

In Other Words...

A RESEARCH SERVICE FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATORS

October 2026

ADVERSITY: October 19, 2026 marks 245 years since the British surrendered at Yorktown, but Washington's greatest victory came with a heavy heart. His stepson Jackie was raised with every advantage: a personal servant, a live-in tutor, fine clothes, and his own horses & hounds. Biographer Joseph Ellis wrote, "The only item Jackie was denied was adversity." His teacher told Washington he'd never known a young man "so exceedingly indolent." Jackie quit college, married at 19, and mismanaged his inherited estate. In 1781, he joined his stepfather's staff at Yorktown, but the young man who was spared from every hardship couldn't withstand military life. He died of camp fever at 26, just three weeks after the surrender. Shielding our children from every difficulty may feel like love, but God uses adversity to build character. *His Excellency: George Washington, Joseph Ellis, 2004, p.42; MountVernon.org*

ENCOURAGEMENT: The most moving moment of a University of Iowa football game has nothing to do with the score. When the first quarter ends at Kinnick Stadium in Iowa City, the entire crowd, along with the players and coaches from both teams, turns toward the Stead Family Children's Hospital next door and waves. Sick kids, their parents, and hospital staff crowd the windows above the field and wave back. It's called the Iowa Wave, and all 69,000 fans take part. For a child stuck in a hospital bed, it's a powerful reminder that a whole stadium is cheering for them. College student Rubye Ney said, "It kind of forces you to stop and think about things more important than football." A simple wave costs nothing, yet it can lift a weary heart. *Reader's Digest, September 2022, p.9*

EVANGELISM: Apple had barely escaped bankruptcy when Steve Jobs lured Ron Johnson away from Target in 1999 to try a long shot: Apple stores. Computer stores were fading, and most shoppers cared little about Apple. So, the two men went where people already were: the nation's malls. Instead of copying other electronics outlets, they modeled the stores on the warm service of the Ritz-Carlton, which birthed the Genius Bar. Johnson, whose Christian faith shaped how he treated customers, told Jobs, "Most of our future customers will be introduced to Apple through the store." Today there are more than 500 of them worldwide. The church can do the same: Go where people are and demonstrate the beauty of following Christ. *Shop Different, Ron Johnson, 2026; Wall Street Journal, 10/1/26, p.A13*

FAITH: George Swanson died in 1994, but his funeral is still a conversation piece. He'd bought 12 plots at Brush Creek Cemetery, about 25 miles east of Pittsburgh, so he could be buried in his white Corvette. Cemetery officials weren't thrilled, but they eventually honored his wish. On May 25, 1994, two months after his death, about 50 family members and friends watched the Corvette, with Swanson's ashes in the driver's seat, lowered into a 7x7x16-foot grave. At the reception, his widow Caroline said of her 71-year-old deceased husband, "George went out in a fabulous style. You have a lot of people saying they want to take it with them. He took it with him." Well...not exactly. The Corvette stayed behind like everything else. One can only hope Swanson's faith was in Christ, because that's the one thing we can actually take with us. *Houston Post, 5/26/1994, p.A11*

FLEXIBILITY: Bestselling author & organizational psychologist Adam Grant says artificial intelligence is changing what it takes to succeed. For generations, the surest way to get ahead in a profession was to know more than the people around you. Grant says of the change, "Great careers used to hinge on ability, and now they depend on agility." He added a sobering warning: "The expertise you have today may be obsolete tomorrow." In a world changing so rapidly, a willingness to learn and adapt is more valuable than ever before. *Wall Street Journal, 10/1/26, p.A10*

GAMBLING: Reporter Dan Horn spent two months betting on everything from NBA games to reality TV to see what online gambling is doing to America. Americans wagered about \$200 billion through betting apps last year (2025) and half of all men ages 18 to 49 now carry a sportsbook on their phone. One study found a gambling plug every four minutes in sports broadcasts. After Ohio legalized online betting, calls to its gambling helpline soared nearly 300%. A counselor told Horn the apps are built with constant alerts and rewards because "They're trying to get you hooked." When he insisted he wasn't at risk because he was rational, she replied, "Well, so are all of my clients." The apps are new, but the trap is as old as greed itself (1 Timothy 6:9). *USA Today, 10/2/26, p.4D*

HEART: Type the word "askew" into Google's search box and something odd happens: the entire results page tilts slightly to the right. It's one of the company's playful hidden tricks. Nothing is actually wrong with your screen, but everything you read suddenly looks...askew. Life tends to work that way too. When our heart is off-kilter, everything

we see gets distorted: our marriages, our jobs, our circumstances, even God Himself. Before blaming the world for looking crooked, make sure your own heart is not askew. *Google.com*

