

In Other Words...

A RESEARCH SERVICE OF FACTS & HUMOR FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

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COMMUNITY: John Elmore drank hard for twelve years and ended up holding a shotgun to his head because he wanted to finish his miserable existence. While drinking on the streets of Austin, Texas with two homeless guys in 2005, his family intervened and his pathway to freedom began. John became sober, went to seminary, joined the pastoral staff at Watermark Community Church in 2011, and leads the world's largest weekly recovery program called re:generation. He knows how isolation nearly killed him and what it does to others, so he regularly says, "illness starts with an *I* and wellness begins with *we*." God ordained for us to find wholeness and holiness in the context of community with other Christians. *Freedom Starts Today, John Elmore, 2021, p.25*

CONFLICT: Dr. Debbie Steele directs the Christian counseling degree at Gateway Seminary. When asked about the biggest growth point for students in her relationship class, she replied, "When they come to understand their part in a conflict." She explained, "We all seem to focus on what the other person is doing wrong, but we can't see our part of the broken or damaged relationship." Embracing our responsibility diminishes conflict. *Mature Living, March 2023, p.28*

FORGIVENESS: In one of her best-selling novels, Jodi Picoult wrote a Confucius paraphrase: "When you begin a journey of revenge, start by digging two graves: one for your enemy, and one for yourself." Forgiveness is superior to revenge in that it only requires digging one grave for the interment of our pride. *Nineteen Minutes, Jodi Picoult, 2007, p.331*

HAPPINESS: Laurie Santos is a psychologist who teaches Yale University's most popular course, The Science of Well-Being. The class is designed to teach students how they can become happier. Dr. Santos explains happiness this way: "It's like a tire that you put air into. Occasionally it leaks, and you have to put more air into it. It's not a one-time thing where you learn it and you're good. You actually have to put the work in." That tire and exclamation mark sensor on your dash is a good reminder that happiness also requires regular fill-ups. *Reader's Digest, May 2020, p.33*

IDENTITY: On Super Bowl Sunday, Brock Purdy will be the third youngest starting quarterback in the big game's history, and he's already a winner even if the final score doesn't go his way. In the 2022 NFL draft he was the final pick, which is dubbed "Mr. Irrelevant." The player picked dead last isn't supposed to matter and initially it appeared that way. Purdy was the backup to the backup QB. But through injuries and performance, he became the starting quarterback his rookie year. He makes less than nearly every kicker and punter in the NFL, and his \$930,000 salary means his counterpart, Patrick Mahomes, makes over 45 times as much per year. But all of that pales in comparison to what he deems most important. Purdy says, "The bottom line, my identity is in Jesus." Now in his second season, Mr. Irrelevant will be playing for the Lombardi trophy on February 11th and his presence there should remind everyone that our identity comes from Christ alone. *Wall Street Journal, 10/12/23, p.A14; 12/19/23, p.A12, DenisonForum.org, 12/21/23*

LOYALTY: In a definition quiz utilizing language from the Shakespearean age, two words stand in contrast: popinjay and brick. The first means a vain windbag and actually finds its origin in the word for parrot. Like a parrot, this type of person just repeats what others say and fills the air with meaningless verbosity. Brick is defined as a reliable person and comes from the field of construction. To be a brick is to be a dependable person who holds steady and true like a brick in the wall. We have a choice as to which of the two we'll be. *Reader's Digest, March 2020, p.124*

MARRIAGE: On September 2, 1987, Hank Dempsey had the ride of his life. While flying an empty commuter plane for Eastern Express Airlines, he turned over the controls of the Beechcraft 99 to his copilot Paul Boucher. The cabin door was rattling so he went back to check on it and it suddenly flew open when they hit some turbulence. Dempsey fell out of the plane and grabbed the cable railings on the door-stairway. The copilot immediately radioed for an emergency landing and asked for the Coast Guard since they were 4,000 feet over water and feared his friend was lost at sea. Boucher brought the plane down at the airport in Portland, Maine and Dempsey survived by pulling his head up just inches from the runway. He never wanted to talk about his 10-minute survival flight because it was so traumatic. He simply told his boss he was “just glad to see the sunrise” that next morning. Emergency personnel had to pry his hands from the cables as Dempsey had literally been hanging on for dear life. Marriages stand a far greater chance of survival when we in similar fashion cling tightly to that treasured relationship. *The Washington Post, 9/4/87*

RELATIONSHIPS: Following the SARS outbreak in 2003, Matt Leacock invented a game called Pandemic. Uniquely different from other board games, the players must cooperate because they all either win or lose together...just like relationships. *Reader's Digest, January 2021, p.24*

TEMPTATION: *The Wizard of Oz* was back in the headlines 85 years after the movie premiered in 1939. Terry Martin went on trial in January 2024 for stealing the iconic ruby slippers from the Judy Garland Museum, which is housed in the actress' childhood home in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The repeat-offender got out of prison in 1996 but was lured back into crime when an old mob associate told him the jewels were worth \$1 million. Martin never saw the movie and knew nothing of the cultural significance so he saw the heist as just “one last score.” After taking the shoes in 2005, he tried to sell them to a fence, but found out the rubies were nothing more than glass beads and sequins. Martin ditched the red pumps and the FBI recovered them in 2018. He confessed to the crime in October 2023 but hardly looks like a thief. He's 76, has COPD, is in a wheelchair with oxygen and is on hospice care. The judge waved any jail time, which would have typically been 4 to 6 years, and ordered \$23,500 in restitution to the museum for damages, but Martin is destitute. Dorothy's ruby slippers only worked in the magic of movies, but in real life they serve as a reminder that temptation never delivers what it promises. Million-dollar rubies turn out to be nothing more than glass beads and sequins. *Wall Street Journal, 1/30/24, p.A4*

EVERYDAY HUMOR

CHANGE: A wife told her husband, “I love you just the way you are...but I do have a few suggestions.” Most marriages could use a few suggestions. *Reader's Digest, March 2020, p.30*

DECISIVENESS: We've all winced behind the steering wheel when a squirrel darts out in front of the car and then reverses course. In hopes of not flattening Bullwinkle's best friend, we brake or slow down but roadway remnants prove we're not always successful. That's why we shouldn't be indecisive like those little bushy-tailed critters because “the road of life is paved with flat squirrels who couldn't make a decision.” *Ponderings of a Pastor, Jerry Long, 2023, p.58*

MARRIAGE: When Ginger asked her parents about the secret of being married 55 years, her mom replied, “We never hated each other on the same day.” *Reader's Digest, January 2022, p.19*

PERSEVERANCE: For a decade beginning in 1990, the Leaning Tower of Pisa was closed for structural adjustments. Engineers altered the white marble icon by reducing 17 inches of its lean. In 2020, the Italian government announced that the tower had righted itself by another 1.57 inches due to the shored-up foundation. If it continues, calculations show it will be perfectly straight in about 4,000 years. Perseverance can be a powerful force. *Reader's Digest, March 2020, p.91*

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