

WHATEVER IS *true*
 WHATEVER IS *honorable*
 WHATEVER IS *just*
 WHATEVER IS *pure...*
 IF THERE IS ANYTHING
worthy of praise,
 THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS.
 PHILIPPIANS 4:8. NRSV



Connections

◆ A Journal by & for Women in Ministry ◆

Vol. 23, No. 2 June 2016

Lesson From the Scar

By Angelita Tabin

One afternoon I was busy distributing bagels to my neighbors. I always take this time not only to give them physical bread, but also to build friendships with them. This particular time, as I was still talking and praying with one of the women, another woman called and asked if I had leftover food, for she was hungry. So I said, “I will go home and get some food for you.” She is homeless.



On my way home, I happened to see another neighbor, so I thought I should give her bagels as well. As soon as I knocked on the door I heard a dog barking. All of a sudden, the dog came out of the door. I thought she was just scaring me with her bark, but she bit my right knee. When the owner of the dog

screamed, I was reminded of the song, “Who Let the Dogs Out?” by Anselm Douglas. The little girl who opened the door was afraid because she let the dog out.

This was my first time to be bitten by a dog. I knew to wash the wound. I also put natural antibiotic on the bite, but it got worse. I almost did not sleep the whole night for I was afraid. I asked the owner if the dog had a vaccination. I also have my tetanus shot. I searched the Internet and found if the dog is safe for 10 to 15 days, then I am safe too.

When I was young, I prayed for God to protect my legs from scars. But now that I am serving the Lord, it dawned on me to look at Jesus’ body. He was scarred from head to foot because of his love. “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (I John 4:9-10, *NIV*). First John 3:16 says, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters” (*NIV*).

The more I understand this love, the more I am compelled to share it with our neighbors. I prayed: “Lord, may this incident turn out for good that my neighbors may come to know how

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Lesson From the Scar

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much you love them and care for them. May they have a deep relationship with our Lord who gave his life as a ransom. He redeemed us because of that great love for us.”

Now that I know I am safe, I can look at the scar as a reminder that once upon a time I was bitten by a dog. It's also a reminder that because of the scars Jesus wears, I am safe for eternity.



Angelita has been married for 29 years (March 29, church wedding) to Saddie and is a mother of three. Heidi, Herbert and Hazel help at the church they planted in Eagle Rock, California. Grace Communion Fellowship (GCF) is now on its third year and serving mostly Filipinos. You may email her at angie_saddie87@yahoo.com.

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Connections

Mission Statement

Primary: The Connections for Clergy Support Department provides intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual support and encouragement in the personal lives of GCI ministry families.

Three primary means of serving are the *Connections* journal, the Connections for a Successful Ministry and Life web pages, and the Nurturennet forum. We highlight women in ministry but are inclusive of the needs of the entire family.

Secondary: To promote respect, understanding and support for women, their personal ministries and ministries that serve them.

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• CALIFORNIA •
TAM 2 U

That Age-Old Problem

*I*t creeps up on us, a little at a time, almost unnoticeably, until one day we realize it's taking over. I'm not talking about old age, although that creeps up on us too. No, this problem affects almost all of us, unless we live on an island with no access to shopping. It's clutter and it's insidious.

Even if you keep all the papers, mail and magazines, ill-fitting clothes, children's items and souvenirs at bay, I'm sure you still have a drawer, closet or cupboard filled with things you no longer need. Just as work seems to fill the time allotted, clutter fills any available space. Where does it all come from?

I've decided, in our 17th year in our current home (I'm hopeful it's our last home), to pretend as if I'm moving and get rid of as much stuff as possible. I must confess, I'm not diligent about throwing out my stuff on a regular basis. I let it accumulate until it reaches critical mass, and then I go through an area or two, only to realize the stuff has seemingly been reproducing under cover of

darkness. Then I turn around and spot more problem areas. Sometimes I get discouraged and give up, but not this year. I won't leave all this junk for my kids to sort through at some future date.

I've heard physical clutter compared to mental, emotional and spiritual clutter. This could be true, but I hope my mind and heart aren't as cluttered as my closets. But like my closets and cupboards, a lot of stuff is hiding in the background—habits, attitudes and behaviors I've become blind to, ignored or just plain given up on. We become comfortable with our clutter.

