

### **Be a Berean!**

*The Bereans...received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day.* (Acts 17:11)  
["Be a Berean" will regularly cover topics that arise during Lockport Alliance Bible classes. Contact Franklyn Pfeil—[liftedup@lockportalliance.org](mailto:liftedup@lockportalliance.org)—with questions or comments.]

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### **"Silver and Gold"**

I meet with a small group a couple times a month. "Meet" probably isn't the right word for what we do. It's probably closer to "hang," as the kids use the term. That's more like it: I hang with a small group a couple times a month. I like hanging with them. I like hanging with them a lot.

I think of the group as "the Black Ducks," my extrapolation of "black sheep" and "odd ducks." My Dad told me I was the black sheep of the family when I was barely old enough to understand the phrase. "Every family's got one, and you're ours." Thing was, when he said it, he meant it as praise. As do I; in fact, I love those Black Ducks. Thank God, every church has some.

There's Shellster, always. We've never been apart. There's Elusive Jimmy, who will disappear if you let him, but Mary and I keep an eye on him, so he can't. Jimmy's just like Jesus, but doesn't know it. Mary has ESP--extra spiritual perception. She sees around corners. I borrow her eyes. Laura is glad. About what? About everything! Tom is a realist; no whitewash or sugarcoating interferes with his outlook. I run the Tom-Test to see if an idea will fly. Vicky's Spirit emanates. The polar opposite of catching a cold; when you're around her, you'll catch fire! Dan could and should be President. Julie knows. She just knows.

Sometimes at the Coffee Connection, sometimes in the library, this gaggle congregates. Shelley prepares a lesson, which we sometimes get to. I'm under strict orders not to say anything until everyone else has been heard, but that's never happened. Every week, some one of us prints up the lyrics to an old hymn or a contemporary Jesus song. We dwell on those lyrics, lingering here and perhaps there for a while. Then I'll drag in something from Second Corinthians or Zephaniah; Shelley, shining, kicks my foot under the table because I'm supposed to wait; Laura grows glad, then gladder; Vicky transcends; Tom tests the supposition; Mary's already up ahead, around the corner; Dan's in the building (you know when Dan's in the building); and Julie knows. She just knows. By the way, has anybody seen Jimmy?

When we got together in late November, Shelley asked us to tell about the most memorable or meaningful gift we'd ever received. That question took wing that night. I was utterly taken by each person's reply.

Shelley asked all the way around the table until the question came to me. I didn't know what to say. So Shelley told about her gift, a ring I'd given her in another time, another place. I'd never been aware of what it meant to her.

As she was telling about those days and that ring, I watched it, moving with her hand, syncopated with the telling of her story. There were other rings as well, on other fingers. Silver and gold, they enhanced one another.

"Silver and gold, silver and gold..." In the back of my head, dredged up from who knows where, an old Burl Ives song started playing. "Silver and gold, silver and gold..."

Then her hands, gently gesturing, returned to rest upon the Bible before her. That's when Burl Ives' voice morphed into the voice of King Solomon!--

*A word fitly spoken and in due season is like apples of gold in settings of silver.* (Proverbs 25:11/AMP)

"Have you thought of a special gift?" Shelley asked, as she ended her story and turned again to me.

"Yes. Many of them. They were *words in due season*. I can still hear the voices of people in my life who spoke just what I needed to hear, just when I needed to hear it. Those are my most meaningful gifts."

Veteran's Day was a banner day at Lockport Alliance Church. When all the veterans went forward to shake our pastors' hands, it was a throat-cramping, eye-watering scene. But for one boy I know, it wasn't the best of days. Frankie had dutifully practiced his trumpet, preparing for his "Taps" solo, and for his part in the other patriotic songs. But when his time came during the 8:30 service, he faltered. Crestfallen, he wanted no part of the 11:00 service.

So someone stood in his stead. Not many knew that Greg Verratti, who gamely stood before a packed house and made his way through "Taps" and the other stirring songs, hadn't touched a trumpet since God knows when. That's my idea of a real trouper.

After the service, when we arrived home, there was a message on the machine. It was for Frankie, from Mr. Costello. From all those Sundays in Mr. Costello's class, and all those summer days at REACH work camps, Frankie loves Mr. Costello, and heeds what he says. If he says it's wrong, then it's wrong. This time, he called to say that it would work itself out for the good. And so it would, from that moment on--because he said so.

A couple days later, a letter arrived. Addressed to Frankie, it was a card from Dave and Arlene Sluyter, with a note relating a harrowing incident from Dave's youth--when he was just Frankie's age--involving a talent show and a trombone and an ignominious exit! It was a delightful retelling, deftly written--*a word in due season*.

The exact date, even the year, when I first encountered the Word of God has been hidden from me--probably, by God's mercy, in order to spare every Bible class I ever teach the retelling of every single detail! I told the Cross Ties class that the closest I can guess is sometime around the year Frankie was born, in 1994.

I'd messed up one family already. I was working sporadically, and living in moral equivocation, at best. I don't recall how or why the notion occurred to me, but there I was scavenging amongst my couple of thousand books--my god at the time--for a KJV Bible that I knew was there. I happened across it in seconds; I think it found me. The words shone from their pages *like apples of gold in settings of silver*. That's the best gift I've ever received.

It may be that a life connected to yours is in due season, awaiting a word, perhaps from you. Pick up the phone. Pick up your pen.

It may be that your life of late has been disconnected from Jesus Christ. If so, search the house. Is there a gift that's been left unopened?

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It is our fervent hope that you will 'be a Berean' by attending one of these Bible-based classes this week! —

"Cross Ties"--Sunday at 9:45

"Lies Women Believe"--Sunday at 9:45

"A Detailed Study of Luke"--Sunday at 9:45