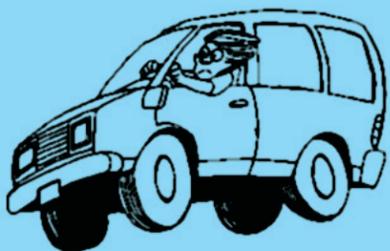


Reckless Abandon



couple of minutes, but by that time we were stuck in the line of cars who took the same advice and were moving as slowly as we could see the freeway was moving. One foot, then 3 minutes later, 6 inches, then

Ok, I'll come clean and lay it all out there for you to see. I was bad. I was really bad. I was so bad that Gommel, my dad who is now with God, reached down and slapped me upside the head. I was definitely not the everyday Linda.

What could I have done that was so bad? Well, it was several things, actually. Let me bore you with the story.

First, a bit of background. Some of you may remember the classic and memorable stories of Sir William, intrepid explorer of the desert, and the tootles we took with him. He LOVES bouncing and jouncing on desert dirt roads, or cliff-hanging on mountain roads, with the panorama of the desert far below, and the passengers terrified that they are doomed to roll down the mountainside all the way to that desert!

I finally declined to participate in those rides, not fully enjoying the ride due to the reckless abandon with which Sir William sometimes drove. My main concern was legitimate: if that many key people were in one car in so many risky situations, and something should happen, the store would be in a world of hurt.

Unfortunately, my reluctance to risk it all with reckless abandon labeled me as a racist—er, no, that's a different subject – as a bigoted tootle-phobic, which is of course unfair (oh, poor me!) because I love tootles. Just not the ones that hang over the edge of the mountain or bounce you all the way out in the desert

with no cell signal, with a store to keep going. Maybe in the next life, when we are with God, we hope, we can tootle all we like with no danger or risk or store standing in the way!

Anyway, a few days ago, I had a doctor's appointment in

Orange, and you may remember how much I just lu-u-v(!) the asphalt jungle and especially the freeways. Going down to Orange was a breeze, because it was the right time of day. Traffic was "lighter" (define "light" when discussing our freeways), alleviating the risk of bumping into the poor slob just ahead when he/she comes to a dead stop while you were looking at all of your mirrors to change lanes and failed to see his brake lights.

Coming home was a different story. I usually bring a human navigator along, one who is fluent in Siri's language or Google Assistant-speak and can carry on a semi-intelligent conversation with him/her, or is it "they/them"? Or Zhe? Or one of the 5,612 pronoun choices being offered these days?

My best navigator is Jason, who gives frequent updates on the distance and direction of the next move and watches for traffic changes. That voice from the map application doesn't always appreciate it when we digress from its (may I use that pronoun?) directed path, but it reluctantly recalibrates and creates a new set of instructions. It's almost like its recalibration sound is "BONG, BONG-ITY, BONG, darn it!"

Returning home from Orange, I asked Jason to check the usual traffic crush spots: the 57 merge onto the 210; the 15 interchanges with the 91, the 60, the 10, and the 210; and the merge of the 15 and the 215 in Devore. Jason said they were all clear but within minutes, it all changed, with our little map person recommending that we use the Glen Helen Parkway to save 31 minutes. Huh? Really? Then the time savings changed to just a

5 minutes later, 10 feet, then a gap where we can move at 20 mph (wow!). We finally got to our normal route home, using the 138 and Summit Valley Road. We had to stop in Victorville for a couple of errands, and with a huge sigh of relief, we headed home on Bear Valley Road. I NEEDED to get back to the store so that the day wasn't a total loss for getting daily chores done, so I was anxious.

Moving right along toward beloved Lucerne Valley, we had to slow down just past Lone Wolf Colony, and cars were turning around. What??? A lone county worker was standing there, his big orange truck parked to the side, turning the cars around. Here's where I turned bad.

First I demanded to know what was up, with great irritation. It looked like the County was diddling with the road and had the whole thing closed so they could keep diddling. The man replied, "Someone died, ma'am." Oops! I apologized and asked, "Was there an accident?" We couldn't see anything over the road but a cluster of vehicles in the distance, and no flashing red or yellow lights. "Yes," he replied. "Go back to Central to go over to Hwy 18."

I could have and should have done that, but that's when the spirit of Reckless Abandon, along with rebellion overcame me. I turned around, saw a dirt road headed north toward Hwy 18, and took the dirt road instead of Central. I know these dirt roads wind up on 18, I thought. Yeah, they do, eventually.

