

Sharing My Daily Bread

I've written before about [Our Daily Bread](#) – it's a little pamphlet of daily devotionals that I find very helpful in remembering to take time to think about God and His many gifts everyday – even when time is short. Yesterday's devotional was a good one that I think can help and/or speak to many people. Enjoy:

Trouble by Dennis J. De Haan

Does it surprise you that trouble is a part of life? Probably not. We all know trouble close-up and personal—bad health, empty bank account, blighted love, grief, loss of job, and the list goes on.

It shouldn't surprise us, therefore, that God permits the added trials of being ridiculed and hated because we follow Christ (1 Peter 4:12). But trouble, whether it is common to man or unique to Christians, can reveal to us the moral fiber of our soul.

I have never seen a golf course without hazards. They are part of the game. Golfers speak of the courses with the most hazards as the most challenging, and they will travel a long way to test their skill against the most demanding 18 holes.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "If I had a formula for bypassing trouble, I wouldn't pass it around. I wouldn't be doing anyone a favor. Trouble creates a capacity to handle it Meet it as a friend, for you'll see a lot of it and you had better be on speaking terms with it."

Let's not think it strange when trouble comes, for God is using it to test the stamina of our souls. The best way to handle trouble is to commit our "souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (v.19).

*The troubles that we face each day
Reveal how much we need the Lord;
They test our faith and strength of will
And help us then to trust God's Word. –D. De Haan*

Great triumphs are born out of great troubles.

Crazy Cat Lady = Me?

Seems like it's been a long time since my last griping-about-Walmart blog post. Either I'm getting used to their secretive price-gauging ways, or I'm too busy in my personal life to spend as much time feeling wronged by the corporate giant. Maybe it's a little of both. But a few weeks ago, a couple of Walmart employees made themselves worth mentioning on my blog for their roles in turning a normally hectic pre-Christmas nighttime shopping trip with 4 little kids into quite an irritating adventure.

After wandering past empty shelf upon empty shelf and compromising my shopping list due to all of the out-of-stock items there were (and I'm talking everyday items, nothing gourmet nor exotic), my frustrations were growing. But finally I was finished in the grocery section, so I split off from my family and headed for the garden center. It might seem like a strange time of year to get those cement garden-border-blocks, but they are just over \$1 at Walmart, so I use them as a cost effective way to keep my puppy from digging holes under our fence. He digs a hole, I stick in a Walmart cement brick and solve the problem for under \$1.50 – done. It won't be long until I have a pretty little brick fence bordering my chain link fence. Except that my puppy dug a hole the other day, and just because it was December in Ohio

(never mind the thunderstorms and rain we've been having), Walmart decided that they are going to lock up their cement bricks in the outdoor garden section and not let customers back there to get them. I get back there and find the door to the outside blocked with a bench (so THAT'S where they're putting the benches they removed from the entire store. Why Walmart decided to make seating scarce in their store is beyond me. Don't shoppers stay longer and spend more money if there is a place to rest their feet? Don't they want to come back to a store that lets them rest while their shopping companion goes at it? But that's a whole 'nother post, I guess, even if I entertained the tangent). So anyway, I hunt down an employee and ask her about the cement bricks, and she tells me that the garden center is closed for the night and to come back another day. And this is AFTER I've already spent almost 2 hours in the store, wandering amongst empty shelves that it seems they don't know how to stock. It was difficult to explain to her that I had come there that night with all my kids and that this would not be happening again any time soon. Take a bunch of kids into a store that sells toys that time of year if you want to know how draining it can be – go on, I dare you to borrow some kids and do it next year. But the bottom line is, Ms. Walmart employee was not nice when she told me to come back another time, and she didn't offer to go back there or have someone else get me a brick or two or anything. She acted like we were both just stuck there in Walmart, and if she could deal with it, so could I. But guess what? She is GETTING paid to be there, while I have to PAY to be there – see the difference? She did not.

