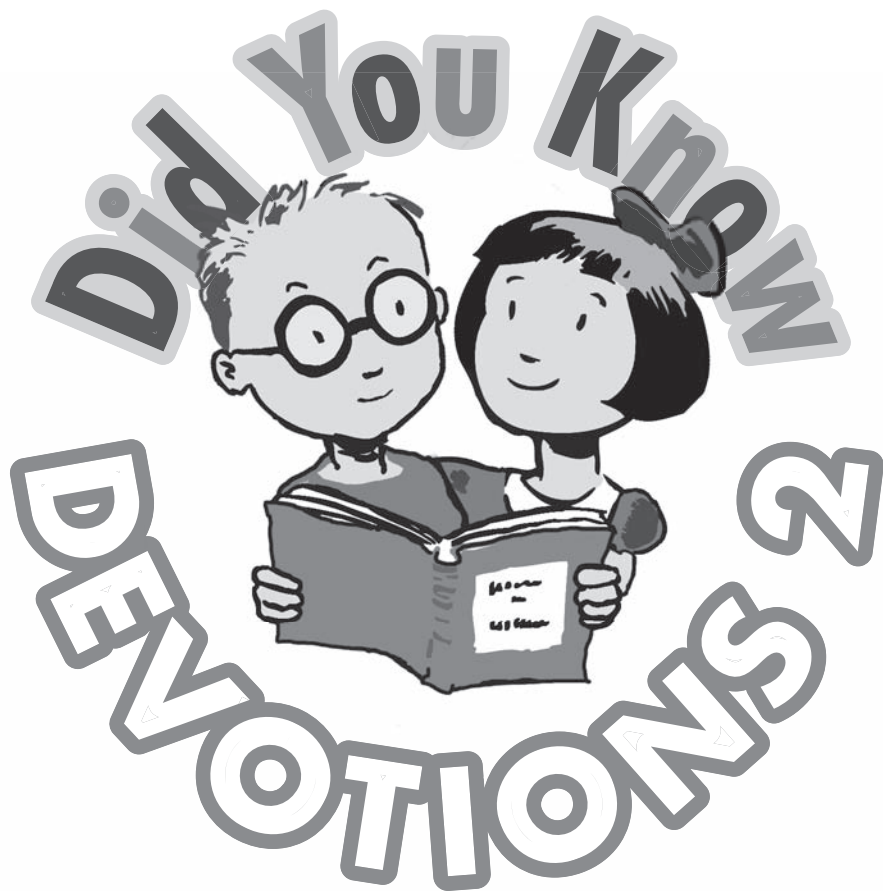


THE ONE YEAR®



Nancy S. Hill



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For Zack, my encourager.

For Wendy and Andrew, who are inspiring.

And for little "Alexander the Great" Gentry, whose life touched us all.

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January

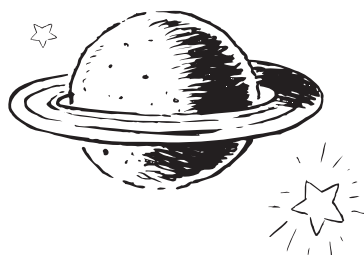
Where did the first calendar come from?

This is the day the LORD has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it.

PSALM 118:24

Thousands of years ago, nothing about the days or months was written down. Farmers paid special attention to the seasons of the year and the nights and days because they needed to know when to plant their crops and harvest them. But everyone was interested in how many days were going by and what time of year it was. An excellent way of keeping track was to look at the night skies, watching when the moon grew full and seeing how the planets changed position among the stars. Eventually people began to see a pattern. It was the Egyptians who first made a calendar that people could use, more than seven thousand years ago. It had twelve months that each had thirty days. Through the years, five special feast days or holidays were added, and then the calendar included 365 days. Today our months are a little different from the Egyptian calendar, but we still use their idea of a 365-day year.

No matter how we count the days or try to figure out what will happen in each one of them, the Bible reminds us what really counts: "This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). God wants us to appreciate and enjoy each day, and be thankful to him for the gift of life he gives us every day we are here on earth. That is the best way to keep track of what will happen to our hearts and spirits through the months and years, no matter what other things may happen.




January

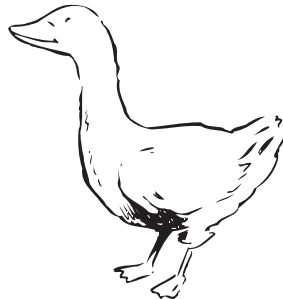
When were ducks in the Olympics?

Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

EPHESIANS 4:32

It was the rowing competition in the 1928 summer Olympic Games. An Australian athlete, Henry “Bobby” Pearce, was ahead of everyone else in the single scull, an event in which each athlete rows his own small boat. Suddenly a line of ducks paddled across the water right in front of where Bobby was heading. Without seeming the least bit worried about the race, Bobby lifted his oars out of the water, which slowed his tiny boat and allowed all the ducks to swim away. Then Bobby began rowing again, and he still reached the finish line in time to win the gold medal.