Paul warned us about spiritual clutter in Ephesians 4. In verse 31, he tells us to clean out our closets: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (*NIV*). James tells us to keep ourselves from being polluted by the world (1:27). Just as clutter creeps into our houses and steals our space, sin and its baggage steals our joy and keeps us from truly enjoying God's grace. It bogs us down with guilt and regret.

The best way to prevent clutter in our homes is to stop it at the door. Don't buy that little thing you only *think* you need, give away extra stuff and take care of papers immediately. The best way to prevent spiritual and emotional clutter is the same. Don't let it in the door. Some gets in anyway and that's when it's time to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" (Hebrews 12:1, *NIV*).

God knows we can't do this ourselves, so let's ask him for help to get rid of all the clutter in our lives and to keep it out by guarding the door. "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7, *NIV*).

For a small reward, a man will hurry away on a long journey; while for eternal life, many will hardly take a single step.



—Thomas á Kempis

Tammy



Mistaken Identity

By Linda Wheeler

Trash was taking control of our neighborhood and I was finally moved to action. I had headed up trash pickup for our church and for my place of work. We kept the area around my work clean, which was close to my house, and it was a satisfying accomplishment. I led the group once a quarter until a couple of years before I retired. One of my coworkers took over the duty and did a fine job. Streets were free of litter and best of all, we did not see any sharps (needles) for several years. Thank God!

A year or so after I retired, my coworker emailed saying she couldn't continue with the trash detail any longer. I was dismayed. In a short time, trash began to accumulate. It was not easy to accept.

So I think, I can do this. I like to walk. I can carry a bag and remove trash at the same time. I have had practice after all. With a plan in place, I tied a bag to my belt loop and carried another in my hand. With a glove on my right hand I was off, looking, stooping, picking up trash and putting it in my bag.

All went well until I found a pair of socks on the sidewalk—just an ordinary pair of children's socks. I thought, this can't be trash; it's a perfectly good pair of socks. I was near a playground I knew would have children and parents; I made a beeline for it. Now, you have to imagine the scene. An older woman with a bag tied to one hip full of returnable cans, a full bag of trash hanging from one hand and by now, a dirty white glove on the other hand. I had purposely separated the socks with a piece of cardboard so I could easily grab them when the time came.

I surveyed the park to see whom to approach so the socks could have a good home. I spied a woman helping her son across the monkey bars. As I headed their way, he bumped his head and started to cry—loudly! I should have known then to turn and run but I had a mission. I continued to walk closer.

As his sobbing lessened, I said, "Hi, I found a pair of socks on the sidewalk and thought you might be able to use them."

I reached into my bag of trash for the socks but they weren't there. At that point I began rummaging through my trash bag. Suddenly the boy let out a blood-curdling scream! My mind flashed to "Warning, warning, Will Robinson." His mother looked at him then back at me and backing away with her son in her arms said, "Oh no, I don't think so." I thought, Oh great, do I look dangerous? They sure thought so.

I emptied my trash bag into a trash can, socks and all, and left the park a little disconcerted with my act of service. But God is good all the time! He came through again. I was within a block of home when I came to a house where a couple of guys were trimming their hedge. "Good afternoon," I say. "Good afternoon," they smile. "Picking up trash?" "Yes," I reply. "Thank you for your service." Wow! No mistaken identity, just acknowledgment and thanks.

What a blessing! And the real blessing is that God never has a problem with identity. He knows who we are, what we are doing and why, even what we are thinking. Then to top it off with whipped cream and a cherry, he knows his plans for us. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jeremiah 29:11, *NIV*). Those plans are personally fit for each of us. No mistaken identity, ever!

I had not imagined removing trash from a mile-long stretch of public roads could make me happy and even satisfied but God knew. And next time I find usable clothing, I'll put it in the collection bin for charity.



Linda's husband Bob died in May. When the funeral home asked for the epitaph, she wrote "Face To Face With Jesus." No mistaken identity there and no uncertainty about where he is. She thanks everyone for the outpouring of love and cards. Email Linda at song1mom@yahoo.com.

