absolutely invaluable as the mega-karat diamond jewel of the Holy Spirit of Christ that hides

[images/Blog Images/show/ujf6](#)

Himself in the treasure chest in the heart of a true believer and follower of Jesus Christ.

When I was a kid my dad worked awfully hard to come home with enough money to put beans and burgers and peanut butter and jelly on the table. We didn't starve, but we didn't have any leftovers to feed our dog "Pixie" either! My mom was a champion at stretching the dollar and she'd save everything of any potential value.

[images/Blog Images/show/ujf7](#) Nothing went into the trash. Her mom taught her to save buttons, rare coins, toy marbles, trading stamps and such in common peanut butter jars that were emptied monthly. I remember one Friday night we even put a handful of fireflies in a peanut butter jar to make a natural flashlight for a game we played in the darkness of our room.

Treasures, in peanut butter jars . . . seems a little ironic, doesn't it!

But when I think of God putting His greatest treasure in [images/Blog Images/show/ujf8](#) the heart of a man who has failed as many times as I have, I feel just like a peanut butter jar; used, washed spotless, and filled with a treasure so I can share some of the rare and priceless jewel with folks who come my way.

QUESTIONS:

1. How valuable is a used peanut butter jar? How valuable are you without Jesus?
2. Spiritual pride is the worst pride known to man. What is spiritual pride? How can I possibly be prideful when, without Jesus, I am only fit to be thrown in the trash?
3. How does this verse define humility to you?

LIFELINE:

When I'm empty, I would break if I fell, but when a peanut butter jar is filled with God's treasures, it is the strongest treasure chest on earth.

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FORGIVEN - Men At The Cross Devotional

JULY 25TH 2011 BY STAFF WRITER

FORGIVEN - Men At The Cross Devotional

Reprint Compliments of Men At The Cross By Joe White

VIDEO OF THE DAY

2 Corinthians 2:9-10

9The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven-if there was anything to forgive-I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake

Riding up the chair lift in Park Cities, Utah with my 22-year-old friend, Emily, was a learning experience I won't soon forget. Emily is an energetic snowboarder who can run circles around this "gray-haired knuckle dragger" (as the young snowboarder crown terms old guys like me who enjoy racing these 160 cm mini sleds down the steep rocky mountain slopes).

The two-chair lift ride was a longest ride in Utah. It took the entire trip to give Emily sufficient time to tell me her emotional teenage-life story. At age 15, from what seemed

like a model family, Emily's world shattered into small fragments when her mom announced that she was in love with the school music director and she'd be leaving home with all the furniture in the house and as much of the family's savings and income as she could get her hands on.

In defense of her gentle-spirited forgiving father, [images/Blog Images/show/ujeo](#) Emily's rage towards her mom boiled inside of her. Her anger seemed unquenchable and the inner fire of hatred blazed hotter with each passing year as her mom took more and more from the family and re-invaded their home continually with painful intrusions and demands and new announcements of her "Dance with the Devil" and continuing extra-marital affair.

[images/Blog Images/show/ujep](#) Then, five years later, this talented little athlete from West Virginia with a smile as beautiful as a Utah Rocky Mountain sunrise came to our sports camp to counsel our teenagers. With all of her talents and Christ-filled beauty, Emily also brought to camp a loaded suitcase of bitterness that was crippling her like an age old case of arthritis.

During staff training week as I spoke continually of God's amazing love for us and my boundless love for my wife and kids, the Holy Spirit purposely and mysteriously melted Emily's hard heart towards her mom and she forgave her completely for all the hurt she had lashed upon her five long years before. Like a mighty wall of water caged behind a huge concrete dam, God's greatest medicine, the healing power of forgiveness, was now released to flow into Emily's life and enable her to be truly well, truly whole and truly free.

QUESTIONS:

1. Emily's sparkling eyes and contagious smile was the result of an unbridled, bitter-free heart. Why was the night of forgiveness so important in that smile?
2. Why does God demand that we forgive others as He forgives us?
3. Is there any speck of bitterness hidden in your heart that you need to deal with today?

LIFELINE:

Forgiveness is God's greatest gift to you and your greatest gift to your family.

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Choir Rises To Occasion For Service

JULY 22ND 2011 BY NEWS

Choir Rises To Occasion For Service

JOPLIN - When disaster strikes, pastors are called into an extreme level of service to help meet the needs of their congregation and community. But it's not just pastors and their staff, but also other areas, such as music ministries, that are presented with unexpected tasks.

When the tornado came to Joplin, Larry Sanborn and his wife Gloria took refuge in an interior room of the lower part of their split-level home. The tornado broke their windows, burst open their doors and took off part of their roof, but they personally made it through uninjured.

Sometime after that fateful night, he's not quite sure what day it was, Larry Sanborn received a call. As music director of First United Methodist Church in Joplin, he was asked if he would be able to get his choir together to perform at a special service in a few days. The service would be a community-wide service, and President Barack Obama and Governor Jay Nixon would be speaking at the service, along with Rev. Aaron Brown from Saint Paul's UMC.

As an uninjured survivor of the deadliest tornado in 60 years, with a severely damaged home, Sanborn already had a lot of emotions to deal with; now he had two more: honored and excited.

“I’ve been music director here 46 years,” Sanborn said. “We’ve sang at Annual Conference a couple of times, but we’ve never had an opportunity anything like this.”

