

DON'T JUST CARRY YOUR BACKPACK—OPEN IT!

June 2010

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Recently we moved a distance of about 40 miles in order to be closer to our business. (This and some traveling is why I've not gotten one of these articles out lately.) I did most of the moving in our air-conditioned SUV, but this one day I had to use our daughter's car where the air-conditioning was broken. As I packed the freezer food into the cooler I was dreading the hot trip home. That's when I saw the frozen apple I'd put in there a month ago (just to see what it would be like). I had no idea when I put the apple into the freezer that we would be moving, or that it'd be the perfect thing for my trip on that particular day. As I drove home sweltering and eating my wonderful frozen apple, I thought how God had planted that apple in my spiritual backpack just for that trip. Yes, I was experiencing "real life" by having to move alone in a hot car, but he had planned a surprise to bring pleasure and ease the discomfort.

Did you know that at salvation God gave you your own personal backpack of physical and spiritual things that will help you on your walk of adventure? As many of you know, I've always been a huge fan of the old King's Quest computer games and find them to be a great analogy of the Christian walk. In the game you are King Graham and something is amiss in your kingdom, for example, the treasures of your kingdom have been stolen and you must hunt each one down and bring it safely back. You travel through all sorts of adventures, both good and bad, on your way to accomplishing your goal and ending the game. Along the way you explore, encounter all sorts of obstacles, and talk to people, all the while gathering information and items in your inventory (backpack) that will help you complete the game.

If Life were a King's Quest computer game then as you begin your quest your instructions would include something like this:

Take this backpack and use it. You will find that it has what you need for your journey, and what it doesn't already have it is possible to find along the way. Keep your eyes open and your ears listening, and question everything, because there is little around you that doesn't have a purpose. Fill your backpack with what you find, for even if you don't know what it's for now you'll need it in the future. For

example, you still have to walk through the Forest of Evils, but you'll find in your backpack the Invisible Cloak that will help you make it safely. You'll still have no money when you get to the Village but by searching you'll find the one who will barter for what you need. You may have no food in the Desert of Hunger but if you're paying attention you will earlier have picked up the Hunger-eating Grapes." Never forget that you have this backpack of things to help you through the adventure, nor that you must keep your eyes open for things to add to it.

The Bible tells us in Matthew 5:45 that regardless of whether we're Christian or not "real life" happens to all of us, and I dare say that no one needs to look up the reference to agree with it.

We all live in a fallen world filled not only with joy, health, and goodness but with sickness, evil, and disease, and we can blame it on no one but mankind. God created a perfect world for us and we made the choice to ruin it. Now on that dreary note, here's some good news! When we accept Jesus' death as personal for us He gives us a little speech that goes kind of like this:

Because of the laws set up regarding the current earth and the dynamics of satan's position, I am not going to remove everything negative from your life and make it perfect, because in order to do that I'd have to just take you to heaven now. But, but, BUT I have a gift for you. I am giving you a backpack to wear throughout your life, lightweight, waterproof, and ergonomic, and it is filled with physical and spiritual resources that can fill your walk through Life with adventure and joy in spite of your circumstances.

God's backpack, through Holy Spirit, is supernatural. It is filled with things you will need or want throughout your life. It is your provision, your encouragement, your resources, and the power to move in the supernatural and the spiritual realm. It enables you to know Jesus as your Bridegroom, Holy Spirit as your tutor, and God as your Father. It has the strength you will need for each situation, and includes courage, joy, and the ability to walk with your eyes on Jesus. As you walk out the Adventure, as long as you're keeping your eyes and ears open listening to Holy Spirit, you'll discover not only what is already in your backpack but many more treasures and resources to pick up along the way.

