

Inspirational true stories

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An eye for a life

Some years ago, in a park in the city of Nagasaki, Japan, a young white woman began to speak with the people passing by about the good news of Jesus and His love for them. She had not been long in Japan, but she had worked hard at the language school and knew enough Japanese to be able to share the Christian message simply.

As she was speaking, she was suddenly aware of a blinding pain in her eye. A young man had maliciously hurled a large stone at her from his hiding place in some nearby bushes.

The missionary was given medical attention and the police were informed of the incident. "We'll find that young hooligan and punish him, Miss Imhoff," they promised. "Your eye is badly damaged. He deserves punishment." The police judged from the injury that the woman would never see again with that eye. "Please don't punish him," pleaded Miss Imhoff. "I forgive him, and Jesus died for his sins as well as mine and yours. Please let him go free."

The police officers were amazed at this woman who had such a loving and forgiving attitude, even to someone who had done her serious injury. Miss Imhoff's eye never recovered from the incident, but this did not deter her from continuing in Nagasaki as a Christian missionary.

Years passed. One day, there sailed into Nagasaki harbour a large Japanese man 'o war. The local Christians arranged a reception for the officers and men of the crew.

The ship's captain stood to reply to the speech of welcome before the banquet began, and surprised everyone with this story.

"I grew up in the city of Nagasaki," he began, "so I am very pleased to return to this place. I am a Christian now, but my youth I was very rebellious and lived a wild life in the city. One day I threw a big stone at a missionary lady who was speaking about Jesus to people in the park. I'm ashamed to say that the stone damaged the lady's eye. I was so scared that I ran and hid in the mountains. I was afraid the police would find me and punish me. But a friend found me and brought me amazing news that the missionary had forgiven me and didn't want them to punish me. I couldn't believe that anyone could be so kind as to forgive someone who had injured the, but my friend assured me it was true.

"I couldn't get this out of my mind. What was this Christianity; that it would make a person act in such a loving, forgiving manner? I began to search out all the books I could find about it. I read the bible. The more I read, the more I knew this was the way of life I wanted to live. I visited Christian church and after talking

with the pastor, I became a Christian. That was many years ago now. But I am so grateful that the missionary lady forgave me, and that Jesus has forgiven me all my sins. I have often wished I could meet her and tell her what Jesus has done in my life.”

A middle-age lady in the gathering was seen to quietly weep, but the tears were tears of joy, not grief. Miss Imhoff was present at the reception and heard the captain’s testimony and was able to rejoice with him that God answered the prayers she had prayed for him years before.

Adapted from “Safety Last” by Rita Snowden, Epworth Press

1. Express in your own words the meaning of the title of this story.
2. Find words in the story that have these meanings: prevent, with wicked intentions, begged, declare the truth of.
3. Find out about Nagasaki. Write a short paragraph about the city and its people. What important event occurred there in 1945?
4. Use the book or website “Operation World” to find out about Christians in Japan today.

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The Tablecloth

This story makes you understand things happen for a reason

The brand new pastor and his wife had been newly assigned to their first ministry, to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, U.S.A. They arrived in early October, excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve.

They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and on December 18 were ahead of schedule and just about finished. On December 19 a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm hit the area and lasted for two days. On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home. On the way he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory colored, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a Cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later.

She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet. 'Pastor,' she asked, 'where did you get that tablecloth?'

The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria.

The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten the Tablecloth. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria.

When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave.

Her husband was going to follow her the next week. He was captured, sent to prison and never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for the church. The pastor insisted on driving her home ... that was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return.

One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving.

The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike.

He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years in between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier.

He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door and he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

A true story - submitted by Pastor Rob Reid

*I asked the Lord to bless you as I prayed for you today,
To guide you and protect you as you go along your way.
His love is always with you, His promises are true*

And when we give Him all our cares you know He will see us through.

The Girl With An Apple

*(This is a true story and you can find out more by Googling Herman Rosenblat.
He was Bar Mitzvahed at age 75)*

August 1942. Piotrkow, Poland.

The sky was gloomy that morning as we waited anxiously. All the men, women and children of Piotrkow's Jewish ghetto had been herded into a square.

Word had gotten around that we were being moved. My father had only recently died from typhus, which had run rampant through the crowded ghetto. My greatest fear was that our family would be separated.

"Whatever you do," Isidore, my eldest brother, whispered to me, "don't tell them your age. Say you're sixteen.

"I was tall for a boy of 11, so I could pull it off. That way I might be deemed valuable as a worker.

An SS man approached me, boots clicking against the cobblestones. He looked me up and down, and then asked my age.

"Sixteen," I said. He directed me to the left, where my three brothers and other healthy young men already stood.

My mother was motioned to the right with the other women, children, sick and elderly people.

I whispered to Isidore, "Why?"

He didn't answer.

I ran to Mama's side and said I wanted to stay with her.