Sometimes it’s hard to be kind or forgiving when someone is in our way or is ruining our big plans, or when we’re doing something much too important to be stopped. But those are the times we most need to follow the Bible when it says, “Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).





January

How did a three-year-old inspire the invention of a camera?

I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.

MARK 10:15

Little Jennifer Land simply asked her father a question after he took pictures of her in 1943 while on vacation. Her question was, "Why can't I see the pictures now?" It just so happened that her father was a distinguished inventor in the camera business, and Jennifer's question made Edwin Herbert Land begin to wonder, *Why not?* Five years later, Edwin began to sell his new invention: the Polaroid Land Camera. This camera was the first to develop a picture that came rolling out of the camera only six minutes later. Jennifer now had a way to see a picture of herself on vacation very soon after it had been snapped!

Sometimes little children don't realize that some things just aren't possible. For example, Jennifer was expecting to see something that hadn't even been invented yet. She trusted and believed that everything is possible. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it" (Mark 10:15). Sometimes as we grow up, we forget how to believe in amazing things like little children do. Jesus is just asking us to trust that what seems too good to be true really is true!



Why would you need a big boat to help build a road?

Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

HEBREWS 12:13

Long ago, there was one place in the world where people knew they could find that brownish-black sticky tar, called asphalt, to make a road smooth. On an island called Trinidad, across the ocean in the West Indies, there is a lake. This lake does not hold water—it holds asphalt, because there is so much of the gooey stuff in the ground around it. The only way to get asphalt to America in the late 1800s was to scoop the asphalt out of the lake, drop it into a large boat, and sail it to the United States. Because the asphalt got very hard inside the boat on the way over, it had to be chipped out of the boat little by little when it arrived. Then it was mixed with a solution to make it soft and spreadable so it could cover the tops of dirt roads. What a lot of work and trouble just to have a smoother road!

It was worth the extra work, because nobody likes to travel over holes or bumps where they might get hurt. God wants us to work even harder on the steps we take when following him so we will not get hurt. The Bible tells us to “mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong” (Hebrews 12:13). Try to show others that you are walking smoothly where God wants you to instead of tripping on “bumps” in the road, like lying or cheating or talking back to your parents. Then others can follow carefully and safely behind you and walk where God wants them to go.

5
January

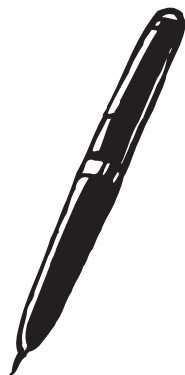
Why won't your ballpoint pen write, even when it has plenty of ink?

I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in!

MALACHI 3:10

Is it because of some mysterious law of gravity or because the temperature is too hot or cold? Not at all. It's all about age and air. The trick to pens is the thickness of the ink. If the ink is too thin, the pen leaks. But if the ink is too thick, it can't ooze out of the pen and onto the paper. The older the pen is, the more chance that air has been in contact with the liquid ink. The longer the ink is exposed to air, the thicker the ink gets. Have a pen that skips? That means it's getting old. When the pen is ancient and might as well be thrown away, you will know it. No ink will move at all, because it has thickened too much to flow. That's when your pen still looks full, but your paper stays totally blank.

When you want to write, a pen that leaves an empty page is useless to you. It is not what you need. If you allow the Lord to work in your life, you will never end up needing something you do not have. God knows what is best for you and will give you plenty of it. He has said, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in!" (Malachi 3:10). Like a pen that always flows with ink, God's love will always keep your soul full of what you need, when you need it.





What's in your kitchen that used to be locked in a safe?

Keep on seeking, and you will find.

LUKE 11:9

It's the clear plastic wrap that is used to cover food! It was actually invented by mistake. In 1908 a chemist named Jacques Brandenberger was trying to make a tablecloth that could be wiped clean and not show ugly stains. His idea was to cover an ordinary tablecloth with a clear sheet. It turned out that his invention—cellophane—didn't work for the tablecloths, but it was useful for wrapping food. At first, cellophane was so expensive that only the fanciest stores could wrap their products in it. At night, the cellophane was locked up in the store's safe so that no one would steal it. Later, cellophane was made waterproof, and people discovered that ordinary food could be covered in it and kept fresh. Then everyone began using cellophane to wrap just about every kind of food they could think of.

Because cellophane is clear, people like how they can see what is inside. If you want to know more about God, just imagine that the answers are wrapped in cellophane and you can see them easily. It's a promise from the Bible—"keep on seeking, and you will find" (Luke 11:9). God does not want to hide himself from you. He loves to show you more and more about himself every time you look for him.



