



James Aggrey was a young African boy growing up in a Methodist Mission on the Cape coast. He lived in the missionary's house, helping with the chores, fetching water and cleaning the missionary's boots. It soon became clear however, that he was an extraordinarily gifted young man and before he was 20, he was in a responsible teaching post. Recognising his gift, the authorities enabled him to go to America for further education and there, before long, he became a professor. Soon, as his fame spread, he preached and lectured across the world. Years later he returned to his naive Africa and paid a visit to his old missionary mentor. He arrived late at night and there was little chance of talking, but the old missionary waited rather apprehensively for morning, wondering how learning and fame had affected his former pupil. Next morning he looked out of his bedroom window and there in the yard he saw Aggrey engaged as he had been so many years before - in cleaning the missionary's boots.

This little prayer by Michael Quoist should make us pause and think.
I have just hung up; why did he telephone?
I don't know — Oh! I get it -
I talked a lot and listened very little.
Forgive me Lord, it was a monologue and not a dialogue
I explained my idea and did not get his.
Since I didn't listen, I learned nothing,
Since I didn't listen, I didn't help,
Since I didn't listen, we didn't communicate,
Forgive me Lord, for we were connected and now we are cut off.

HAVE YOU YOUR LITTLE OIL CAN WITH YOU?
There is a story of an old man who carried a little can of oil with him everywhere he went and if he passed through a door that squeaked, he poured a little oil on the hinges. If the gate was hard to open, he oiled the latch, and thus he passed through life, lubricating the hard places and making it easier for those who came after him. People called him eccentric, queer, cranky, but the old man went steadily on, refilling his oil can and oiling the hard places he found.
There are many lives that creak and grate harshly as they live day by day. Nothing goes right with them. They need lubricating with the oil of gladness, gentleness or thoughtfulness. Have you your own oil can with you? Be ready with your oil of helpfulness at any time of the day. It may lubricate the whole day for the next person you meet. The oil of good cheer to the down hearted, the word of courage to the despairing lets speak it.

Prayer of Commitment
Lord Jesus
I give you my hands to do your work,
I give you my feet to go your way,
I give you my eyes to see as you do,
I give you my tongue to speak your words,
I give you my mind that you may think in me,
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me,
I give you my heart that you may love in me,
So that it is you Lord Jesus who is glorified in all things.
Amen

Sir Bernard Ferguson told how in the Ayrshire village where he was brought up, there lived a man called Mungo McInnes. He was a big man with a big moustache and white beard. He was also a great exaggerator. Mungo told the village children the most fantastic stories, about how as a young man he had found hidden treasure on an island on which he had been shipwrecked, and how he had killed a grizzly bear with his own hands! In the eyes of the young people of Ballantrae, there was no one quite like Mungo McInnes. Bernard Ferguson's mother, who taught in the local Sunday school, once asked her class, 'Who made the world?' To her surprise a 6 year old boy responded, 'Was it Mungo McInnes?' Meeting Mungo in the street later that week, she told him what had happened, how one little boy was certain that he had made the world. Stroking his ear, Mungo said, 'Well I suppose I did have a hand in it.' Mungo's answer is not as absurd as it might at first seem to be. We all have a hand in making the world the kind of world it is. Whereas people like Hitler, Osama ben Laden and Saddam Hussein made the world an unhappy and more violent place, others like William Smith, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela greatly enriched the life of the world. How is it with us? Are we using our God-given talents wisely or foolishly, generously or selfishly? Are we using our days to please and promote ourselves, or to promote worthy causes and brighten the lives of others? Are we using our hands to help or hurt? Are we using our voices to build bridges of understanding, or to promote strife?

Two old friends had quarrelled and in their hearts they very much regretted it. But who was to make the first move? One made up her mind to visit the other and take her a quarter pound of tea for they often had a cup of tea together. On the way she met her friend and explained her errand. The other burst out laughing, 'That's funny. I'm on my way to visit you for a cuppa' and she produced a packet of tea for the other to see.

