

# NAME, NEVER, TODAY

“Be still,  
and know that  
I am God”  
Psalm 46:10

## What's in a name?

I had just landed a job as assistant manager for a large apartment community. Chloe and I were moving into a beautiful apartment with a fireplace – lovely.

The stairs to the second floor were not so lovely for moving in. My Dad and I and not so much Chloe trudged up and down and up and, you get the picture.



Then came the sofa. My dad is stronger than three men, but three men would have had a hard time getting up those stairs and around the balcony corner with that sofa. Dad and I both kind of folded our arms because truth time had come. *We couldn't do it.*

Our neighbor with an adjoining balcony came home smiling his always smile. About 20, handsome, boundless energy and friendly.

“I'll help you move that! Just a sec, my dad's home and he can be the third man.”

The providence of perfect timing didn't occur to me until just now.

The good-looking one returned with his dad, Grumpy, in tow, and up and in went the sofa. So fa, so good!

And so I met my neighbor, Matthew. Grumpy had already disappeared behind a slammed door. I made a huge note on my to do list: *bake Matthew some cookies!* It was number one on my list.

Then we rushed inside to wrap up the day and be ready for the morning and the new school and the new job. That's a lot for one single mom and my to do list was already growing and somehow number one 'bake cookies' was moving down.... Rush, rush, rush, rush, rush, pretty normal.



Nearly every morning and every evening, as I rushed and rushed, I said 'hello' to Matthew standing on the front balcony to smoke. He always had that great smile, never a down moment with him. *And I always thought of those unbaked cookies!* Guilt and cookies don't go together.

And neither go with great intentions, I hadn't even bought the chocolate chips.

But my prevailing thought was always to take the time to make a friend of Matthew, return his kindness, and share a moment with him. Just not at *this* moment. Soon. Really, really soon.

One noontime Matthew and I passed each other in the parking lot, Matthew driving home, waving wildly and smiling. Me driving the half block back to the office. I waved and smiled – what was he so excited about? Just a fun, fun guy. I had never seen him driving before.



Soon it was time to rush and pick up Chloe from school. As quickly as I could, I was back in my office in the elegant, renovated old house and situated my daughter at her home school desk adjacent my office.

The office closed at six o'clock or as soon as possible after and we drove the half block back to our apartment. Then picked out the clothes for tomorrow as dinner cooked. By a quarter after seven we sat down for dinner, both needing bed more than food.

As we began to eat, a horrible, horrible pounding from next door. Someone was pounding so hard that our walls shook.

"Chloe, stay here! No matter what you hear or what happens, *sit* here! Mama will come back."

Was it a robbery? Domestic violence?

I rushed out the front door onto the balcony and there was Matthew's dad leaning on the wooden railing in the night.

"Have you come for Matthew?" Grumpy asked flatly. It was too dark to see his expression, but for some reason he didn't know that it was me, his neighbor.

"Yes."

"He's right in here," Grumpy said as he led me into their apartment. Then he motioned behind him as he continued to the living room.

*There on the bedroom floor was Matthew.* There was a spoon with cotton in it, some matches, and a needle in Matthew's arm. It was too late to check for a pulse and I really didn't want to touch the body. His face was hidden behind the bedroom door where Matthew had fallen. Were his eyes open or closed?

Pretty soon a policeman arrived through the open front door. I pointed the way "He's in the bedroom."

That horrible, horrible pounding noise was the sound of the dad, Gary, "Grumpy", finding his dead son and beating on the walls, screaming.

The policeman stayed awhile but the scene was pretty obvious and needed a coroner rather than a cop. The policeman told us that he'd called the coroner, "It might take awhile". He wrote the number for grief counseling on a piece of paper. All I knew to do was sit at Gary's feet in the living room holding his hand.

"Well, that's all I can do for you, but you have the number for grief counseling there," and the policeman left.

I just sat there with Gary. Sometimes I kissed his hand, sometimes I patted it. I just didn't know what to do.

"Gary, I'm going next door to put Chloe to bed and I'll be right back." Which I did, then I was.

Returning, I knelt again by the lazy boy and held Gary's hand. Now, Gary talked.

And for three hours, until the coroner and his helper arrived, Gary talked about how much he loved his son. Matthew had had problems with drugs and that's why he'd moved in with his Dad, to do better. He was attending Mt. Hood Community College, getting his GED.



