

THE HERALD

Newsletter of the Orrville Grace Brethren Church

A Brick in the Valley

By Chris Brauns

Four bricks hide behind my tool shed. The shed sits on the edge of the woods so leaves hide the bricks. If you weren't looking, you wouldn't notice them: just a few bricks settling into moist, black soil under brown oak leaves.

If I picked up one of those bricks, brushed the leaves off it, and asked it what it is doing, I wonder what it would say. I know that bricks can't talk. Bear with me for the sake of the thing. A brick disconnected from any building, lying behind my tool shed, how would it explain itself?

A loose brick might be a little defensive. Can't you just hear the brick bristling when asked why it is not in a building?

"Look, I am a brick! I assure you that I am a brick. Are you implying that I am not a brick?"

I would probe gently. "No, I'm just wondering why you aren't part of one sort of building or another? Just curious."

The defense would continue. "Look, I don't have to be in a building in order to be

a brick. I can be a brick all on my own."

True enough.

Then again, maybe it wouldn't be a defensive brick. It might be a "friendly, procrastinating" brick: agreeable and well-intentioned.

It would say, "I know what you are thinking and you are right. I do need to find a good building. I just haven't gotten around to it. I mean there was a time when I was in a building, a school actually, but I drifted away and now I'm back here behind the tool shed. But, I am going to find a good building. I still listen to the radio — — — you know, to stay in touch with what is going on in the building industry."

Or, it might be critical: a brick that lists and describes the imperfections in other bricks. This brick would point its finger while it answered. It would go on offense.

"Hey, I got tired of being next to so many irregular bricks. Bricks, and I am talking especially about the ones in buildings — — they have rough edges. I don't want to judge, you understand, but they're lopsided. They're uneven. I decided if that's what the other bricks are like, then I am not interested in being in a building."

Or maybe the brick would be too busy.

It has nothing against buildings per se. At some point it would even like to be part of one; it just can't find time.

At the end of the day, there would be as many different excuses as there are loose bricks in the world. Each brick would offer some logic about why it is stacked out behind a tool shed and not mortared into a building.

Of course, none of the explanations would work. There is no good reason for a brick to be lying in a sloppy pile, dirt crusted on the side of it, underneath brittle leaves.

Don't get me wrong. The explanations make sense. I can relate. I understand that a brick is still a brick regardless of whether or not it is in a building. We've all seen enough brick-laying going on to know that it is an involved process; there are legitimate reasons why a brick might take some time jumping into the wheel barrow. And, there are a lot of uneven bricks in the world — certainly, it is a challenge to fit next to them day after day.

What brick isn't busy?

But, none of those reasons adequately explain why a brick would be tossed aside next to a tool shed under decaying leaves and hollow excuses.

Bricks are made with a building in mind. A brick, and I looked this up, is "an artificial stone made by forming clay into a rectangular block." After it has been formed, it is hardened, either by burning in a kiln or sun-drying. And, the whole process is done for the purpose of building.

No brick was ever kiln fired with a goal

of seeing it exist unto itself. Brick-makers dream about a school or a store, a high-rise or a home. Bricks are meant to build something grand.

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If you didn't know the point of the word picture, the Bible might insult you by calling you a "brick." Think about it. If someone looked you dead in the eye and said, "Hey, 'rock,'" you might take offense.

But if you are a Christian, then you are a brick: a "living" brick, but a brick nevertheless. Peter wrote:

". . .you also, like living 'bricks,' are being built into a spiritual 'building' . . . (1 Peter 2:9a)."

Peter means no offense. He's explaining that God makes "bricks" with a building in mind. The Creator never envisioned building blocks in isolation from one another. He pictured community.

"Living stones" is a more accurate translation than "living bricks." Bricks are the same. Stones come in all shapes and sizes. The kind of building that God intends has widely varied stones laid together. Picture the stones in cottage chimneys in stories like Hansel and Gretel: oblong stones of all sizes, shapes, and colors, smoothly nestled together.

I pointed out reasons that bricks give for not being in the building. But, what really deserves attention is the positive side of the thing. What should motivate a brick to be in a building? Why give time, energy, and space to be part of community? Why be laid together and over and under and next to one another's lives?