Got Love?

By Kathy Miller

Ever hear or say something along these lines?

“I love her but I just can’t stand to be around her because she is:

- so annoying
- really loud
- odd smelling
- unkempt
- boring
- hyperactive
- too quiet
- too talkative.”

What? Wait! Hold the phone! If someone came up to me and said, “I love you but I can’t stand to be around you (for whatever reason),” I would not be feeling the love. Did God really mean we are supposed to love everyone as he does (John 13:34)? Surely there are some exceptions. I have to remind myself of what he actually said when he was giving instructions and had the chance to list some exemptions.

A brief list of how he loves us includes these:

- God so loved the *world*. That’s pretty all-inclusive (John 3:16).
- He died once and for *all* (Romans 5:6, 2 Corinthians 5:15). Hm-m-m, no exemptions there.

The Lord doesn’t ask about your ability, only your availability; and, if you prove your dependability, the Lord will increase your capability.

—Author Unknown



- He even asked the Father to forgive those tormenting him at his crucifixion (Luke 23:34).

God’s love for us is enormous and merciful and that’s how he wants us to love others—everyone (John 15:12-13). It’s a big order.

Just in case we find reason not to love someone, Christ gave even more detailed instruction. He mentioned we are supposed to love our enemies, bless those that curse us, do good to those who hate us and pray for those who use and persecute us (Matthew 5:44).

Wow—that’s pretty personal. I don’t see any indication of justification to harm anyone (word, deed or thought). The New Testament is full of instruction from Jesus about love. It’s a huge subject and is listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 list the attributes of love).

I fall so short of *really* loving everyone. Only God can give us that kind of love. I have to constantly run to him for help. I remind myself every person is one of his children and he loves me and everyone else even when we are sinful. Christ died for the ungodly—for all (Romans 5:6; 2 Corinthians 5:15), and his instruction is for me to love him and all people.

Sounds simple but is not always easy. I’m not perfect at it but when I ask, God gives me the ability to love his children—even if they are annoying, unkind or whatever. He reminds me they are his kids too and I am not an only child.



Kathy and Bill retired from ministry in Seattle, Washington. They are enjoying their leisure time, which includes spending time with their two grandsons. You may email Kathy at kathym2u@hotmail.com.

Zorro and Me

By Barbara Dahlgren

Wonders of the World

Those who know Zorro and me well know Zorro tolerates hot weather much better than I. He never wears sunscreen and never burns. However, I can get sunburned just looking at the sun through a window. Saying that sun and heat are not my friends is an understatement.

So imagine everyone's surprise, including mine, when I agreed to take a family trip to Egypt, a place that gives sun and heat a whole new dimension. The expression, "so hot it makes the devil sweat," comes to mind. I'm not sure how hot that really is, but Egypt has to be close.

On the day we rode camels in the desert to the Pyramids, it was 134 degrees F. in the blazing sun, a record for even Egypt. Needless to say I tried to wear white, heat-reflective clothes from head to toe. White is not my most flattering color, but when you are dying from heat exhaustion you really aren't trying to make a fashion statement. I had a wide-brimmed hat and an umbrella to shield me from the sun.



Great thoughts speak only to the thoughtful mind, but great actions speak to all mankind.

—Theodore Roosevelt



One does not merely perspire in Egypt, one sweats. And boy did I sweat—and sweat—and sweat! So no makeup for me. Mixed with all that sweat, makeup just becomes one big mud pack on your face. I had 100-plus SPF sunscreen and insect repellent aplenty in case any pesky mosquitoes tried to infect me with some undiscovered virus. I was a walking mass of chemical protection.

Survival was the name of the game and for a gal who would rather sit in an air-conditioned building just looking at summer through a window pane, I did pretty well—and had a *great* time. I surprised myself (and my family) at my level of endurance. We rode camels in the desert, explored the Pyramids, hot-air ballooned over the Valley of the Kings, cruised on the Nile River, visited ancient temples and learned so much by being immersed in a different culture.

