

Life and experience

Now that I've lived over 1/2 of a century, I guess you could say I've got a little bit of experience living. In my life, I've been a child, student, husband, father. I've experienced the death of people close to me. I was married to the same woman for almost 20 years. I know about love, commitment and trust. I know about making promises and keeping them. I know grief, depression and anxiety. I know happiness, pride and hope.

But in those 50+ years there are many things I know nothing about. Things that I've never experienced. Things I never want to experience.

I know that with two ears, you should listen twice as much as you talk. I know that disagreements can only be solved by communication. I know lack of communication causes a lot of disagreements.

I hope to gain more experience in better things. I hope not to experience more 'bad' things. Realistically, I realize that I will experience both in the years to come. I don't need to like it, but to survive, i need to live with it.

A God Story

I love coming across God stories. Real life anecdotes which display the way God works in our lives, God stories can be experienced by Christians and non-Christians alike; it's just a matter of recognizing them and taking the time to be thankful and appreciate them.

I was at our babysitter's house last week picking up my kids, and there was a little girl cuddling a dog. Being an animal lover, I had to say hello to the cute little furball and find out her name and age. The little girl's father said he didn't know the pup's age because they had found her, and then he said, "I have to tell you the whole story." So he begins his story, not knowing me or that I am a Christian who appreciates God stories. His story went something like this:

"My wife left me; she left me and the kids and even took our dogs, so these poor kids lost their mother and their dogs. I kept telling them I would get them a dog, but I had lots of other things to work out too. So for Halloween, we went to one of those 'trunk or treat' things at a church, and there was a little girl walking around inside the church with a puppy in her arms. I thought, something doesn't seem right there – why is this little girl walking around a church with a puppy, so I asked her about the dog. "We're not even sure what we're going to do with her – we just found her outside." the little girl told him. "Well," I told her, "my kids have been looking for a dog." We took home the little puppy, and she was mangy and starving, just skin and bones. We didn't estimate her to be more than 10 weeks old at that time, and she has been a part of the family for the last few months. She is thriving physically, and she has helped provide some of the healing the kids needed as they spent Christmas without their mom."

After hearing the story, it was magical to see the little girl cuddle her puppy. It warmed my heart to see them together, knowing that God brought this little puppy into the lives of a family who needed her – and brought a family into the life of an ailing little puppy who needed them as well. God works in wonderful ways, and being a witness to it is awesome – you just have to stop and look around; He is always there!

Once Again Hollywood Has Come Up With A Creative Idea

Or maybe not so creative idea. It seems that ABC and Selma Hayek are combining forces to create a magical miniseries which is based on a popular novel which was based upon a beloved classic movie which was based upon another book. The popular novel was also the basis for a megahit Broadway musical which is (the last I heard) is being turned into a big-screen production. Whatever happened to an original, creative idea.

The miniseries in question is based upon the novel, [*Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*](#) by Gregory Maguire. While the musical may be a blockbuster, one of Maguire's newer "Fractured Fairy Tales" was made into a telefilm. Anyone remember *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*? That's ok... neither do I.

I think I will stick with the Fractured Fairy Tales as ready by Edward Everett Horton as seen on The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle Show. For your enjoyment, I have chosen a classic Mr. Know-It-All segment.

FIVE MORE DAYS!!

Only FIVE more days until we leave for a family vacation to warm sunny Florida!! Making this one even better than most are extended family and friends that are able to meet us down there. The kids (and us!!) could not be more excited!!!

I just have to figure out how to get 6 people and all the stuff that goes along with 2 adults and 4 kids into a mini-van and keep us sane for a 20+ hour car trip and one again on the way back... Every time we take a big vacation I worry about it, every time it goes better than I could have imagined. Not going to make that mistake this time; I am just SO appreciative and happy to be going! Thank you God for blessing my family with such a fun opportunity for some togetherness!!!

Much work ahead of me this week, but the most fun kind of work: preparing-for-a-vacation work!!!

CAN'T WAIT!!!

Migraines SUCK!

I used to get them quite frequently while growing up but every once in a while they rear their ugly heads and I am done. My only regret is that I had to miss my voice lesson for which Kathrine was more than understandable ☹️ Next week promises to be interesting as she is hosting an exchange student from New Zealand, I will have some one critiquing me full time.

Kathrine tries to play the piano and watch me at the same time.