"No," she said sternly.

"Get away. Don't be a nuisance. Go with your brothers."

She had never spoken so harshly before. But I understood: She was protecting me. She loved me so much that, just this once, she pretended not to. It was the last I ever saw of her. My brothers and I were transported in a cattle car to Germany.

We arrived at the Buchenwald concentration camp one night weeks later and were led into a crowded barrack. The next day, we were issued uniforms and identification numbers.

"Don't call me Herman anymore." I said to my brothers. "Call me 94983."
I was put to work in the camp's crematorium, loading the dead into a hand-cranked elevator. I, too, felt dead. Hardened, I had become a number.
Soon, my brothers and I were sent to Schlieben, one of Buchenwald's sub-camps near Berlin.

One morning I thought I heard my mother's voice.. "Son," she said softly but clearly, I am going to send you an angel."
Then I woke up. Just a dream. A beautiful dream.
But in this place there could be no angels. There was only work. And hunger. And fear.

A couple of days later, I was walking around the camp, around the barracks, near the barbed-wire fence where the guards could not easily see. I was alone. On the other side of the fence, I spotted someone: a little girl with light, almost luminous curls. She was half-hidden behind a birch tree.

I glanced around to make sure no one saw me. I called to her softly in German "Do you have something to eat?"
She didn't understand. I inched closer to the fence and repeated the question in Polish. She stepped forward. I was thin and gaunt, with rags wrapped around my feet, but the girl looked unafraid. In her eyes, I saw life.
She pulled an apple from her woolen jacket and threw it over the fence.
I grabbed the fruit and, as I started to run away, I heard her say faintly, "I'll see you tomorrow."

I returned to the same spot by the fence at the same time every day. She was always there with something for me to eat - a hunk of bread or, better yet, an apple. We didn't dare speak or linger. To be caught would mean death for us both.

I didn't know anything about her, just a kind farm girl, except that she understood Polish. What was her name? Why was she risking her life for me?
Hope was in such short supply, and this girl on the other side of the fence gave me some, as nourishing in its way as the bread and apples.

Nearly seven months later, my brothers and I were crammed into a coal car and shipped to Theresienstadt camp in Czechoslovakia.
"Don't return," I told the girl that day. "We're leaving..."

I turned toward the barracks and didn't look back, didn't even say good-bye to the little girl whose name I'd never learned, the girl with the apples.

We were in Theresienstadt for three months. The war was winding down and Allied forces were closing in, yet my fate seemed sealed.

On May 10, 1945, I was scheduled to die in the gas chamber at 10:00 AM. In the quiet of dawn, I tried to prepare myself. So many times death seemed ready to claim me, but somehow I'd survived. Now, it was over. I thought of my parents. At least, I thought, we will be reunited.

But at 8 A.M there was a commotion. I heard shouts, and saw people running every which way through camp. I caught up with my brothers. Russian troops had liberated the camp! The gates swung open. Everyone was running, so I did too. Amazingly, all of my brothers had survived; I'm not sure how. But I knew that the girl with the apples had been the key to my survival. In a place where evil seemed triumphant, one person's goodness had saved my life, had given me hope in a place where there was none. My mother had promised to send me an angel, and the angel had come.

Eventually I made my way to England where I was sponsored by a Jewish charity, put up in a hostel with other boys who had survived the Holocaust and trained in electronics. Then I came to America, where my brother Sam had already moved I served in the U. S. Army during the Korean War, and returned to New York City after two years.

By August 1957 I'd opened my own electronics repair shop. I was starting to settle in. One day, my friend Sid who I knew from England called me. "I've got a date. She's got a Polish friend. Let's double date." A blind date? Nah, that wasn't for me.

But Sid kept pestering me, and a few days later we headed up to the Bronx to pick up his date and her friend Roma. I had to admit, for a blind date this wasn't so bad. Roma was a nurse at a Bronx hospital. She was kind and smart. Beautiful, too, with swirling brown curls and green, almond-shaped eyes that sparkled with life. The four of us drove out to Coney Island. Roma was easy to talk to, easy to be with.

Turned out she was wary of blind dates too! We were both just doing our friends

a favor. We took a stroll on the boardwalk, enjoying the salty Atlantic breeze, and then had dinner by the shore. I couldn't remember having a better time.

We piled back into Sid's car, Roma and I sharing the backseat. As European Jews who had survived the war, we were aware that much had been left unsaid between us. She broached the subject, "Where were you," she asked softly, "during the war?"

"The camps," I said. The terrible memories still vivid, the irreparable loss. I had tried to forget. But you can never forget.

She nodded. "My family was hiding on a farm in Germany, not far from Berlin," she told me. "My father knew a priest, and he got us Aryan papers."

I imagined how she must have suffered too, fear, a constant companion. And yet here we were both survivors, in a new world.