There's also a lot of biblical history in Egypt. Does anyone remember the story of Moses? Well, we saw the very place where Moses was discovered in the bulrushes by the princess! One must wonder about the authenticity of such claims, but I can

assure you the Pyramids and temples were very, very real. We saw the Pyramid of Cheops, which is the only remaining seven wonders of the world still standing today.

I must say it wasn't an easy trip, but isn't that a life lesson? Life wasn't meant to be easy; life was meant to be lived. The Christian life is similar. When we start our spiritual journeys we think it's all roses, lollipops and air conditioning, but later we find ourselves in the desert and sometimes wonder, is this really what I signed up for?

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Wonders of the World

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But here's the deal, if we want to see the treasures God has in store for us or the wonders of the world, sites such as the Pyramids, the Valley of the Kings, the Nile River and the ancient temples, we have to endure a little heat!



Barbara and Zorro are still in San Jose, California. They are presently recuperating from their family trip to Egypt, which their kids arranged. Good times! If you get a chance, check out Barbara's weekly blog at www.barbdahlgren.com. You can email Barbara at bydahlgren@pacbell.net. She loves hearing from you.



My One Word for 2016—*Renew*

By Senior Pulley

Since beginning my annual one-word journey, I am always excited to learn what new lessons God desires to teach me each year.

After an exciting and then emotional end to 2015, I was inspired by a thought-provoking sermon on the new covenant. In 2 Corinthians, much is written about the difference between the old and new covenants. The third chapter speaks of the *new* being “more glorious,” “having greater glory,” “surpassing glory and “ever-increasing glory!” In the new covenant, the ministry is *new*, there's *new* hope and *new*-found freedom that transforms us into his likeness so his life may be revealed in us. All of this “in the *new*” is for his glory.

God giving us a *new* covenant made me think about the *new* year and how he lavishes us with *new* beginnings. Temporal things are not perfect, so we need (and are gifted with) many fresh and *new* starts—a *new* year, a *new* month, a *new* week, a *new* day, a *new* hour, a *new* minute, a *new* moment. We are given many opportunities to start over when the need arises. Could it be God gives us so many *new* starts because he wants us to get used to the idea that one day we're going to have the most spectacular *new* start ever?

In the fourth chapter of 2 Corinthians, my eyes zeroed in on encouragement not to lose heart. Even though we waste away on the outside, inwardly we're being renewed day by day. The word *renewed* popped out at me and I began to wonder, What does renew mean? I took out pencil and paper to put into words what it meant to me: to make new again; even though it's been used, it's as

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My One Word

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good as new; as from the start; to have another chance to do something over; to begin again with a clean slate.

Then, quite unintentionally, as if my brain were downloading from an internal listing, I continued writing: *restore, regroup, repeat, replenish, re-adjust*. The *re* words continued to come to mind: *re-evaluate, review, re-think, re-establish, refresh, re-invent, remember, redo, re-focus, reflect, reclaim, redeem, revitalize, realize*. Because my mind was engulfed with so many words and thoughts on this subject, I felt my word for 2016 was meant to be *renew*. I then found as I defined what I understood about each of those words, I had begun a series of lessons on being renewed each day by his Spirit.

Restore: Repair, put back in better order.

Regroup: Slow down, think about it and begin again.

Repeat: Another chance to get things right; a *do-over* with no limit as to how many times I can try!

Re-do: If I've not done it right, do it again.

Replenish: Refill what I've used or removed.

Re-adjust: Make necessary changes and continue on.

God became earth's mockery to save his children. How absurd to think that such nobility would go to such poverty to share such a treasure with such thankless souls. But he did.

—Max Lucado,
God Came Near
1986



Re-evaluate: Go over the facts as often as necessary.

Review: Look over again to make sure I've done it right.

Re-think: Think again about an issue; don't be hasty.

Re-establish: Put back that which is important.

Refresh: Freshen up and add some nourishment.

Re-invent: If it doesn't work, figure out a better way.

Remember: Bring back to mind.

Re-focus: If off track, slow down and get back on it.

Reflect: Think about the important things.

Reclaim: If it's truly mine, retrieve it.

Redeem: Trade in for something better and make good use of it.

Revitalize: Add some new life.