It is hard sometimes to keep up resentment and we may wish to get back on the old friendly footing. The trouble is that we may not find it easy to take the first step in reconciliation. But how glad we are once we have done it!

Tom loved growing vegetables so much that he filled his front garden with cabbages amongst the flowers. One day, his neighbour leaned over the gate and said, 'You've got so many caterpillars on your cabbages, Tom, that I can almost hear them munching. You'll have to put salt on them.' 'Nay, lad', replied Tom. 'If they don't like them as they are, they can do without.'

Have you heard these 'Thoughts For today'
'Try to see people's lamps, not their shades'
'Turn yourself into a window and bring light into someone's life'
'A smile is a curve which helps set things straight

While taking a seminar on efficiency, a businessman presented a case study on his wife's routine for cooking breakfast: 'After a few days of observation, I determined what was slowing her down and suggested ways to speed up the process.' 'Did it work?' a member of the audience asked. 'It certainly did. Instead of it taking her 20 minutes to cook my breakfast, it takes me only seven

Twice a year, we change the clocks for summer and winter hours. Twice a year a normally punctual assistant arrived late to work the Monday after. 'Do you have a problem remembering to go forward or back?' the boss asked. 'Oh no', she replied pouring herself a cup of coffee. 'What gets me is staying up until 1am to change my clock.' Don't forget to put yours forward on Saturday 26th! See you all in church on 27th at the right time. You can't be late it's Mothers' Day.

Committees are made up of the Yes-buffers, the Not-knowers and the Why-notters. It is the Why-notters who move the world, who get things done, who achieve. Why not join the Why-notters group and help to get things done.

German theologian Jurgen Moltmann expresses in a single sentence the great span from Good Friday to Easter Day: 'God weeps with us so that we may someday laugh with him.'

The local coffee shop knows how to make sure that children are well behaved. A sign advises parents: 'All unattended children will be given two shots of espresso and a free puppy.'

There's a Lancashire saying which goes 'From clogs to clogs in three generations.' This happened to a Liverpool merchant who failed in business through no fault of his own. His clergyman called to sympathize and found him down in the dumps. 'Everything has gone', he moaned. 'I've lost everything'. 'Oh dear', came the reply, 'So you've lost your reputation?' 'Indeed, I haven't, thank God!' came the quick reply. 'My name and my reputation are fine!' 'Has your wife left you?' 'Indeed not. My wife is an angel - loyal, true and kind.' 'I see', said the clergyman. 'Now, your children - have they turned from you?' 'No indeed', the merchant replied. 'I never seemed to know my children until this happened. In fact, they've been so brave and sympathetic - I can't tell you how much they mean to me.' 'Well', said his confidant, 'You told me that you had lost everything, but in fact you have lost nothing except a bag full of gold that doesn't really matter. Love, loyalty, comradeship - all the important things are still yours.

Count your blessing, count them one by one
Count your blessing, see what God has done.
Count your blessing, name them one by one
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

John, aged 9 was reading an autobiographical story to his teacher about living in a corner shop in the 1940s. The author's main memories were of legs, 'khaki legs, sailors legs, busmen's legs and old ladies legs with voluminous skirts'. Before Miss could ask what this told him about the author, John looked at Miss and asked, 'Why were they selling legs Miss?'

John bought a bunch of five daffodils for Mother's Day. Bright and early on Sunday morning, he marched up to his mother and, with a proud smile, handed her - a single daffodil. Later that day, he presented a daffodil to each of his grannies and another to an aunt, also a mother. Surely the boy still had one daffodil left? You're right. His pet rabbit had just become a mother too, and he solemnly gave her the last daffodil! Each of the ladies received her daffodil with tears of pride and joy, apart of course, from Mrs Rabbit. She ate hers and enjoyed it thoroughly.