So what's with the Walmart policy of selling an item but not letting customers buy it? Are they hoarding cement bricks to build a top-secret Walmart price-gouging planning party fortress or something? Well, I was crabby that night, but I was not going to cause a scene; I don't like to be the scene-causing type. I had some good advice from a fellow tangenteer floating around in my head, "Walmart employees are people

too", so I got over it and moved on. But by the time the second Walmart employee wronged me that night, I was *really* mad... The woman at the check-out did not want to take our coupon, even though it was clearly for the item we purchased. Not even worth writing about now; I might as well move on to the incident that inspired the title of this post – thought I would throw an amusing Walmart story into my grab bag of gripes...

I had to run to Walmart on New Year's Eve. Yes, New Year's Eve, the day when even our normally not-so-full rural Walmart is filled to the brim with people who can't wait to get where they're going to stuff themselves, get drunk or do both at the same time. The mood in Walmart was festive, but I couldn't find a parking spot. I opted for one a mile away, especially because the weather decided it wanted to be more like May than December; it was in the 50s. I'm picking up some last minute New Year's goodies, and I notice that the mixed shelled nuts are on sale for only \$1 /pound. Cracking fresh nuts is one of my favorite ways to snack – hold comments on this please, this isn't Facebook, it's a mostly family-friendly blog ☐ – nuts are nutritious, one of the natural foods I believe the human body is meant to consume, plus I have a monster parrot that loves them. So I called Hubby, and he told me to buy 30 pounds. By the time I got done putting 30 pounds of nuts into sacks (still holding on the comments), my little boy had bitten through an orange I was going to buy (I put it back instead – haha, just kidding, I had to buy the dehydrated orange at the end of the trip), and I had fielded the same exact question from at least two different people: "What are you going to do with all those nuts?" I had some conversations about my parrot and my 4 kids, and then I had had enough and wanted out. Here's the funny part.

We returned to our friendly local Walmart on January 2, and my husband runs in and finds the same nuts for now only a quarter a pound!! I'm not going to think about how much money I could

have saved, not going to do that; it's not the funny part. At a quarter a pound, they were out of the nuts, so my husband asked an employee if they had any more (wait, the 30 pounds I bought weren't enough?) to which he replied, "No, some lady came in here on New Year's Eve and bought most of them for all of her cats." My husband thinks that somehow my stories of us having a nut-eating pet parrot turned into Crazy Cat Lady Buys Nuts among our local Walmart employees, and that's ok with me – I could be crazy cat lady. If only I weren't allergic to cats...

Happy holidays from me and Walmart!



Too Close To Home

Crazy night here last night!!

Our 6-year-old, Samantha was up late, and since she was the only one of our 4 kids still awake, we decided to spend some 'just parents with Sammie' time and play a game. Dad had sunk one of our ships in Battleship when we heard a series of pops from outside. Following our instincts to take cover, we went into the interior of the house away from windows, where we discussed what we heard. Had we spaced on the date, was it

New Year's already and someone was lighting off fireworks in celebration? No, my husband said, there is only one thing that sounds like that, and when he put it that way, I had to agree – it was gunfire. After we decided that it couldn't really have been anything else, we called the police, who told us there were already officers on scene. We got our police scanner hooked up (who said I don't need a police scanner to keep tabs on small town action?), and we continued to sit in the hallway and listen to it. Soon we heard the unmistakable churning of the LifeFlight helicopter (we live blocks from the hospital), and we wondered if it was related – we would have more info in the morning. The police scanner just had mild chatter about officers responding and trying to find the "suspect's ID". They found his cell phone, and an officer was told to see who the suspect had called. Not getting any useful info, we went to bed, and my husband woke me this morning with the info that he had heard on the big city Toledo news – a shootout had occurred in our small town, only blocks from our house, mere feet from our friends' house.