"He was doing real good! He went to his classes, he was home early. I thought he'd make it. I gave him \$15 today for a math book, I should never have given him the money. He bought heroin with it." Dad moaned and cried some more as the coroner arrived and went in to meet Matthew.

After a brief moment the coroner returned to the living room as his helper went back out and down the stairs again.

"He died of a heroin overdose. He was dead before he hit the floor. We'll take him to the Multnomah County coroner's office and you can call them with your instructions." The coroner was a very nice, compassionate man but dead is dead and there's nothing else to it.

The coroner handed us his card, then he and his helper, who'd returned with a black package, put Matthew's body in the bag and zipped him up. Then they carried his stiffening body out and

around the corner and down the stairs with great difficulty. In fact, it was more difficult than Matthew getting my sofa up and in.

Now it was eleven. I brought over some dinner for Gary. I had the gall to pray over the dinner and Gary had the honesty to cuss God out; he hated the notion of God. I waited a bit before leaving for the night.

Three o'clock in the morning and I'm wildly awake.

"Oh, Father! God!! *If only I'd baked him those cookies and spent time with him.* I just waved and thought 'tomorrow'. And there is no tomorrow! O, God! I'm so, so sorry. O, my God. It's too late now." I kept seeing Matthew's dead body and dead is dead, there's nothing else to it.

"WHAT KIND OF NAME IS 'MATTHEW'?"

"It's a Bible name."

"RIGHT."

"DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY GENERATIONS HAVE PRAYED FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN IN THIS FAMILY?"

"Is he with You, Lord?"

"YOU DON'T KNOW. *I KNOW.*"

"YOU DON'T KNOW THE TIMES, THE PLACES, THE PRAYERS,

OR MY PLAN.

*I DO.*

AND NOW YOU KNOW, NEVER AGAIN SAY 'TOMORROW'.

"Wherever you go," Matthew 16:15

## NEVER AGAIN SAY TOMORROW

Two months as resident assistant manager I had met all but one of the occupants of 147 apartments. Every day was a whirlwind of driving Chloe to school, opening the office, renting

apartments, moving people out, moving people in, tending to maintenance staff issues, keeping the pool records, never enough time in the day.

Then back at three o'clock to pick my daughter up from school and complete three more frenzied hours. Every day was unpredictable and hugely beyond me. But the long-time resident managers, a husband and wife team, were hopefully on site somewhere.



“Hello, thank you for calling Waverly Gardens! What can I do for you?”

“Please, please! You’ve got to help me. The police won’t help and we’ve called everyone who should help but no one is willing to do a welfare check on my friend.” A woman’s voice, frantic.

“What’s going on?” I asked. And here’s a summary:

Mr. Enfield was their accountant and he’d never missed a day of work. Today was payroll and he hadn’t shown up for work yesterday or today. He didn’t answer the phone. He hadn’t answered his door when the company came out to check on him. She absolutely knew he was in his apartment, his car was there, and he needed help!

The cardinal rule of apartment management is to never, but *never* enter someone’s door without their consent or a signed legal 24-hour notice of entry. The police had referred the caller to me because they didn’t have a key and he hadn’t yet been missing for four days.

No way, lady. Of course, I didn’t say it out loud to her!

“Please, I know he’s in there and he needs help. You gotta help him.”

Oh, gee. Visions of slip and fall, heart attack, lots of possibilities which left Mr. Enfield on the floor, incapacitated but maybe still alive. I couldn’t just walk away from that possibility, one person is all it takes to save a life. But I wanted two,

So I called Darrell, my maintenance supervisor, and told him to come to the office quickly, I needed him to be my witness as I entered the apartment.

Darrell came immediately and I hopped into his maintenance cart. Darrell was on fire that I was entering an apartment without permission, this called for immediate termination.



OK, hmmm, let's see: me keeping my wonderful, wonderful job or saving someone's life? It wasn't even a decision. I didn't know what I'd find but I couldn't take a chance on doing nothing.

Darrell banged on the door, "Maintenance! Maint-nance!" There wasn't a sound inside. I opened the door.