When I *recall* what Christ has done to *renew* my life and *realize* how he has *restored* and *repaired* what has been broken, how he has *redeemed* each one of us and *reconciled* us to himself by peeling away the old to *reveal* newness of life and to transform us so his life may be *revealed* in us; how he has *re-established* in our minds the purpose of humanity and *reclaimed* us as his own, all for his glory, as I *reflect* on all of the benefits of being *renewed* in him, I feel *revitalized* and full of *rejoicing!*



On Senior's 2016 one word journey, the *re* words continue to come, providing constant *reminders* of being *renewed* each day. You may share or email her at: cjpulley@logic.bm or cecil.pulley@gci.org.



Living Life Eternally

By Joyce Catherwood

Many of us used to view the progression of conversion as a yardstick by which to measure ourselves. In doing so, life became burdensome and exhausting. “The way to God degenerates into a struggle up a ladder or progress by degrees.... Following Christ then becomes a work that is never finished, rather than a life that is never ending” (Alan Jones, *Soul Making*).

Living this life with the conviction it will ultimately transition into eternity doesn't mean everything will go smoothly. Acceptance of inescapable adversity and heartache is a necessary part of the process. This is not easy for me because embedded in my spiritual DNA is the yardstick notion that good things happen when you're good and bad things happen when you're bad. Somehow life will be perfect if I just do the right things. If I don't measure up, God doesn't love me anymore.

There's a big difference between measuring life negatively as a work that is never finished and positively living life that is never ending. Now just so we understand, no way can I, or anyone else, live life eternally every minute of every day. I hardly know what eternity is. It is a mystery.

I remember my dad in his 90s literally, and often, dreaming of the holy city as he slept because he thought about it constantly, picturing what it would be like. Having a good imagination is helpful, but I don't have a colorful, vibrant imagination as he did. My

dreams are usually silly and don't make any sense, kind of like the Mad Hatter's tea party.

Here's what I do know: the Son of God tells us eternal life is to know the only true God and Jesus Christ (John 17:3). To know Jesus is to know the Father. And to know Jesus is to love him. Emotionally connecting to the greatest story ever told—that Jesus did indeed come to this earth clothed with humility, that he lived and interacted with his own creation, that he died a cruel death at the hands of his own creatures—is pivotal. We cannot help but be drawn to him. And loving him puts us on track to loving each other.

Even if we could fathom all mysteries, have all knowledge, understand all prophecies, have faith that can move mountains yet lack genuine love for God and humankind, it is meaningless. Comparing ourselves with and judging each other is futile. Using yardsticks to measure and climbing ladders becomes work that is never enough, never finished.

Then what does last forever? Loving God and experiencing the peace and joy that flow from this love is living this earthly life as it will be in eternity. Exhibiting patience, kindness, compassion, sympathy and forgiveness toward others is living life eternally. Not being easily angered, proud, boastful or envious is living life eternally. Not showing dishonor to others or being self-seeking is living life eternally. And so much more.

As fallible human beings, we can expect to fall short, but that will only serve to remind us to increase our awareness of the aspects of God's love deficient in our daily lives. This is living life that is never ending.



“We are at a time in life now, with eight grandchildren, as each summer rolls around, there is a high school or university graduation or wedding. This summer there will be both. Such a privilege to watch them grow into individual and amazing young adults.” You may email Joyce at joyce.catherwood@gci.org.

Jesus was God spelling himself out
in language humanity could
understand.



—S.D. Gordon

The Yin and Yang of Being

By Trish Clauson

More often than not I find myself telling God how small I feel, and with good reason I suppose. There are, after all, more than seven billion people on the planet today. That's seven billion who like me who need to eat and drink to stay alive. Who also work and play and struggle and strive and suffer, just like me. On the one hand that means I am not alone. On the other, well, it just makes me feel small.

Sometimes I think feeling small is not a bad thing. It helps to keep me humble. It allows me to get some perspective on the happenings in my life so I don't engage in my own personal pity party about how no one can possibly understand what I am going through. As I focus on the fact I am still one among billions, it keeps me reminded in the grand scheme of life I am very small.

But wait a minute. What about those scriptures that tell us how special we are to God? That we are unique and no one has a story quite like ours? I'd like to think some-

thing about me is truly special and unique. But which one is it? Am I small or am I special?