Turns out, a man had shot at the police station and then drove down to the park, where he shot at the police who chased him. The police returned fire, which explains the series of 6-8 pops we heard. The man was then LifeFlighted to a bigger hospital with life-threatening injuries. That was all the info in the newspaper, but when I did a google search this morning on the man's name, something interesting came up: a memory page for his daughter who died in a motorcycle accident in our town (this family was from a town 25 miles away) last spring. I remember that case: a man was driving a speeding motorcycle, and when police tried to pull him over, he gave chase. He eventually lost control of the motorcycle, and it crashed, killing his passenger when she was ejected from the motorcycle. From the research I did on the internet this morning, it seems that the suspect from last night's shooting incident was the father of the victim in the motorcycle chase case. Perhaps he was upset with the way police handled things

last spring, so he shot up the police station and led them back to where his daughter was killed – the shootout took place at the same scene.

Tragic case all around, and we are reeling from yet another so-called 'big city' incident that seems quite out of place here in our small Utopian town. I went to the shooting suspect's Facebook page, and there are several Christian activities on it. Perhaps in his grief for his daughter, the man lost faith in letting God handle things, and that is another aspect of the tragedy. Thank God that no officers or bystanders were injured, and I'm going to pray for the recovery and physical and emotional healing of the man and his family.

[Here's a link to the news story.](#)

It's A Myth That You Can't Get A Speeding Ticket On Christmas Day

Finding out that it's only a myth that cops are nice and forgiving on Christmas Day was not pleasant, and that's all I'm going to say about that – except to disclaim that the lead foot did not belong to me.

Other than 'the incident', Christmas day was a fun day full of blessings and family cheer. We drove the 200+ miles to Chicago and back to spend the day with family, and despite promising ourselves this will be the last year we attempt that sort of craziness, it was fun – although we returned more tired than ever with less time to recuperate than ever, and it

really might be time to sit back and relax at home on Christmas Day one of these years.

Hope your holiday season was blessed and happy!! And oh yeah, watch out for those Indiana State Troopers! ☐

A Christmas Blessing

Speaking of family outings, we found a fun place weekends ago in Fort Wayne Indiana – it's an indoor ice skating place, and they have THREE ice rinks! But we didn't have time to try ice skating; our family was more interested in the bouncy castles. At \$5 / head from 1-4pm, it wasn't a bad deal. The only problem was that they had the bouncy castles in the ice arena area, and it was freezing in there! The kids were ok, but we weren't able to stay as long as we wanted, plus they were all frozen by the time we left. If they had just noted their arrangement on their website, we could have dressed for the occasion, but that's ok, it was still fun. After that, we had a delicious dinner at Golden Corral – YUM!

But something strange happened there – I was waiting for a man to finish at the buffet, and he apologized for taking so long (he wasn't) and then handed me a "Christmas blessing" on a folded up piece of paper. He was vague in the details; just mentioning 'Christmas Blessing', so I opened up the paper, and it was a copy of a newspaper article about the man's family – mainly his elderly mother. Looking at the picture in the article told me that the man who gave it to me was Raymond, whom you'll read about below. Although the article was from 1996, he mentioned that he was with his mother that day at the restaurant – she is doing well here in 2010, 14 years later! I find the family's story inspirational, and I thought I'd

help the man spread his family's touching story – the story featuring his mother's boundless faith and he and his father finding Christ. Below is a copy of the article he gave me; I hope you find it inspirational reading on this very special holiday. Merry Christmas!

'She taught us by what she did'

Thanksgiving this year had a special glow for Arlene Berger, 74, and her family.

They gathered for the holiday meal in the new house the Flushing Township resident, severely brain-damaged in a 1994 traffic accident, shares with one of her sons, his wife, and two children.

Her house was built with funds from her accident settlement and her family is determined life will be as meaningful as possible for the woman left with physical as well as mental impairment.

Her progress has been awesome, as has been the help she's received from others, according to two of her five children.

Raymond, 47, the eldest of her four sons, and David, 32, the youngest, this week recounted details of their mother's accident and her life of righteousness.