My New Years Day was ehh. After getting to bed around 5AM, I was awakened 4 hours later by the dulcet tone of "Can you come in to work today?" I probably would have been more receptive of the idea had I not been brought out of a deep sleep. I did go in from 1-6 and at time and a half plus the 9 hours at the same rate that I put in the day before, I wasn't all that upset. Even the fact that the day just SEEMED to DRAAAAAAGGGGG did not put that much of a damper. At 5:45 however, a customer called asking if we had Similac Baby formula. About 30 seconds later, the man of the house called, asked the same question, and thankfully asked how late we were open. So, being the nice guy I am... waited for the customer's arrival. But as he was checking out with his 9 cans of formula (which put us over \$100.00 for our last hour) I turned out the lights.

Bowl Games for Big 10 country have not been overwhelmingly successful. Thankfully, the Buckeyes ended their 9 game winless streak against teams in the SEC as they defeated Arkansas 31-26. And poor Rich Rodriguez is out of a job. I thought he did a fine job as the 3 year coach of the team up North but I guess the PTB had other ideas.

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!



A Year Full of Ups And Downs

2010... What a year! So much happened that I do not know where the time went! It started off LAST January when I received my first two awards for acting in *You Have the Right to Remain Dead* (as everyone's ill-fated, lovable, hammy narrator... Harnell Chesterton) and for bringing the Grinchi Scrooginess of Mr. Henry F. Potter to life in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Even my best friends gave up a Bears' playoff game to share in my moment as well as family!

I can't even fathom the reality that I had limited myself to only two plays this year. I tackled my first lead role in the three person DRAMA, *Miracles*. I hope that Dawn and Rebekkah share in my belief that this play was one of the best shows I have ever been a part of. Thank you Beth for pushing for this show to be done and spreading its important, powerful message.

Chris next challenged me to seek out a new vocal coach. I had wanted to find one ever since Emily passed; however, I was uncertain as to whether I could find one as determined to help me in what I need to do. Thank God, he helped me find Kathrine. I could not ask for a better coach. I just adore people who know where your talent lies and are willing to guide you with suggestions on how best to cultivate them. Over the years I have had and continue to have some of the best!

I also became a board member of a new theatrical group in which I get to spend more time with my friends and help to bring *The Wizard of Oz* to the stage next summer. I also had my first byline when I reviewed the company's production of *(Cr)Oklahoma!* last summer.

My final performances of the year came in the Mare helmed production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in which I played a dual role as Barrymore, the caretaker of the Baskerville estate and as the doomed Selden who met a rather grisly demise. Each production lends some challenge as well as fun working with old friends and making new ones.

The fact that I only limited myself to two shows this past year allowed me to do some very cool things with my friends. In July, we went to Cincinnati to the zoo and then to Kings Island. I had not been to one of my favorite parks in several years and to go and be treated as V.I.P.s was extraordinary. Not to mention the multiple game nights (from which I just opened 2011), chats in person and via I.M.ing. Just good times!

Of course a year is not all roses. On January 5, we lost our beloved Aunt Carol to cancer. Gone long before her time but held on longer than many thought she would. And more recently, my brother separated from his wife. I think that ultimately with the help and guidance of prayer and the love of family and friends striving forward yet remembering the

special times only make us stronger.

So as we bid farewell to 2010, wrap up the holiday season and look ahead to the new year, I wish all of you the very best of peace, joy, and happiness.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind?

Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and days of auld lang syne?

For auld lang syne my jo,

For auld lang syne,

We'll take a cup of kindness yet,

For auld lang syne.

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE... GOOD NIGHT!

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.](#)

7 Years Ago

7 years ago my best friend, the love of my life and mother of my children left this world. Cancer claimed yet another victim.

This year, I will spend the day with two of my Florida family. I'm not sure what we will be doing, but throughout the day I will be thinking of her.

After 7 years, the pain in my heart is dulled. Time has done that. Memories, mostly pleasant, have filled the have filled the places where pain once stayed. Life continued even when I didn't want it to.

I've tried to remember what the pain I had experienced. Others have lost loved ones this past year, I had hoped my experience could help, but I know nothing will relieve the pain. It must be lived through. It must be experienced. It must be faced for

healing to occur.

I know for a fact that time will not heal all wounds. Some stay with you the rest of your life. Those wounds, both physical and mental, are part of your life. You live with them. They become part of your fiber. They become a part of who you are.

On this 30th of December, I will pause to wish all a Happy New Year. May it bring joy to you and yours. If not joy, may it bring just a bit of hope and peace.