Completely dark inside, all the windows covered over with black plastic letting in no light. Cold, creepy. Darrell went straight ahead through the living room, dining area, kitchen. I made a left and explored the single bedroom. I was terrified. I looked around slowly in the dark. I was so scared I didn't even think of turning the lights on. I got down on the floor and looked under the bed steeling myself for what I was sure to see. Nothing.

Absolutely terrified, I got up off the floor and moved to the closet, slowly opening the closet doors. Nothing.

I just couldn't catch my breath.

Darrell was already done looking and very quickly, very stiffly, we exited the apartment.

I called the woman and told her there was no sign of Mr. Enfield and nothing looked unusual. I didn't point out the cold and creepy or the blackout plastic. My heart raced for a long time.

I felt so stupid. I dreaded Wednesday morning when I'd have to report my transgression.

*"You what???? Of all the residents here, Enfield is absolutely the most private person, aggressive about it. He never lets anyone go into his place. And you actually went in there? Oh, boy."*

Then it was *my* weekend, two days off to wait and see if it was going to be years off, instead.

Upon return, my boss, the resident manager smirked at me. "There's nothing at all wrong with Enfield. He took off suddenly to LA, he came back, he paid his rent in person as always. No one mentioned that you went inside looking for him. Just hope you don't get us all sued for that!"

It was a very chilly week.

The managers' next two days off came and I was still pretty subdued, treading fearfully. Rigid, one might say. Late on my first solo day a lady came frantically into the office.



"Please! Ya gotta help. My friend came back from LA last Friday and I saw him and we decided to meet up for dinner at five. I came back, the lights were all on, everything looked

exactly the same, but he didn't answer the door. His car's parked here. I used to live here with him, we were roommates, and I just know there's something wrong!"

"Is his name *En---field*?"

"Yes. And I've come back every day. The lights never change, the car hasn't moved, and I can't get him to answer the door! I know he's in there, ya gotta go in there. Please! Something's wrong."

This woman wasn't frantic because it was payday and Enfield did payroll. She was ostensibly a close friend and her report was credible: lights hadn't changed, car hadn't moved, tv was on, Enfield didn't answer.

I reached my hands to her across the table, we held hands as I prayed "Father God, You are the Father of the spirits of all mankind and You give everyone his breath. Please give Mr. Enfield back his spirit and his breath and give me one chance to tell him how much You love him before he meets You."

Prayed in a public office with a stranger? Termination.

Then I called Darrell again. Darrell said he'd drive me down there but that's it. He needed *his* job, too.

Same drill: knock, knock, knock "Maint-nance". Knock, knock, knock "Maint-nance!"

Darrell opened the door then slammed it shut. An unforgettable odor.

"He's dead, shut it up, there's no use going in. He's dead. Call the police and let them clean it up. That's what they get paid for."

There was a terrible stench, one that never leaves and always stays with you.

"I'm going in." Ducking under his arm, I pushed open the door.

It was nearly as dark as before. The entryway was filled with an opened suitcase with most of its contents spilled out over the entry floor. I went straight in this time to the living room with its fireplace and there, in the adjoining dining area was an army surplus desk, metal -

and next to the desk on the floor, Mr. Enfield's naked body, face down, in a huge dark oval of some kind of liquid all around him.



And on the desk, the telephone. Right next to the body. It was the only apparent telephone so I walked over next to Mr. Enfield's body and called 9-1-1.

"Hello, I need police, Gresham. I'm at 257 NE 201st, and someone is dead here. Hurry!"

"Well, if he's dead, we won't hurry." replied 911.

**"WHAT DID YOU ASK ME FOR?"**

"Well, I don't know that he's dead, I don't want to look at him, please hurry!" I didn't want to see what it was that had leaked out making that dark oval, and I didn't want to see what had happened to him.

"OK, we'll send someone right away. Stay on the phone with me until they arrive."

Which meant I had to stay next to the body, the naked body, the naked dead body, right next to it. It didn't move, it didn't breathe, dead is dead.

**"YOU ASKED ME FOR SOMETHING."**

Mr. Enfield's left shoulder twitched like a horse's flank twitches when a fly lands on it. But no breathing, no moving, just that one quiver. I remember a hand towel the color of split pea soup covering part of one buttock. I remember the stench, that ominous dark oval surrounding the body and how much I wanted to just scream and run.