With 15 years separating them, they hold different views of how their mother's faith affected them.

"I used to mock her; my other brothers did," Raymond said of his youth in Flint.

David said, "She was the most giving person, many of us thought to a fault. I remember a couple of times she didn't know how she was going to pay her bills, and when I asked her about how she had spent her money, she had given some to this person, some to that one."

Raymond concurred, "We thought she was being used. We told her there ain't no God and to quit giving everything away.

But we weren't thinking like she was."

Their Bible-reading Baptist mother was living up to the passage: "Give, and it shall be given to you." (Luke 6:38)

"Now she's on the receiving end." said David. "Because of the way she was before the accident, people want to do for her."

Church members are showing up to care for her to a degree the family never could have imagined.

"She gave everything away her whole life, and now her kids all want her to have an enjoyable life," David said.

It was not just her older sons who derided her faith.

Raymond, a Flint truck plant employee, recalls his late father chasing ministers away from the door.

"He had been anti-religious. He worked and he drank. I didn't really know him until I was old enough to drink, old enough to go to the bars," Raymond said.

In 1981, their father had a massive heart attack. His wife's church prayed for him, and he survived to embrace salvation.

He lived the last two years of his life a Christian.

Raymond said he also has been saved, and has seen the difference faith has made in his life. "That was a miracle," he said. "I never thought I'd see my dad in a church. I never thought I'd see myself in a church."

David, on the other hand, attended John R. Rice Baptist Academy in Davison and went on to graduate from a bible college. He teaches at Bridgeport Baptist Academy during the day and works at Delphi Saginaw Steering Systems at night.

He was the assistant pastor at Landmark Baptist Church, where his mother was headed Feb. 24, 1994, when her car was hit in the driver's side by a Jeep Cherokee whose driver had run a

red light, he said. He was notified that his mother had been taken to Hurley Medical Center, where she was in critical condition.

She underwent two emergency surgeries in short order.

A CAT scan showed 11 brain hemorrhages and blood on her brain stem, he said.

"She was in a coma the whole time," David said. "After three months, the doctors told us she might not ever come out of it because of her age and the length of time since the accident."

Her children were told of the probability that she would never be able to walk, talk, or feed herself.

"Well, you ain't God," Raymond told them.

After three-and-a-half months at Hurley, she was moved to Riverbend Nursing Center in Grand Blanc, where she stunned David by allowing nurses to walk her in "baby steps" the first day.

She progressed out of the coma. Raymond remembered first noticing her fingers tapping to the inspirational music tapes her family supplied.

Raymond and David recall the times she responded with an "I love you, too" to each of them.

Arlene Berger received three months of therapy at Riverbend before transferring to McLaren Regional Medical Center to build skills she would need for living at home.

His brothers and sister back David up in caring for their mother, who lost her left eye and use of her left hand in the accident and now has an erratically functioning mind with an IQ of 90.

"A lot of people live for themselves, don't do for their

kids. And then the kids don't do for them," David said. "She taught us by what she did."

Merry Christmas!

Merry Christmas! Happy holidays! Happy New Year!

Whatever you are celebrating this year, here's to hoping that it is safe, fun, and happy!



Merry Christmas from our family to yours!

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

*14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

*15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the
shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see
this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us
about."*

*16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the
baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him,
they spread the word concerning what had been told them about
this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the
shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these
things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds
returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they
had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

– Luke 2:8-20 NIV

10 Years, 1 Year

December 18 marks two anniversaries of immense personal loss – 10 years ago today, my father-in-law passed away from ALS. Though some memories are still painful, a decade of time has numbed the pain of his loss a little, and it's easier to focus on the good times we shared and the countless wonderful things he did for people during his lifetime. Albeit selfishly, I sometimes wish that Vince was here to meet his 7 wonderful grandchildren, to realize our family's growing relationship with God and our spiritual journey, and to see how far his son has come in life. I think he would be so proud. [More about December 18, 2000 was written here.](#)

December 18, 2009 – Last year, on the day that was 9 years to

the day after Vince's passing, our family dog Charity passed away unexpectedly. She was almost 12 years old but in seemingly good health. She was fine in the morning, gone by dinnertime. Not enough time has passed to heal the pain of her loss since she was like a child to us, but there is no reason to dwell on such melancholy topics here in the blog.

