

On the Battle Front...

Part One: How to Kill a Neighbor (Heaping Coals on Your Enemy's Head)

Basketballs, Banana Bread, and a Snow Shovel...

Labor Day weekend brought great excitement as Nana, Pawpaw, Aunt & Uncle, and 5 cousins were here to visit. We had a wonderful time but now it was time to travel home. Early Monday morning everyone was packed and ready to leave. The cousins and Pawpaw went out to shoot a few hoops. Every successful shot brought giggles and laughter, but when Pawpaw made a shot the laughter turned to cheers!

The noise was too much for "Neighbor Lady". As everyone loaded up she came outside shouting in our direction that we had been too loud. She blazed through a litany of complaints against our family for 20 minutes. We had only been in the home for a few months and were totally surprised at all the accusations she made. My husband apologized multiple times and tried to explain that we just wanted to be good neighbors. She was not impressed and was totally unreceptive to his attempts to reconcile.

We were all upset and shocked. As the day passed on resentment towards "Neighbor Lady" crept into our hearts. I asked God for help and His advice was to go "kill" her. Two days later a plan hatched. While at work, I asked my oldest child to make a double batch of banana bread.

Once home, the house smelled wonderfully delicious. As I wrapped the bread the kids asked what was going on. I simply stated, "I'm going to kill Neighbor Lady and you're welcome to join me." "Oh, You're going to kill her with kindness," they said. But they were not sure it would work on her because she is "really mean and told lies about us!" "You're going to give her all 4 loaves?" they asked. "No, the others are for the other neighbors." You see, "Neighbor Lady" said all the other neighbors hated us too so I wanted to bring a peace offering to them as well.

My oldest agreed to deliver with me but was scared of "Neighbor Lady." The others watched eagerly from the drive. As we went to the other neighbors I apologized for our loudness and told them the bread was made by my 15-year-old. "You did not disturb us. What noise?" was one reply. So far so good. Now off to "Neighbor Lady."

I rang the doorbell while my 15-year-old lingered about 10 steps back. Her dogs barked as she opened the door. The look on her face was priceless as I shared the bread and apologized once again. This time she was in shock. I had to hold back a chuckle. She thanked us for the bread and went back inside a bit confused. I wish I could say the banana bread cured the problem and she became a friend, but the battle did not end there. She wasn't nasty with words anymore; however, she would ignore our waves and hellos while glaring at us.

However, just a few weeks ago my husband was removing snow from our drive. As he was finishing up he noticed "Neighbor Lady" was shoveling her drive. He asked if she would like some help. She took him up on the offer and after finishing the drive, she thanked him and then apologized for her behavior on Labor Day. She went on to say that she had had surgery a couple of months back to remove some tumors and was not supposed to be shoveling snow. The tumors caused her to be very irritable and grouchy. My husband accepted her apology and shared the situation with our children. Our oldest now goes over without being asked and removes her snow and has even come back with gifts of Girl Scout cookies from her.

I am so thankful that God has helped us with killing her with kindness. It has been a blessing in our own home as the feeling of resentment has been replaced with kindness and compassion.

Romans 12:17-20 "Repay no one evil for evil...live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

On the Battle Front...

Part Two – Who’s Watching You?

Has anyone come right out and said they were testing you—to see what kind of Christian you really are? As a little girl and throughout the growing years my mother would tell me to behave, “You never know who is watching you,” she would say. Over the years that piece of advice gradually went to the back burner until recently.

One day, while at work, I was trying to complete an assignment. To meet compliance, I had to pull a new report as the original had expired. I explained the situation via email to the person that would approve the report and explained that the original had expired so I had to pull a new report. The reply I received from the disapproving co-worker made me really nervous as her reply stated, “That’s too bad, you can only pull this report once. What are you going to do about it?” I was in a dilemma of what to do. I said a little prayer, asking for help and that I was not out of compliance. I completed a few other tasks as I was trying to figure out what to do about this 2nd report that I pulled and apparently was not supposed to do so.

After about an hour, I received the courage needed to pick up the phone and call this disapproving co-worker. She answered on the first ring. I laid out my case as to why I pulled the 2nd report and she came back with a few snappy remarks. I silently prayed for help and then asked her calmly what I should do. I was under pressure and almost to tears but I did not want her to know that the tears were imminent.

And then she started laughing and said, “I wanted to see if I could make you cuss. Of course report #2 is approved. I know you are a Christian and wanted to see if you would crack under pressure.” I shared with my colleague that I did not plan to cuss and was relieved that the report was accepted. She said, “You know everyone in this line of work cusses and drinks. You will too!” I replied, “No, I want!” “Good luck,” she said. “You won’t be able to withstand the pressures.” “I want be doing it by myself,” I told her, “God is on my side and He will help me.”

After hanging up the phone, the words of my mother came flowing back into my mind, “You better behave, you never know who’s watching you.”

Promise: Psalm 37:30-34a “The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom and his tongue talks of justice. The law of God is in his heart. None of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay him. **The Lord will not leave him in his hand nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the Lord, and keep His way and He shall exalt you to inherit the land.**”

Challenge: When the pressures of this world seem to almost break you, you will not be defeated if you will reach out to Jesus. Call on Him and He will help you throughout the battles of this life. Each battle He can help you be victorious. Trust Him! Believe in Him! Partner with Him! Jesus is here to be your Battle Buddy!