Oh, the *smell!* Oh, *it never left me, the smell is still with me even today!* Please, feet, run - run out the door before the smell moves into me. The *stench!*

And I heard sirens coming forever from far off. Then they were louder and nearer, *please hurry!* The sirens paused in places as the emergency vehicles threaded their way through the interior roadways. Then I heard people shouting, maybe they were asking for directions and were shouting over the sirens, and more people shouting. Then the sirens stopped outside and I skirted around the body and the liquid oval and outside somehow to the balcony and began praying with my hands raised up. With half of the community there by now, I stood there on the second floor balcony praying in the Spirit with my hands held up to my God. Life and death overcame good sense and sensible 'professional' pride.

I stepped aside on the balcony as the response team stormed in with their supplies. Then they began to exit and they weren't hurrying at all. "He's dead."

I looked at one of the men with question mark eyebrows.

"He's dead," the fireman said.





I walked down to the sidewalk to join the crowd, and Darrell and Mr. Enfield's friend and I put my arm around her waist.

Then suddenly the responders started rushing down and up the stairs and brought a bright yellow blanket and stretcher.

### **“WHAT DID YOU ASK ME FOR?”**

“What's going on?” I asked one of the team.

“He's alive,” he screamed. His face looked frozen but the rest of him moved incredibly fast. Maybe he was perplexed and or just didn't have time for explanations. But then, he *had* no explanation.

O, my God! Nothing was really making sense to me as I stood with my arm around Mr. Enfield's friend.

Soon Mr. Enfield was loaded inside the ambulance and everyone left the scene with sirens screaming. I returned to the office where guests still waited. I showed them the property, rented the apartment and left to pick Chloe up from school.

Instead of asking as usual about her day, I told her about Mr. Enfield.

I told her about the prayer. I told her that he was alive again! Chloe has always understood adult talk *and* she knew God. Children know God until they start to grow up. I think it didn't seem really big to her that God would answer prayer, of course He would. I think she wasn't astonished that God raises the dead, she knew Him.

We were both drained by our day as we locked up the office around seven.

“We're going to go see Mr. Enfield now?”

“Oh, honey, I don't think so.” She had no idea what she was asking for. And she hadn't smelled *the smell!*

"But mom,"

“Sweetie, it's *late*. Mr. Enfield is in the intensive care unit and they won't let us go in there under any circumstances. You have to be an adult and you're not. And we have to be family and we're not!”

And I thought "Even if he *is* still alive, or not."

She started in on her campaign to go see Mr. Enfield and it was a very short campaign: “Mom, you *have* to go. You asked God for a chance to talk to Mr. Enfield about Him and God said ‘Yes’ and you can’t say ‘no, maybe tomorrow.’ God says ‘Go!’”

As tired as I was, I knew it was easier to drive up to the hospital, park, go in and get turned down than to live with Chloe’s pestering.

And she was right. About the God part. Off we went.

Parked the car, took the elevator to the second floor and quietly walked the long hallway to the locked doors of ICU. I pushed the intercom button:

“Hello”

“Hi, we’re here to see Mr. Enfield.” The doors started to *op-en*.

“Come on in, he’s the first one on the right,” said the intercom. In we went.

I pulled aside the curtain and there he was, I guessed. I’d never met him before so I couldn’t recognize him. It was very odd. Not surreal, *not real*.

He was lying there completely still and covered up to his neck in a perfect white sheet with no wrinkles. His eyes were closed. Lots of tubes went into his left arm under the sheet. His face was missing some skin, his flesh looked like the proud flesh on an injured horse, he’d been skinned significantly. What was missing from him was back there in his carpet with *the smell*.

Machines blipped but he was breathing on his own. We quietly waited. For what?

So, I slipped my hands under the sheet and groped around carefully for his right hand. I found it, which started our conversation.

"Hi, Mr. Enfield. This is your friend, Joy, we met this afternoon. Soooo, I’m so glad to see you again.” Holding his hand, I started to pray.

“Father God, thank you so much for Mr. Enfield. And thank you so much for your great love for him and giving us this chance to pray together. And thank you that Mr. Enfield believes in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, and that by believing in Him, he is forgiven. He is born again and saved. And he has eternal life with You. We accept Your love and we believe in Your salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

And Mr. Enfield squeezed my hands, firmly, three times.