I'm thankful that I have a busy December 18 this year, that it's on a Saturday and that I don't have to spend it alone. I'm writing this ahead of time and scheduling it to post itself on December 18 automatically in hopes of maybe not realizing this day of personal infamy until it's over. Will the entire day pass without me thinking about Vince or Charity? Probably not, they and other loved ones lost hold a special place in my heart, and I think about them most every day, especially in December. But December 18 this year will have joy of its own as family comes from far away to celebrate the season. I look forward to making happy memories for December, especially for the 18th, which just happens to be exactly one week before Christmas, a day I'm really looking forward to celebrating this year more than ever. Losing Charity last year was an awful thing to happen just before Christmas time, just as it was even more terrible to lose a parent / grandparent in our family just before Christmas 10 years ago. But when I lost Charity, and I realized that I was more curious about God's plan for me than I was looking to be angry with Him, I knew that I was on my way to having a wonderful spiritual relationship with Him.

For that, I am very thankful, and it makes me want to celebrate this Christmas season for what it truly is: a celebration of the birth of Jesus and an acknowledgment of the glorious love that God has for us.

Go See... Oh Wait, It's Much Too Late And So Am I

Big surprise, time got away from me. How did that happen? Couldn't be that it's Christmas time and I have a million things to do. Honestly, I always try to refrain from sending Christmas cards, but sometimes I feel so badly when we get cards from others and I'm not sending any back. So then I start sending some – just to my MOPs (Mothers of Preschoolers) group, I'll say. But next thing I know, I've decided to send Christmas cards to “a few” select groups of people, and that's when I realize that I'm just sending Christmas cards anyway even though I wasn't going to! Well, this that and the other stuff; Christmas cards are just one extra check on my holiday time to-do list, but that's a tangent...

My point was busyness. I was so busy that a few weeks ago when I wrote another newspaper review for one of our community theater groups, I forgot to post it on my blog. I usually like to post my reviews in my blog – since I'm doing the work to write them anyway, I might as well post them here to try to remind some friends and readers to go see the show. But now it's too late, for the show I saw and reviewed has finished its run. Oh well, such things happen; hopefully my review as it was printed in the paper made some people want to come see the cute show. For fun, here is a copy of the review:

Pageant Shines This Season

Early December finds many people preoccupied with the hustle and bustle of the approaching holiday season, so what better way to unwind from holiday stress than to see a live show?

A play guaranteed to inspire Yuletide spirit, The Best Christmas Pageant Ever is being performed by The Williams County Community Theatre in the playhouse at 501 S. East

Avenue in Montpelier during these chilly December weekends between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

This festive show provides fun for the entire family. The audience can spend a wintery evening or an afternoon matinee getting to know the Bradley clan (cohesively played by Jake McAfee, Mary Valdez, Allie Boyer, and Logan Psurny) as their normally normal life erupts into chaos. Thoughtfully narrated by young Beth Bradley (a cute and concise Allie Boyer), a heartwarming story unfolds, and the audience is a captive witness to the events leading up to what everyone hopes will be The Best Christmas Pageant Ever.