For example, in one King's Quest game you've entered a cave (thankfully you've got the lantern you picked up earlier) and have made it past the troll that wants to eat

you. Now you've come to the chasm. You can take the long tedious climb down and across where you die a thousand deaths or you can put the board you're carrying down and walk directly across. No problem, (except the part where you spend ages trying everything in your inventory until you figure out to use the board). Earlier, once you got behind the waterfall, if you were in a big hurry to move on you wouldn't have noticed the board lying there, or maybe you hadn't played the game enough to know to pick it up. **It's the process of playing the game that teaches you to look at everything, for it all has a purpose. The same goes for walking through Life with Holy Spirit.**

We often don't realize that we have a backpack, what it's for, or how to take anything out and use it. One summer we rented an RV and drove to California. On this particular day we knew where we wanted to go and that we were in the general vicinity, but that didn't help (we didn't have our GPS at that point). After wandering around hopelessly lost we eventually stopped at a photography studio to ask directions. The man spoke little English, and when Terry asked where Universal Studios was he responded with, "Is Studios the last name?" and began flipping through his pictures. Finally catching on he led Terry outside, and pointed up. There, towering directly over us was a billboard pointing the way.

Like in the game, God starts us off as new Christians with things being more obvious, but as we mature and grow in the spirit He doesn't make it so easy, because He wants us to grow, exercising our spiritual muscles as we seek Him out. If we live on milk all our lives we'll never get to experience the pleasure of a good steak. And God has steak for us! (If you don't do steak think of something else wonderful to insert here.) God loves to challenge us to deeper things in Him. He tells us in Proverbs 25:2, *It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.*

The first thing to do is to realize that you **HAVE** a backpack, and while the backpack itself is spiritual (through Holy Spirit), it also includes physical things. **As we walk through our lives we should be constantly on the lookout for the things God either already has in our backpack or that He has put in our path to be added to it for future use.** God doesn't **WANT** us to be persecuted, suffer, and experience evil, it's just a result of this fallen world. Therefore He uses Life for our good (when we'll let Him) and provides things (physical, spiritual, and supernatural) that will help us as we go. Some general provision items are in everyone's backpack (grace, peace, joy, protection) while other things are

specifically there to help you in your own personal walk (frozen apples). Some items are for help, some for protection, and others just as gifts for your pleasure and to enable you to grow closer to God.

Recently, a few hours from home as we finished a business trip, our rental car surprised Terry with a new message, telling him that a tire was low. After filling it we went on our way, only to see the message again, warning us that it was getting dangerously low. Soon after we had to stop and switch out the car in order to finish the trip. Without a car equipped with the technology to inform us about the tire we would have had a flat tire right as we headed over Jellico Mountain in pouring rain with tornado warnings. As it was, because of a warning notice in our backpack, we safely crossed the mountain and reached home.

One item in our backpack is protection and peace instead of fear. Having finally gotten settled into our new home we've encountered a problem with our neighbors. Our driveway adjoins the neighbor's drive, with our side being in front of our garage and theirs in front of their garage. They have several cars and continual company and believe that they can either park in our drive or across the bottom of our drive, blocking us in. We've tried to be nice as we ask them to move their car so we can get in or out, but the response has been ugly, with unrepeatable words, orders to get off their porch, and threats. The plan, decided by both the landlord and the police is that we call the tow truck or the police.

Driving home from the landlord's I felt myself succumbing to fear of their retaliation, from things as simple as keying our car to our safety. But suddenly Holy Spirit reminded me that "greater is He that is in me than he that is next door." And I realized that instead of being fearful, our place is to speak protection over our home and property and come against the evil, and I can walk in that peace and security. Our backpack provision comes with protection and authority in the name of Jesus. I don't know how God is going to work this issue out (I'm voting for them to move) but I do know that we can live here peacefully and joyfully as we resolve this issue.

First of all, **REALIZE** that you have a backpack full of amazing and wonderful things that God has provided to enable you to victoriously and joyfully walk out your adventure with Him. Secondly, **USE IT!** Open it up and see what's inside. **As you encounter problems ask Holy Spirit what He has for you to use to get past that situation.** EXPECT God to give you inventory for your backpack. Keep your

eyes open, WATCHING and LISTENING for Holy Spirit to speak and show and guide you. You'll find that He's provided all you need and more. ENJOY!