I think I am both. Small and special. Feeling small seems to come naturally. But at times God comes into my smallness and reminds me that before him I stand alone, as if I were the only one in this entire universe who matters.

When I share my struggles with him, he doesn't minimize them by reminding me others are going through the same things. Instead, he comforts me, encourages me and loves me as if I am the only person in the world he is taking care of today. He is all mine and I am all his. I am an original—the apple of his eye—his one and only.

So in the end I may be small as I sit among the billions, but before my Savior I am truly special as I sit with him alone.



Trish is still waiting for her home to sell so she can move closer to her children and to her congregation. You may email her at trishannson@yahoo.com.

There are times when God asks nothing of His children except silence, patience and tears.

—Charles Seymour Robinson



We receive no life unless we stay in constant contact with Christ. Thankfully, our contact with him is not dependent on our resolve to hold on to him but on his resolve to hold on to us. He wants to live and dwell in us more than we want to live and dwell in him.

—Ben Patterson,
*Deepening Your Conversation
With God*



Nurturennet

Nurturennet is our computer forum for women in ministry. Its purpose is to help you stay connected through digest-mode communication (each day's messages compiled into one email). You may use it for requests for information, prayer requests, to share ideas and resources, to receive updates on *Connections* news or just to stay connected!

To join or update your email address, please send Tammy a message at tammy.tkach@gci.org. Please do not reply to a post unless you want to address the entire list.



Please let us know if your email changes!

Prayer is a declaration of our dependence on God. It isn't something mechanical you do, it is somewhere you go to meet Someone you know.

—Jill Briscoe



Briefly Speaking...

What's in a Name?

Do you like your name? Names had significance in the Bible. People's names were sometimes changed to reflect an aspect of character or some significant accomplishment. Think Abram-Abraham, Sarai-Sarah, Simon-Peter, Saul-Paul.

Today many babies are named with seemingly not much thought as to what their names mean. Some media personalities have named their offspring names we don't even associate with human beings.

I'm not saying they aren't cute names. I guess it's fine for people to be creative with naming. I just hope their children are happy with how they've been tagged.

If you've read the book of Romans lately you'll remember that in the last chapter Paul acknowledges many of his fellow workers in the church. Name after name is listed, both men's and women's names. Just think, those Christian's names have been immortalized in the Scriptures for millennia now. What an honor to have your name listed in the very Word of God.

But don't feel left out when it comes to names. Your name is listed in the most important book of all, the book of Life. And, if you don't like what your parents named you, that's OK too. God is going to give you a new one.



You may email Sheila Graham at grahams@ntin.net.



Being a Light...has a lighter side!

Curious when I found two black-and-white negatives in a drawer, I had them made into prints. I was pleasantly surprised to see that they were of a younger, slimmer me, taken on one of my first dates with my husband.

When I showed him the photos, his face lit up. "Wow, look at that!" he said. "It's my old Plymouth!"

On the Upper West Side of NYC lived an assimilated Jew who was now a militant atheist. But he sent his son to Trinity School because, despite its denominational roots, it's a great school and completely secular.

After a month, the boy comes home and says casually, "By the way Dad, do you know what *Trinity* means? It means the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost."

The father can barely control his rage. He seizes his son by the shoulders and declares, "Danny, I'm going to tell you something now and I want you never to forget it. There is only one God—and we don't believe in him!"

A preacher of the old school was describing the events of Judgment Day and, of course, he used biblical phraseology whenever he could.

"Oh, my friends," he intoned, "imagine the suffering of the sinners as they find themselves cast into the outer darkness, removed from the presence of the Lord and given to eternal flames. My friends, at such

a time there will be weeping, wailing and a great gnashing of teeth!"

At this point, one of the elders of the congregation interrupted to say, "But Reverend, what if one of those hopeless sinners has no teeth?"

The preacher crashed his fist on the pulpit. "My friends, the Lord is not put out by details. Rest assured, teeth will be provided!"

—clean laffs

I hate it when
I'm buying
ORGANIC vegetables
but when I get home
They're just
REGULAR donuts!

—Submitted by Linda Wheeler



—churchart.com