The answer begins and ends with the foundation of the building, what Peter calls a chosen and precious cornerstone: the Lord Jesus Christ. He is such a stunningly perfect foundation for any building, so brilliant that anyone who glimpses Him would long to be mortared into a building with Him.

But, along with Jesus, part of the motivation to be a part of community must be to see the sheer beauty of human lives in all their diversity coming together. If we took the time to look at lives the way that we soak in sunsets, we might find ourselves out behind the tool shed far less often.

People in community are a beautiful sight to behold. Being in the building, in community, doesn't mean that we lose our individual identity. In a way, when a brick is incorporated into the structure, it gets more attention because it is visible. Reflect on that. Long grass and leaves swallow a brick in isolation. Loose bricks are soon lost and forgotten. But a brick mortared into relationship with other bricks is seen, like the red bricks in the church building where I pastor, unlike the bricks behind my tool shed. When a stone is in the building, that's when you might stop and look at that one unique place in the building and how it is a part of the whole, a tile in the mosaic, a pane in a stain glassed window.

Grace for Grandparents

My Mom doesn't do everything exactly the way I do. She feeds my children different foods, offers different drinks. They do different things than we do at home.

Sure, sometimes it seems excessive. I mean, does my 3 year-old really need McDonalds AND cookies AND marshmallows toasted over their backyard campfire, all within 24 hours?

But here's the thing—it's only for a few days. Or sometimes just a few hours. Maybe my kids will come home wired. That's definitely a possibility. Maybe it will take a day or two to get her back into our home routine.

But they will ALSO come home loved, happy, and full of new memories shared with Grandma—memories they will treasure. Their grandmother won't always be with us. And when she leaves on day, those memories will be all my children have.

So please...show grandparents some grace, if not for their sake, for your child's sake. Your child might be thrown off their routine for a short time, but will gain adaptability, treasured memories, and even more love than you alone can provide them. And who doesn't need that?

- Shared by an OGBC Family Member

For more thoughts on this subject check out Episode 061 on the Parenting with Ginger Hubbard Podcast | Setting Boundaries with Grandparents with Dr. Josh Mulvihill

FUNNIES

A little boy was upset with his parents' financial situation, so he decided to write God a letter.

Dear God, My mommy and daddy need \$500 for bills and I don't know who else to ask. Could You please help? - Johnny

The letter was received by the local post office and put in the 'dead' letters pile. The clerk, being curious of the letter addressed to God, opened to see what it said. As you can imagine, he was touched by the letter and decided to help. He asked all his fellow workers to 'chip-in' a few dollars to help a family in need. When all the money was collected, it came to \$300. The clerk sent a money order in an official Post Office envelope with the return address simply, God.

Several weeks later the same clerk found another letter addressed to God in the same writing. The letter said, Dear God, Thank you for the \$300, but next time don't use the Post Office, they have a \$200 service charge. - Johnny

A little boy was in a relative's wedding. As he was coming down the aisle, he would take two steps, stop, and turn to the crowd. While facing the crowd, he would put his hands up like claws and roar. So it went, step, step, ROAR, step, step, ROAR, all the way down the aisle. As you can imagine, the crowd was near tears from laughing so hard by the time he reached the pulpit. The little boy, however, was getting more and more

distressed from all the laughing, and was also near tears by the time he reached the pulpit. When asked what he was doing, the child sniffed and said, "I was being the Ring Bear."

Teacher (on phone): You say Michael has a cold and can't come to school today? To whom am I speaking?

Voice: This is my father.

In a country home that seldom had guests, the young son was eager to help his mother after his father appeared with two dinner guests from the office. When the dinner was nearly over, the boy went to the kitchen and proudly carried in the first piece of apple pie, giving it to his father, who passed it to a guest.

The boy came in with a second piece of pie and gave it to his father, who again gave it to a guest.

This was too much for the boy, who said, "It's no use, Dad. The piece are all the same size."

A 6-year-old was asked where his grand-ma lived. "Oh," he said, "she lives at the airport, and when we want her, we just go get her. Then, when we're done having her visit, we take her back to the airport."

When my grandson asked me how old I was, I teasingly replied, "I'm not sure." "Look in your underwear, Grandpa," he advised "Mine says I'm 4 to 6."