

In Other Words...

A RESEARCH SERVICE FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATORS

November 2025

COMPLAINING: Randy Pausch (1960-2008) was a popular professor at Carnegie Mellon University who delivered *The Last Lecture* after he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. His talk was expanded into a book that has sold over 8 million copies. It's a memoir filled with advice for his young children who would never know their dad beyond childhood. In a chapter about complaining, he explained how he had a photo of Jackie Robinson in his office because Robinson was his "favorite non-complainer." Number 42 was the first African American to play Major League Baseball and his success depended on him enduring relentless racism without complaining. Pausch, who did not complain about his terminal illness, wrote that the message of Robinson's story is: "Complaining does not work as a strategy." This time of year reminds us to jettison the bad strategy of complaining and focus on our thanks. *The Last Lecture, Randy Pausch, 2008, p.139*

GRATITUDE: Teri Garr (1944-2024) was a comedic actress who excelled at portraying ditzy characters. She was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1999 and later required a wheelchair. She suffered a brain aneurysm in 2006 that caused a week-long coma. She then had to relearn how to talk. Never losing her penchant for humor, she wrote, "I really do count my blessings. At least I used to. Now I get so tired I have a woman come once a week and count them for me." There are always blessings to count, even if we have to get help counting them. *The Week, 11/15/24, p.35*

PERSEVERANCE: Fabian von Schlabrendorff (1907-1980) was part of the resistance movement against Hitler. After a failed assassination attempt in 1943, he was arrested but survived the war. He later wrote about his friendship with Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) and noted, "he never tired of repeating that the only fight which is lost is that which we give up." Those often repeated words gave courage then and can do the same today. *Bonhoeffer, Eric Metaxas, 2010, p.499*

PRAYER: Howard Hendricks (1924-2013) was a legendary professor at Dallas Theological Seminary who powerfully influenced several generations of Christian leaders. One day he began class by sharing that his 75-year-old father had just recently given his life to Christ. Through tears he said, "That might not be meaningful to you unless I tell you that for forty years I have prayed for his salvation. And after forty years, God finally said yes." Sustained prayers are the most difficult, yet often the most effective. *Prayer The Great Adventure, David Jeremiah, 1997, p.64*

REPENTANCE: Butch Cassidy (1866-1908) was an American outlaw who robbed banks and trains with his "Wild Bunch" gang and his infamous partner, the Sundance Kid. Only once was Cassidy arrested and imprisoned. During his 18 months in the Wyoming Territorial Prison, Cassidy asked for a pardon. In 1896, governor William Richards pardoned Cassidy after he agreed to no longer commit crimes in Wyoming. Seven months later he robbed a bank in Idaho. We haven't repented if we just agree to take our sins elsewhere. *Wall Street Journal, 10/29/2025*

SPIRITUAL WARFARE: Dick Butkus (1942-2023) was the bone-crunching Chicago Bears linebacker whose name and likeness is given as the prestigious award for the best linebacker each year in high school, college and the NFL. In an obituary for Butkus, his friend Deacon Jones (another hall of famer) described the Monster of the Midway as a "well-conditioned animal" who "tried to put you in the cemetery, not the hospital." Such words are an accurate assessment of Satan's intent for us all – terminal pain is his ultimate goal. *The Week, 10/20/2023, p.39*

SUCCESS: Actor Marlon Brando (1924-2004) said, “Most of the successful people in Hollywood are failures as human beings.” Aim at the right kind of success. *Wall Street Journal*, 8/23/25, p.C11

THANKSGIVING: The Royal Calcutta Golf Club was built by the British in 1829. They anticipated playing golf in India but weren’t prepared for the monkeys. These native animals were enamored by the rolling golf balls so they frequently ran on the course and picked them up. They seldom confiscated the balls but they always relocated them. After numerous measures failed to keep the monkeys from interfering, an informal rule was established: Play the ball where the monkey drops it. Occasionally it meant an improved lie but usually these primates made the shot worse. When our life improves, thanks comes naturally, but real thanksgiving involves gratitude even when the monkeys mess us up. *1001 Great Stories*, Kent Hughes, 1998, p.173

TRANSFORMATION: Robert “Evel” Knievel (1938-2007) was an iconic motorcycle daredevil known for his dangerous jumps. His high-stakes lifestyle included women, gambling, alcohol and an oversized ego. He once flew both of his private jets side by side just so he could sip champagne in one plane while looking out the window to see his name on the other. God was irrelevant until he sensed the Lord calling him to change. His daughter and her church were praying for his salvation and he read *The Case For Christ*. The result was, “I just got on my knees and prayed that God would put his arms around me and never, ever, ever let me go.” He became a passionate Christian that told everyone about Jesus. He noted that his biggest regret was not surrendering his life to Christ when he was much younger. As death approached from a lung condition, he asked for these words to be etched on his grave marker: “Believe in Jesus Christ.” He died to self and was transformed to life by Christ. *The Unexpected Adventure*, Strobel & Mittelberg, 2009, p.272

TRUTH: Robert Fulghum’s 1986 book, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, became a *New York Times* bestseller that sold 7 million copies. Fulghum is an engaging, insightful writer that makes readers smile, but his theology is sad. He’s a Unitarian Universalist minister that adheres to open-ended theology. In the decade following his classic, he summarized all that he believed into a simple one-word credo: Maybe. There are many unknowns, but a theology of maybe leaves us untethered: maybe there’s a God...maybe not. Maybe there’s life after death...maybe not. Maybe there’s hope...maybe not. Thankfully, Jesus declared certainty in John 14:6 and Christians can cling to that truth. *Words I Wish I Wrote*, Robert Fulghum, 1997, p.3

EVERYDAY HUMOR

EXERCISE: Helen and her friend were walking outside enjoying the fall weather. As the colorful leaves fell with the cool breeze she said, “I love this time of year because it means I won’t have to worry about having a beach body for another six months.” *Beaumont Enterprise*, 11/6/25, p.B8

FAMILY: Comedy writer Melanie White stated, “Thanksgiving is a time to count your blessings, one by one, as each relative goes home.” *The Week*, 12/1/2023, p.17

GRATITUDE: William asked his 3-year-old granddaughter if she was enjoying her dinner. She picked at her food a few times and then replied, “Not yet.” *Reader’s Digest*, September 2011, p.100

PHARMACIES: A professor at pharmacy school began the new student orientation by asking a question: “How many of you are here because you thought it’d be faster to become a pharmacist than to wait in line at the pharmacy?” Every hand went up. *Houston Chronicle*, 10/11/25, p.A12

TARIFFS: It was after midnight at the White House when Game 7 of the World Series ended. President Trump was still up so he sent his congratulations to the Los Angeles Dodgers for their championship win over the Toronto Blue Jays. He ended his message with “See you all at the White House” but the traditional trip to D.C. will be different this year. Because the Dodgers won the World Series in Canada, they’ll have to pay a tariff on their championship. *Editor’s Perspective*

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