7
January

Take a toothpick, some cotton, and a baby's ear, and what do you get?

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me,
and I will be whiter than snow.

PSALM 51:7

A Q-tip, of course. Leonard Gerstenzang noticed that his wife put cotton on the ends of a toothpick to clean their baby's ears. He thought that this homemade tool might be helpful to all parents. In 1923, he began manufacturing his new invention. These swabs were made by a machine and were advertised as being "untouched by human hands." Three years later, the name officially became "Q-tips." The Q was for quality, and *tips* referred to the tiny pieces of cotton that were attached to the ends of the stick to make them soft. Later the wooden sticks were replaced with rolled-up paper ones, and that's how one mom's idea became a product that every mother could use.

Did you know that God washes you every day, just like mothers wash their babies? The bad things you do make you look dirty in God's eyes. But because Jesus died on the cross and rose again, he forgives you today for the bad things you may have done yesterday—and that makes you clean. The Bible tells us to ask the Lord to "purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). You are clean again every day, and God doesn't need a Q-tip to make it happen. The forgiveness of Jesus is the most powerful cleaner in the world.



How do iguanas skydive?

You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it.

JOHN 14:13

Pretend you are out walking one day on the cliffs in southern Mexico. You spot a shy iguana sunning itself on the edge of a towering cliff by the ocean. The iguana is as startled to see you as you are to see it, and without a moment's hesitation, it hurls itself right off the edge of the cliff into nothing but air. Oh no! But there is no need for you to worry. The iguana has one of the most sturdy bodies of any living creature. For an iguana, falling off a cliff is about the same thing as falling out of bed would be to you. Iguanas have been known to land straight down from a sixty-foot drop, right onto jagged rocks at the bottom of a cliff. There is no crashing or smashing. The iguana doesn't even seem to notice the impact when it hits the ground. It lands and immediately starts running away—probably to another high and sunny spot—to try again.

When you can see examples of little miracles all around you, like the iguana just getting up as if it had never fallen, it serves as a reminder that God is so powerful and can make anything happen. The Bible tells us that Jesus said, "You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:13). Examples of amazing things we have seen with our own eyes make us believe all the more that Jesus is Lord over all the earth—and Lord of our lives too.



January

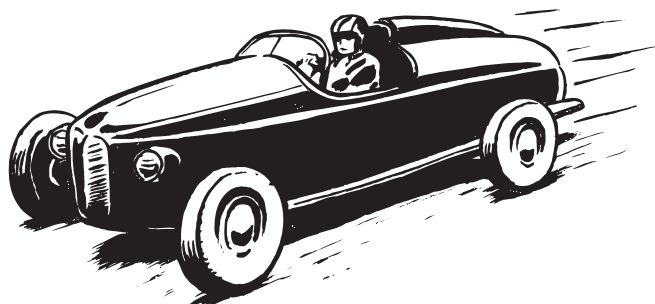
When did a mirror take the place of a person?

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person.
The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

In 1911, Ray Harroun's race car was registered to compete in the first Indianapolis 500 race. His car started out pretty much like the others, minus one very important addition. All the other drivers had a mechanic who rode with them and kept looking backward to keep track of the other cars. But Ray didn't have a mechanic to be his lookout. Instead, he attached a mirror over the dashboard of his car so he could look backward himself. Ray was the only driver to race alone, and his was the only car to win the race! Later, thanks to a man named Elmer Berger, rearview mirrors became available in all cars.

When driving a car, it's necessary to be aware of what is behind you. But an amazing thing happens when you are a child of God. God promises that your past has been erased, so you don't always need to look behind you and be worried about what you did yesterday and the days before that. The Bible says, "Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The only reason for a "rearview mirror" for your soul is to look back and rejoice that you have been forgiven!





When did a president play a joke on his guests?

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.

EPHESIANS 5:1-2

Soon after he was elected, President Calvin Coolidge was having dinner in the White House with some old friends. Since his guests had never been to the White House and weren't sure what was polite or correct to do at mealtime, they decided to copy President Coolidge's every move. That plan worked well for them until the after-dinner cup of coffee. When they saw the president pour some of his coffee into the saucer under his cup and add milk and sugar, his guests did the same, guessing that at the White House, you drank from the saucer. President Coolidge had fun with what he did next—he put his saucer on the floor for his cat to drink from, knowing that all his guests couldn't do the same thing!

The president's guests thought that he was so important that they needed to follow him exactly. That's the way God's children should feel about Christ. He is the most important person to follow, and when you copy him very carefully, only good can come from it. The Bible says it this way: "Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ" (Ephesians 5:1-2). God wants you to follow him, but not so he can play a trick on you. When you follow him, you will get a reward that lasts forever. It's no joke!

Notes

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Acknowledgments

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