Nothing else moved. Nothing looked alive. I didn’t know whether to pass out, throw up or offer congratulations. No way was anyone ever going to believe this! I needed a witness.



“Mr. Enfield, I brought my daughter, Chloe, here to meet you tonight. Can you please do that again for her?” And I placed her small hand in his, then said again "In Jesus Name, Amen."

And Mr. Enfield squeezed her hand so hard she jumped. Eyes huge, mouth open.

“Thank you. We’ll leave now, and I’ll come back to visit tomorrow.”

Nothing else moved. Nothing looked alive. We didn’t say much on the way home until Chloe remembered she was starving so we picked up Chinese to go. But we stayed pretty quiet because He had exceeded our comprehension.

All that I remember of the next day is being there but not all there. After closing the office, I hurried to go see Mr. Enfield again.

Again I was let to go right in. He looked the same, like a dead man, and nothing showed me that he knew I was there. What to do? I found his right hand again and held it while I chatted about Waverly and the day. That took only seconds. Being at a loss for what to do next or anything more to say, I sang old hymns with my eyes closed. It was still very difficult to look at him without all his skin on.

After some time, something felt odd and I opened my eyes. Mr. Enfield’s family had quietly arrived and were standing there staring at me. Awkward. I introduced myself and quickly escaped.

I would go see my new friend every couple of days. Some of his family members also visited me in the office, saying thank you, so grateful.

Always wondering what to do or say, about what would happen, at our next visit, I just held his hand.

“Mr. Enfield, do you want to worship today?” and his right eye flew open wide and tears came down as he squeezed my hand.

Clearly, Mr. Enfield rallied to worship. It must have been just too much for him to come back from wherever he was but he’d do it to worship God. He knew things I didn’t know. He had seen things I haven’t seen. *It scared me to see him really alive.*

As time went on and with his family keeping him company, my visits grew further apart. Always in the back of my mind, I thought of visiting soon. And one day I went.



I arrived again at the ICU and the intercom voice said “Oh, he’s been transferred, he’s not here anymore. Go up to the nurse’s station on the next floor and they’ll help you there.” Whew, transferred but not dead, this is good!

I checked in upstairs and they invited me to have a seat and wait, it was so empty and hushed. There were a lot of sideways glances and whispers. After a while someone came out and invited me to follow her. We went to a small room.



“We discharged Mr. Enfield and he was transferred to a rest home.” she said.

“Transferred? Oh, goodness, he *is* doing well!”

She told me that over time, Mr. Enfield had had several operations to remove dead intestines and pieces of lungs and other parts which had decomposed during those four and a half days on the carpet before I found him, before someone had prayed. The concrete subfloor under him had required removal with acid to move all of Mr. Enfield out.

“First, he learned to communicate ‘yes’ and ‘no’ by blinking. Then he began to rehabilitate and was able to write with his right hand. He was very direct with his communications and perfectly clear.”

“Miss, Mr. Enfield passed away recently. After his first two days here in ICU his heart and breathing stopped and he died. We brought him back but he needed to be on life support. We can’t take someone off life support. We transferred Mr. Enfield to a rest home, according to his wishes, to be allowed to die.

“I’ve never seen anyone who wanted to go, to go home as much as he did. He was able to communicate by writing: Home. And every time he was left alone, he ripped out all his IV and breathing support. He didn’t want to be here anymore. He had seen something, SomeWhere, that made him happy and he wanted to be there.”

“PRAYER ANSWERED. TRANSFERRED, TRANSFORMED, *ALIVE*: ‘WHY ARE YOU SEEKING THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD?’ ”

“I am the resurrection and the life” John 11:2

"ALWAYS ENOUGH" CASTING CROWNS

# WHILE IT'S STILL CALLED TODAY

## in the news **Today**

"An 11-year-old boy has pleaded guilty to kidnapping and murdering a 3-year-old, admitting he beat the toddler with a baseball bat and dumped him face down in a drainage ditch.

"Aaron Kean, who was 10 at the time of the crime, told a judge Thursday that he brutalized the youngster because the boy was bothering him and wanted to use his scooter."

## **December**

"A convicted killer... lured teenagers into his apartment with offers of alcohol and drugs, the rundown apartment house from which investigators this week removed the bodies of three teenagers... his record includes a murder conviction for the death of a 15-year-old boy in Illinois and a conviction in Texas for committing bodily injury to a child ...

