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Wieners and Beans or Pride!

It was a Monday afternoon; I had been washing and ironing clothes for our family all day long. As I worked, I prayed for myself, my husband Bill,¹ and our four children. I removed the sheets from each bed, washed and dried them and returned them to each of the children's rooms and to our own bedroom. And as I did, I prayed for each family member, smoothing the sheets on their bed and fluffing each pillow. I lifted that person's needs to the Lord, giving Him thanksgiving and praise for each one.

I talked to God about my dreams for our family and for each child in it. I prayed that our family would be so filled with the love of Christ that it would "ooze" out of the doors of our house to fill the neighborhood, the school, the community and the world with the sweet fragrance of Christ. "Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him" (Ephesians 5:1-2, NLT).

As I ironed shirts, blouses and dresses, I prayed again for each person in our family. I prayed that God would shape and form them into the people He wanted them to be, that they would walk faithfully with the Lord all the days of their lives, and that they would reach out to others with the love of Jesus Christ.

By now, the children, ages 5, 6 and 10 years, had arrived home from school one by one; they walked the two blocks to our home. They knew this was laundry day; if possible mother was not to be disturbed. My 10-year-old daughter Kathy was caring for her two brothers, Billy and Gary, and our active 2-year-old Jane, who had followed me about the house all that day while I worked. It was a welcomed breather that I had looked forward to all day.

¹ Doris' husband, William T. Greig II, was a partner in the family business, Gospel Light.

I was particularly thankful because there seemed to be a greater spirit of peace and cooperation than usual, and I knew I would manage to get my laundry completed in time to cook the wieners and beans for dinner.

I had planned to fix carrot sticks, open a large can of applesauce and serve the dinner at our usual hour of 6 p.m. It was not a fancy dinner, but I knew the children especially would enjoy the hot dogs. My husband was always appreciative of any meal I served him.

The phone rang at about 4:30. It seemed an uncalled for interruption in my hectic schedule. I wanted to get the ironing done before I prepared the meal, Kathy answered the phone and told me her daddy wanted to speak to me. As I walked to the phone, I wondered what on earth he could want at this hour. After Bill told me the reason he had called, I felt like a bomb had exploded in the kitchen and hit me!

Bill, in an excited voice, told me he was sitting in his office with a woman from South Africa. “Will it be all right if I bring her home for dinner?” he asked. “She has not been in an American home yet, and would really enjoy seeing our home. She wants to get acquainted with you and the children,” he said.

My first reaction was to scream or cry! How could he do this to me, I wanted to shout. It was at that moment all my spirituality went down the drain. As calmly as possible, I tried to explain to Bill that this was my “laundry day,” and I had wieners and beans planned for dinner. I told him I didn’t have the time or the energy to go to the store for anything else, nor did I have any other food to supplement or make any change in this “slapped together” meal.

He on the other hand was so enthusiastic when he heard that we were having wieners and beans; I couldn’t believe it! He’s got to be kidding, I thought, He told me Yvonne would be thrilled to have wieners and beans because they were typically American and she probably had never tasted them. He was a super salesman — he guaranteed she would love my dinner! I had my doubts.

I frantically fished for another excuse to get out of this dinner visit. I told Bill that the house was a horrible mess, that I wasn’t exactly neatly dressed and that the kids were dirty from playing in the backyard. Again, he tried to encourage me. He told me that families around the world, even in South Africa, are like this, and Yvonne would feel right at home with us. He said, “Not to worry, Doris.”

Well, as you may have gathered by now, I have a husband with a God given gift for extending hospitality to anyone, anytime. He personifies the members of the Body of Christ who are given special ability to provide a warm welcome and an open house for those in need of food or lodging. I was a new Christian, and wasn’t so sure God had called me to this ministry however! Yet, if my husband had the gift, wasn’t I, his partner, to support him in exercising it? Thus, I began to send up “arrow prayers” to God after agreeing to have this stranger from South Africa into my home for an “exotic American dinner” of wieners and beans.

“You’ve come a long way, baby,” I said to myself, as I ran the bath water for the children and laid out clean pajamas for the smaller children to climb into after their baths. They all pitched in before dinner to help pick up the house and re-establish a measure of decency and order. Actually “a

measure of decency and order” was all we ever had at our house. Can anyone ever have everything sterile and pristine with four children, two cats, one dog and numerous smaller animals, like rodents and snakes in cages and jars, plus playmates of all ages romping through the house?

I was too tired to even think of setting the dining room table. Some of the children were still in the milk-spilling stage anyway, so I decided I would be asking for a disaster on a Monday night when everyone, including Mother, was tired. So I chose not to eat in the dining room. Thus, our “committee” of five decided to set the kitchen table with our prettiest plastic mats, plastic dishes and our everyday stainless flatware.

When I had explained to the children where our dinner guest lived, they wanted to know if she was black. I honestly said I didn’t know, I hadn’t asked, and that it really didn’t matter. She was one of God’s people, far from home, and would enjoy being with an American family for an evening. The children enjoyed setting the table. They picked a few flowers from the yard and arranged them in a small vase for a centerpiece.

As I scurried about, I refused to allow myself to dwell on the fact that the kitchen floor should be swept, and that all of the furniture in the house needed dusting. There wasn’t time! I decided, “Why spoil the whole evening by getting grumpy over details that really won’t count through time and eternity anyway?” I really sensed the Holy Spirit guiding my mind into right thought patterns and bringing everything into a proper perspective as far as this evening was concerned.

I thought of God’s promise in Zechariah 4:6, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty” (NASB). God was letting me know that this evening was in His hands. I didn’t have to fret that I did not have the might nor the power to have a model home, model children or a model meal for this guest. God was allowing me the privilege of experiencing His power and might to make the evening pleasant and memorable not only for Yvonne, but also for our entire family.