Sanborn went to the church, and the church staff pitched in with helping him call all the choir members. Because they would be on stage with President Obama, all the choir members had to pass a security clearance, and Sanborn had to get all of the names, birth dates and Social Security numbers to the security team in Washington D.C.

Sanborn called in a few veteran members of the choir, to bring their number up from 28 to 35. The choir got in a practice that week, singing "Hymn of Promise" by Natalie Sleeth. When Sunday came, the U.S. Army sent a bus out to the church to pick them up, so they could get through traffic and past security.

Before the service Glenda Austin, Sanborn’s sister-in-law and pianist for First UMC, played a grand piano for fifteen minutes.

“It was wonderful. You could have heard a pin drop in there,” Sanborn said.

The memorial service wasn’t the only big task for the choir. Like most churches in Joplin, First UMC was packed the Sunday after the tornado.

“It was full – it looked like Easter,” Sanborn said. “It was similar to the crowds we saw after 9/11.”

The Sanborns are living with Gloria’s mother, about five blocks from their home. They are waiting on insurance adjusters and contractors to begin rebuilding. They were told that it might be several months before they will be able to move back into their home.

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THE PLEDGE; Men at the Cross Devotional

JULY 22ND 2011 BY STAFF WRITER

THE PLEDGE; Men at the Cross Devotional

Reprint Compliments of Men At The Cross By Joe White

VIDEO OF THE DAY

2 Corinthians 1:19-22

19For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." 20For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. 21Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

The air rushed out of the front right tire of our travel van as quickly as the "swoosh" a little child hears as expectantly releases an untied balloon to watch it spurt feverishly through the air about him.

[images/Blog Images/show/ujdp](#)

[images/Blog Images/show/ujdu](#) It was 12:30 in the early morning and definitely no time for a flat tire . . . especially to a group of weary travelers with no spare and a nine-hour all night drive from Denver to Kansas City facing them. To my amazement we found an open tire store with one tire on the shelf exactly the right size. As I reached in my pocket to get my billfold, I realized I had left that and all my travel money at the McDonalds across town. With frantic haste, I pleaded with the mechanic to trust me and put the tire on our van while I hitched a ride to retrieve my billfold.

"How do I know you'll return to pay me?" he asked with a shout.

"I'll leave Brad Friess with you. He's my close friend," I said clumsily.

That was enough to seal the deal. Brad was my friend and no fool would leave a friend behind for the price of one measly tire! Besides, Brad is one of the greatest guys you could ever meet . . . a handsome, intelligent, talented 6'5" basketball standout for the University of Arkansas Cagers team.

[images/Blog Images/show/ujdv](#)

[images/Blog Images/show/uje0](#) Brad was a pledge ... a very good one at that! With billfold in hand, I returned for the tire and my friend ... for a starlit trip to Kansas City where my friends laughed at me all night long for leaving an unsuspecting character like Brad Friess as a pledge for ... of all things ... a steel belted radial white wall tire worth no more than \$99.

QUESTIONS:

1. When a person receives Christ as personal Savior, the Holy Spirit enters his heart to stay. How is this gift from God a firm, secure "pledge" that Jesus will return to take that person home?
2. In light of this all-important word from God, what does the phrase "the security of the believer" mean to you?
3. What do the terms "down payment", "pledge", "earnest money contract" have in common and how do they describe God's mission with the Holy Spirit?

LIFELINE:

"I will never leave you or forsake you" may be the most pleasant words in scripture.

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STORMS OF LIFE; Men at the Cross Devotional

JULY 21ST 2011 BY STAFF WRITER

STORMS OF LIFE; Men at the Cross Devotional

Reprint Compliments of Men At The Cross By Joe White

VIDEO OF THE DAY

2 Corinthians 5:1-5

1Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 2Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, 3because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Randy Odom is a fine counselor at Kids Across America, our summer sports camp reserved especially for some of America's most deserving kids who come from the financially deprived concrete world of urban inner city America. Not only does Randy love God, but he loves urban kids with a passion.

One stormy spring day, Randy pulled up in front of his trailer house at the exact moment a tornado arrived at his front door. In haste he jumped out of his car (as the door was ripped from its hinges), dove into his "home on wheels" where he was met head on in the hallway by a flying door. The door pinned him to the floor while his whole house was literally demolished above him. Although his house was scattered for city blocks, Randy was protected by the door and escaped without injury.

<images/Blog Images/show/ujdi>

These "earth suits" we inhabit while we visit this earth are about as stable as Randy's mobile home in a tornado. We can exercise them, feed them, and doctor them all we want, but the "tornado of time" will eventually scatter them into the dust of the ground. No medicine or vitamin or magic potion can keep the inevitable from happening. "As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more....."

Psalm 103:16 Fortunately, oh so fortunately, our spirit is protected from destruction by the spirit of Christ, if indeed He is alive and well in our hearts. It is our spirit, sealed by grace for eternity by His spirit, that is destined to live with God forever unscathed, unharmed, free to live, fit for life with a King.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is our "blind spot" that causes us to focus so much time and attention on our "earth suit" with such a limited life span and so little time and attention to our "inner man" that will live forever?

- 2. What are some ways you can change your priorities to refocus on that part of you that will live forever?
- 3. How do you express high value to that inner being?

LIFELINE:

What a great time to pour our hearts into these daily devotionals to prepare the part of us that will live forever.

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