INSPIRATION: Rocky Balboa has finally won his longest fight. Fifty years after Sylvester Stallone first charged up the 72 steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art on film, the city has made the top of those steps the permanent home of Rocky's 8½-foot bronze statue. It took a while. The statue debuted in *Rocky III* (1982), but museum officials feared a movie prop would cheapen their image, so Rocky was banished to a South Philly sports arena. When the sculpture returned in 2006, it was relegated to the bottom of the steps, and one art commissioner sniffed that it was "not a work of art." The critics never slowed the crowds. About four million people visit the bronze icon every year and Stallone explained why: "Inside of every one of you, there's a real Rocky." Critics come and go, but true inspiration spans generations. *Wall Street Journal*, 10/1/26, p.A15

PERSPECTIVE: In the summer of 2007, billionaire oilman T. Boone Pickens (1928-2019) gave the commencement address at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria, Virginia, where his grandson Alexander was graduating. Suspecting the seniors were mostly thinking about lunch, he made a thought-provoking offer. He said, "You have the best seat in the house," then listed his riches, including a Gulfstream jet and a 68,000-acre Texas ranch. He then declared that any graduate could have all he owned by simply swapping places with him. The catch: the student would become 79, and Pickens would be 18 again. Nobody took the offer. One graduate explained, "We'd miss everything between eighteen and seventy-nine if we changed places with you." Youth is worth more than a fortune, so invest it in what matters most. *The First Billion Is the Hardest*, T. Boone Pickens, 2009, p.247

RECONCILIATION: How Lynyrd Skynyrd got its name is in the *In Other Words* book (Leonard Skinner was a Jacksonville gym teacher who sent long-haired students to the principal's office - so in spite, they later named their band after him with a mocking phonetic twist). But the rest of the story includes reconciliation. Skinner later revealed, "It was against the school rules. I don't particularly like long hair on men, but again, it wasn't my rule." In time, the old feud gave way to genuine friendship. Skinner introduced the band at a hometown concert and even let them put a photo of his real estate sign inside their third album. Grudges make catchy headlines, but reconciliation writes a far better ending (Romans 12:18). *Washington Post*, 9/21/10; *Associated Press*, 9/20/10

SATAN: In August 2026, a teenage football player in Maumelle, Arkansas, approached his coach after about an hour of practice and said his helmet felt weird. Inside, curled up in the padding, was a small but venomous water moccasin that wouldn't come out. Animal control was called out, and they had to hold the helmet underwater before the snake would let go. Authorities said they'd never seen anything like it, but they were thankful someone called because one bite could have been fatal. Satan will slither into anything to take us out. But as the Psalmist reminds us, we serve a sovereign God who puts serpents under our feet (Psalm 91:13). In fact, the very first promise about Jesus declares that He will crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). *Examiner*, 8/20/26, p.21B

SPIRITUAL WARFARE: Airport security works hard to keep weapons off of planes, but the attacker on FlyDubai Flight 1073 didn't need to smuggle one aboard. Just past the midpoint of the trip from Dubai to Tel Aviv on September 30, 2026, the co-pilot stepped away, supposedly to pray, then turned on Captain Smit Machchhar with the plane's own emergency ax. The wounded captain got the cockpit door open, and several passengers rushed in to subdue the violent co-pilot and pull the jet out of its deadly plunge. The ax was secured in the cockpit to protect the pilots from terrorists. The evil forces of darkness seldom need to smuggle anything into our lives; they often use what's already available: our appetites, our abilities, even God's good gifts. So, guard your life's cockpit. *Wall Street Journal*, 10/5/26, p.A1

EVERYDAY HUMOR

COLLABORATION: A petite shopper wrote *Heloise* about her teamwork strategy at the grocery store. Whenever something is out of reach on a top shelf, she politely asks a taller customer for a hand, and they're always glad to oblige. After the item has been retrieved from a higher shelf, she returns the favor: "If you need anything from the floor, let me know." She says it gets a laugh every time. *Houston Chronicle*, 2/5/26, p.A10

EMPATHY: A mother overheard her six-year-old daughter consoling her little brother, who was in tears. She assured him it was perfectly fine to be sad and that it's healthy to have a good cry now and then. The mom praised her daughter's kindness and then asked why her brother was crying in the first place. The little girl answered, "I hit him." Empathy is wonderful, but don't be the reason someone needs it. *Reader's Digest*, September 2022, p.21

INFLATION: Dak walked in from the garage and shouted to his wife, "I just doubled the value of our car by filling it up with gas." *Reader's Digest*, October 2022, p.77

IN OTHER WORDS... is a research service produced by Dr. Raymond McHenry, Pastor of the Westgate Memorial Baptist Church in Beaumont, Texas. This service began in 1991 and offers 1) a free monthly email of intriguing facts, quotes, humor, and spiritual illustrations from a wide variety of sources and 2) a book with over 4,000 entries. Start a free subscription and/or purchase a book at iows.net. All content is copyrighted.