"There was a camp next to the farm." Roma continued. "I saw a boy there and I would throw him apples every day."

What an amazing coincidence that she had helped some other boy. "What did he look like?" I asked.

"He was tall, skinny, and hungry. I must have seen him every day for six months."

My heart was racing. I couldn't believe it. This couldn't be.

"Did he tell you one day not to come back because he was leaving Schlieben?"

Roma looked at me in amazement. "Yes!"

"That was me!"

I was ready to burst with joy and awe, flooded with emotions. I couldn't believe it! My angel.

"I'm not letting you go." I said to Roma. And in the back of the car on that blind date, I proposed to her. I didn't want to wait.

"You're crazy!" she said. But she invited me to meet her parents for Shabbat dinner the following week.

There was so much I looked forward to learning about Roma, but the most important things I always knew: her steadfastness, her goodness. For many months, in the worst of circumstances, she had come to the fence and given me hope. Now that I'd found her again, I could never let her go.

That day, she said yes. And I kept my word. After nearly 50 years of marriage, two children and three grandchildren, I have never let her go.

Herman Rosenblat of Miami Beach, Florida

Why did Jesus fold the napkin?

Why did Jesus fold the linen burial cloth after His resurrection?

John 20:7 tells us that the napkin, which was placed over the face of Jesus, was not thrown aside like the grave clothes. The Bible takes an entire verse to tell us that the napkin was neatly folded and was placed at the head of that stony coffin. Early that Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body and I don't know where they have taken Him!" Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. The other disciple outran Peter and got there first.. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the napkin that had covered Jesus face was folded up and lying to one side. Is that important? Absolutely! Is that really significant? Yes! In order to understand the significance of the folded napkin, you have to understand a little bit about the Hebrew tradition of that day. The folded napkin had to do with the Master and Servant, and every Jewish boy knew this tradition. When the Servant set the dinner table for the Master, he made sure it was exactly the way the Master wanted it. The table was furnished perfectly, and then the servant would wait, just out of sight, until the Master had finished eating. The Servant would not dare touch that table until the Master was finished. If the Master were done eating, he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers, his mouth, and clean his beard and would wad up that napkin and toss it onto the table. The servant would then know to clear the table. For in those days, the wadded napkin meant, "I'm finished". I did not know this.... If the Master got up from the table, and folded his napkin beside his plate, the servant would not dare touch the table, because....the folded napkin meant, "I'm coming back!" He is coming back!

The 'W' in Christmas

Each December, I vowed to make Christmas a calm and peaceful experience. I had cut back on nonessential obligations -- extensive card writing, endless baking, decorating, and even overspending.

Yet still, I found myself exhausted, unable to appreciate the precious family moments, and of course, the true meaning of Christmas.

My son, Nicholas, was in kindergarten that year. It was an exciting season for a six-year-old. For weeks, he'd been memorizing songs for his school's "Winter Pageant."

I didn't have the heart to tell him I'd be working the night of the production. Unwilling to miss his shining moment, I spoke with his teacher.. She assured me there'd be a dress rehearsal the morning of the presentation. All parents unable to attend that evening were welcome to come then. Fortunately, Nicholas seemed happy with the compromise.

So, the morning of the dress rehearsal, I filed in ten minutes early, found a spot on the cafeteria floor and sat down. Around the room, I saw several other parents quietly scampering to their seats. As I waited, the students were led into the room. Each class, accompanied by their teacher, sat cross-legged on the floor. Then, each group, one by one, rose to perform their song.

Because the public school system had long stopped referring to the holiday as Christmas," I didn't expect anything other than fun, commercial entertainment - songs of reindeer, Santa Claus, snowflakes and good cheer. So, when my son's class rose to sing, "Christmas Love," I was slightly taken aback by its bold title.

Nicholas was aglow, as were all of his classmates, adorned in fuzzy mittens, red sweaters, and bright snowcaps upon their heads. Those in the front row-center stage -- held up large letters, one by one, to spell out the title of the song. As the class would sing "C is for Christmas," a child would hold up the letter C. Then, "H is for Happy," and on and on, until each child holding up his portion had presented the complete message, "Christmas Love."

The performance was going smoothly, until suddenly, we noticed her; a small, quiet, girl in the front row holding the letter "M" upside down -- totally unaware her letter "M" appeared as a "W."

The audience of 1st through 6th graders snickered at this little one's mistake. But she had no idea they were laughing at her, so she stood tall, proudly holding her "W." Although many teachers tried to shush the children, the laughter

continued until the last letter was raised, and we all saw it together. A hush came over the audience and eyes began to widen. In that instant, we understood the reason we were there, why we celebrated the holiday in the first place, why even in the chaos, there was a purpose for our festivities.

For when the last letter was held high, the message read loud and clear:

"CHRISTWASLOVE"

And, I believe, He still is.
Amazed in His presence...
Humbled by His love.

Author unknown