When Bradley mom Grace (a funny, flustered Mary Valdez) is chosen to replace Mrs. Armstrong (an amusing character played by Nicki Bassett) as director of the church's annual Christmas Pageant, all seems well until the Herdman family (outrageously played by Lance Day, Jessica Valdez / Sunny Bowman, Mason Bassett, Elliot Bowman, Isaiah Valdez, Jamison Grime, and Katie Taylor / Zara McNalley) slips into the scene. The Bradleys' seemingly picture-perfect world is turned upside-down when the six trouble-maker Herdman kids come to Sunday school. Even the reason why they began attending in the first place is hilarious (Logan Psurny takes the heat as Charlie Bradley). Poor Grace just wants to tell the story of Mary and Baby Jesus in the Pageant, but rehearsals are tough with a zany assortment of characters (brought to life by Amy Boyer, Jenna Bowman, Kyla Huband, Jake McAfee, Abby Ledyard, Makayah Long / Alisa Parsons, Kayden Long, Anna Valdez / Carolyn Rychener, Brook Ward / Bailey Ward, Taylor Brown, Amari Blanco, Tatum Grime, Savannah Kleinhenn, Ethan Psurny, Hailey Tressler, Hannah Tressler) who just don't seem to like the idea of giving the Herdman kids a chance. Will it all come together in time to be The Best Christmas Pageant Ever?

It's the perfect time of year for this touching show, and WCCT's The Best Christmas Pageant Ever will have you flooded with Christmas spirit. Whether you simply come for the holiday

fun, to see the joyously decorated theatre, or to watch the adorable children in the cast put on their Pageant, this show will tug at your heartstrings, chase away holiday blues, and leave you humming Christmas carols with a glow and a grin!

“After all, It’s almost Christmas!”, so come out to the theater and join the fun!

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever can be seen on the Montpelier stage on Friday and Saturday nights at 8 pm on December 3,4, 10, and 11 and Thursday night December 9, and Sunday afternoon December 12 at 2:30 pm. Some of the roles are split between multiple actors, which is just one reason to see this show more than once. Reservations are recommended, but not required. Please call the WCCT Office for reservations and more info: 1-888-569-9228.

Taylor has experience in community theatre that spans multiple decades. Ms. Taylor has been on the stage as an actor, as well as behind-the-scenes doing production work like assistant-directing, producing, and stage-managing. As an enthusiastic supporter of the arts in Northwest Ohio, she has also enjoyed serving administratively on the boards of various local community theatre groups.

I Needed To Smile Today



Nothing Worse...

Than having to care for sick kids when you are a sick parent. Ok, so there are plenty of worse things, but this is one of my least favorite things about daily life, getting sick at the same time as my kids. The hits just keep on coming – is it December or what? (in case you aren't aware, this is in reference to my family's annual dose of uncanny bad luck that seems to show its ugly face every December)

This time around, it's a nasty stomach virus, which means loads of extra laundry and some very crabby kids. The two little ones were up all night last night, and even though Hubby was the one who got up with them, I was still awakened all night, so neither of us got much sleep. Today was a take-it-easy day, and somehow I found the energy to get through it while being sick and on little sleep. I'm slightly concerned about the little ones being kept up all night again because it's the night of our oldest daughter's birthday party, and we have 8 screaming, shrieking 5th graders running around the house. But they seem to be having a blast (while us sickies keep our distance), and that's what matters. Now I just have to figure out how to talk them out of wanting to watch Twilight Eclipse, which in my opinion, does not seem

appropriate for a bunch of 10 and 11 and one 6-year-old.

In a way it stinks getting sick on the weekend- there goes any chance we have of a fun family outing tomorrow, and I'm going to be really upset if I have to miss teaching my Sunday school class on Sunday morning – those 1st graders are adorable, and we have so much fun together every week; I really look forward to seeing them. But on the other hand, getting sick on the weekend means that Hubbydoesn't have to worry about missing work, so that's a positive.

Well, here's to hoping that we are well soon and that there is some way that the rest of the family (2 left standing) does not come down with this. I guess if there was a weekend in December for the whole family to come down sick, this was the best one. We have my daughter's birthday party, but nothing that involves travel like the weekends in the rest of the month.

Take care of yourself and your family in this, the lovely month of December!!