My Pacesetter

The Lord is my pacesetter,
I shall not rush.
He makes me to stop
for quiet intervals.

He provides me with images of stillness
which restore my serenity.
He leads me in ways of efficiency
through calmness of mind,
and His guidance
is peace.

Even though I have a great many things
to accomplish each day,
I will not fret
for His presence is here.

His timelessness, His all-importance
will keep me in balance.
He prepares refreshment in the midst
of my activity by anointing my mind
with His oil of tranquility.

My cup of joyous energy overflows.
Surely harmony and effectiveness
shall be the fruit of my hours,

And I shall walk in the pace
of the Lord
And dwell in His house
forever.

Author Unknown²

True hospitality, no matter what form it takes, is always a gift from the Holy Spirit. I sensed God's supernatural help in overcoming my insecurities and fears of what Yvonne — this unknown person, unknown entity — would think of me, my children, my house and the meal I served.

“Who gave me that fear and insecurity in the first place?” I asked myself. It certainly wasn't God. This fear is a “trap of the devil” (2 Timothy 2:26). I recognized that I had been under attack, but as I relied on the Holy Spirit and remembered that “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4), I felt a peaceful calm filling my mind and body. I knew the Lord was at work within me. Actually, I began to look forward to the dinner hour!

As I look back on this experience, I can see the hand of God on my life — shaping and forming me into His image. He worked in my life through this growing experience of trusting Him in the circumstances of that Monday laundry day so long ago. “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters” (Romans 8:28-29, NLT).

Just as God does not make His spiritual children all alike physically, He formed us differently for various uses in the Kingdom of God. Your call may not be to allow your furniture to get worn

2. Author unknown. From *The Hurrier I Go* by Bonnie Wheeler (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1985), p. 40.

and your dishes broken by hosting a lot of people for dinner. But remember hospitality comes in many forms.

Sometimes hospitality means weeping with a friend or a neighbor, or staying up extra late just to listen to the story of the pain in someone's life. It may be watching the neighbor's children when their mother is ill, or taking food to the home of a new neighbor. Hospitality can take many shapes and forms. We need to pray, "God, please make me willing to see, and then grasp, the opportunities You send my way. I trust Your Holy Spirit to give me the wisdom and strength I need from You for each opportunity You call me to participate in this day and this week. By the power of Jesus' name, I commit my life to You as Your servant."

Would you like to hear the outcome of the Monday laundry day opportunity the Lord gave me? Yvonne came! She was young and full of fun, and the children liked her immediately. As I dished up the beans and stuffed the hot dogs into their buns, put the applesauce and carrot sticks into pretty serving bowls, Yvonne showed the children pictures of Johannesburg, South Africa. She told them about the climate, people, plants, animals and churches there.

What a blessing it was for my children to be exposed to another country and culture through her sharing that evening. In the few brief moments before I called them to dinner, my children were given a larger view of the world through Yvonne's pictures and conversation.

"Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!"

— Hebrews 13:2, NLT

I called to them in the living room, "Dinner is served!" The children joyously led Yvonne to the kitchen and we all sat down to the table. It looked quite pretty with the flowers the children had arranged, and the soft glow of the candles I had added at the last moment. The hot dogs on a platter and the beans in the casserole actually looked and smelled pretty good.

Yvonne immediately admired the applesauce bowl, an antique I enjoyed using. She was so excited about her "American dinner." Imagine she had never had hot dogs and baked beans before! She exclaimed over them; she actually "oohed and aahed."

"These are so wonderful," she said. "I love your American food!" The children were impressed by her enthusiasm and ate with greater appreciation their standard Monday night fare. They were pleased to have been my helpers in hospitality that night.

Whenever I have seen Yvonne in years since, she has always reminded me of that "delightful evening" when she was introduced to our family. Yvonne never fails to mention how good the wie-

ners and beans tasted, and what fun it was to be counted as worthy to be treated “just like family.” As she reminds me of this, I realize that my pride almost kept me from this “choice experience,” as she defines it.

I am also reminded that my pride almost kept me from enjoying that evening too. It was a growing experience for my children as their world view was enlarged. And for me, it was a growing experience in letting go of non-essentials and trusting God to meet me where I was and enable me by His power to enjoy that evening. I almost missed the joy of getting to know Yvonne, sharing my family with her and giving her a little glimpse of our American home and culture. It was either wieners and beans or pride. I am so glad that with God’s guidance, I was able to set aside my pride and instead chose to serve wieners and beans!

Earlier that day I had prayed for my children. I had asked God to mold them into His image. What I now realized was that He not only molded them that evening, but He also was in the process of molding me into a usable vessel for His glory. To think I almost missed the Potter’s touch on my life that day because of foolish pride!

Yes, Yvonne was like an angel sent to us by God. And because of her our family was able to put hospitality into God’s perspective.

Have Thine Own Way, Lord!

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Search me and try me, Master, today!
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!
Power, all power, surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o’er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit ‘till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.

–George C. Stebbins³

3. George C. Stebbins, “Have Thine Own Way, Lord!” ©1935, Hope Publishing. Public domain.

God Is Calling You

1. How do you currently turn everyday household duties into opportunities to think about and pray for members of your family?
2. List a specific need for each family member. Lift those needs to the Lord when you are scurrying about your busy day.
3. Think of a situation where you were called upon at the last minute to either have someone into your home for dinner or extend hospitality in some other manner, such as drive someone to the doctor or keep someone's child. How did you react?
4. Can you think of a time when pride stood (or nearly stood) in the way of your extending warm and generous hospitality to someone you know or to a stranger, thereby removing the blessing of giving and receiving God's love through ministering to someone else?



The Greig Family
Gary, Doris, Kathy, Bill II, Billy
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