Remember, I was in a hurry to get back to



work, so I drove too fast for those roads, thoroughly shaking up my two passengers. And there were dumps of trash all over the place, forcing me to drive around them in the desert. Bounce, bounce, jounce, CLUNK as the poor car hit bottom! Debbie said, "She's driving like Bill (Sir William) does! I'm gonna tell Bill that Linda took us on a tootle!" That included the sudden turns to the right or left when a road looked a little better or more direct, just like he does. Then more trash! Shtuff in the road! Drive around it! Bounce and jounce some more, even as Jason had an important phone call, and he was struggling to keep the phone to his ear.

Finally we reached Hwy 18, and the poor car issued a huge sigh of relief. Gommel continued to yell at me in my head, for putting the car through that. I hoped that I didn't get a flat tire from some sharp something in the trash that was everywhere.

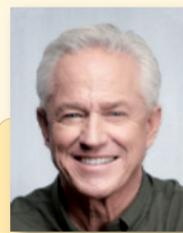
I felt so bad about it that I apologized to God for letting that spirit of reckless abandon overcome me, and in retrospect, I cannot answer why. Maybe just to be able to write a tootle article for this space, so I could bury you with my shtuff here.

I AM sorry to Jason and Debbie, to the car, and to Gommel and God Himself, for abusing the blessing of the car that He provided for this life of service to Him. Sometimes you just need to break out, refusing the control of Big Brother, and go on a joy ride, with Reckless Abandon. And maybe it's good practice for the way God wants us to follow Him -- with abandon, but leave out the reckless part, please!

Linda Gommel

Regaining our Wonder and Awe

Ray Bentley Ministries



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS
We honor Pastor Ray's life by continuing to share the daily devotions he prepared for you, his precious readers.

"The heavens declare the glory of God..."— Psalm 19:1

The heavens once were a magical canopy of fiery daylight, cooled at night by the glow of the moon. Twinkling lights spread their star stories across the universe.

When I was young, imagining myself as an astronomer or astronaut, I was endlessly intrigued by the mystery of God's lights and learned everything I could.

They spoke to me in the rhythms of creation, and I felt God's presence, especially after the night I first met Him at the age of eleven. I'd lie in the yard outside my home and listen to crickets and the wind in the trees. I would stare at the sky, marveling at the faraway lights signaling God's glory. I knew the fanciful legends of Orion, Cassiopeia, and the menagerie of lions, bulls, dogs, and rams.

Then I grew up.

The science of astronomy had a way of removing the awe and glory from God's work in the sky. The moon, sun, and stars were said to be gaseous balls of fire or dark, icy matter. They were the beautiful part of creation that ordered the days, nights, and seasons.

But I no longer heard their stories, and for me, the heavenly bodies lost their mystery.

Until I matured as a believer and began recognizing God's handiwork in the heavens. As I studied Scripture, history, and the origins of the stories in the skies, I began to understand why God said,

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.*

*Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.*

There is no speech nor language

Where their voice is not heard.

*Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.*

(Psalm 19:1-4)

When you need inspiration and confirmation that there is a God who has created us and loves us, look to the skies and soak in the beauty of His creation. Imagine generations of ancestors looking to the stars for navigation, evidence of God's work, and connecting with His creation's awesome beauty.

I have regained my earlier wonder and sense of awe at all that God has put in the heavens. The beauty is there for our enjoyment, but it so much greater than that!

The heavens exist to declare the glory of God!

REAL LIFE

with Jack Hibbs



"Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture... Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God... But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away."

-- Luke 8:6, 11, 13

These are the last days, the closing hours of the church age. Soon, and without warning, Jesus will suddenly appear. In the rapture, He will take all those awaiting His return. The Lord is preparing the church for this great event.

GOD IS PURIFYING HIS PEOPLE BY SEPARATING THE FALSE FROM THE TRUE.

We are living at a time when seemingly committed believers are turning their backs on the Word of God and the fellowship of His people to go after their own selfish lusts. What was once good and godly, worthy of defending, is now cast upon the selling block for any price.

The once-believing heart is now justifying its new position, blaming others to appease its own lost conscience. Many may go this route before the end comes, but tragically, some have chosen this path already.

Hear again what Jesus says, "They are the ones who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away." Knowing this, guard your heart this day, Christian. Choose what is right, not what is popular. Decide to do the good thing and not what is easy. See to it that your heart continues to believe, lest you, having once known the Word of God and the fellowship of His people, turn back to the world and your former lifestyle.

On The Lighter Side . . . Contributed from the Web