".. was released on \$300 bond the same day.... the fresh 8-foot-by-8-foot concrete pad was found in the basement... revealed two of the bodies, wrapped in plastic and tied with cords and tape.... third body was removed Wednesday."

## **12**

"A caravan of trucks left at first light Friday to join the search for a 22-year-old college student who disappeared three weeks ago from ..."

## **2003**

". . . contending that he was so brainwashed by Muhammad, whom he considered his father, that he did not know right from wrong. Prosecutors on Thursday questioned Malvo's claim that he pulled the trigger in only two killings..."

..... **United Press International December 12, 2003**



**He was one of my favorite adult students.**

Crisply attired, immaculately turned out, everything about him glowed. He was sincere, hardworking, your basic overachiever. He had joined my singing class because tap dancing was too undignified for him. He reminded me of Captain Kennedy, S.S. President Wilson, American President Lines, and actually they had much in common: each lived in a fully-contained universe, both dressed in freshly pressed uniforms and ate three precisely scheduled meals daily. One was the captain of a luxury liner enroute to a concert tour in Japan and Captain Kennedy had a terrific pension plan.



The other, my eager pupil, was guaranteed three hots and a cot in San Quentin Prison every day for life without the possibility of parole. Murdering a cop does bring some kind of security.

Showing off one day after class, Greg said "Don't you know who I am? I'm *famous*! There's a guy named Wambaugh, wrote a book about me! My name is Gregory Ulas Powell, don't you know about me?"



Hadn't heard of the book but vaguely remembered the headlines about some onion field in, Vacaville? No, Visalia? I made it my business not to know the details about my students, *none* of my business. I felt it made me more effective, professional, that way ~ just kidding. Knowing would have scared me to pieces.

Professional what no one knew: during the reign of the SLA, the fatal shootout at the Marin County courthouse just down the road, the manhunt for the dangerous version of Patti Hearst, no one really knew who I was, either. Easy in, easy out: no background check, no ID required, no permits, just an "inspectorscope station" and I waltzed in and out of San Quentin Prison to teach,

I was a volunteer. Good ol' days.

One time I'd made the trip to San Quentin Prison for nothing because my officer chaperone hadn't shown up and of course they didn't let me in. The looks on my guys' faces were devastating the next week, especially Joe: so black he almost shone blue at night, smiling and crying, "by and by, by and by". They didn't know why I hadn't shown up the last week and it made them very unsure and sad. Not many people came in to see them and our visits were life-changing.

So then that night when my chaperone didn't show up again, and the guards waved me through the first inspector station, then alone through that first huge gate and into the longest corridor in the world, fashioned of huge stones, I just kept walking...

And walked right on through as the second gate o-o-o-o-o-o-opened and right into the north courtyard on a very dark night. Alone. I didn't look back as I heard that deep boooooom-claaaank of the huge gate closing again behind me. I just kept walking ~ I knew my way and thank you very much.

It was acting class night, which was really my sneaky way of teaching reading. We were having a great time until all that noise started. And I mean *noise*: sirens, shouts, loudspeakers. Boooooom-clanging-shouting-sounds of a lockdown were drowned out by men shoving me to the floor and piling on top of me. Then they got really quiet, no one moved. Freeze frame.

See, someone had just figured out that there was a little, lone white female wandering around somewhere at night in San Quentin Prison without any guards. With the 'no hostage policy' official in the State of California, and the lifers of San Quentin who had nothing to lose for just



one more rape and murder, they knew it was way too late. Shouts and guns roared in, which is why those men had piled on top of me: to save me.

So, when a torn paperback called "The Onion Field" floated by me a few years ago, I tried to read it. Couldn't. Couldn't do it. It was too gross.

Not about the murder, I didn't get that far.

**About Greg's boyhood**, his growing up time. The 'lifestyle' he had inherited, its 'values', his 'heroes'. Being left alone in strange places for days at a time while his mom was out partying. Not so much what was done to him, but what no one did for him. I kept wondering "where were all the caring people?" When the little boy Greg was moldable and shapeable and God's fingerprints were still there in his young, soft clay? When he was hungry or scared or sat alone, discarded, for days and days and began to disconnect and his heart hardened because his connectors atrophied, where were all those great people who care?

Just *one* hug might have done it.

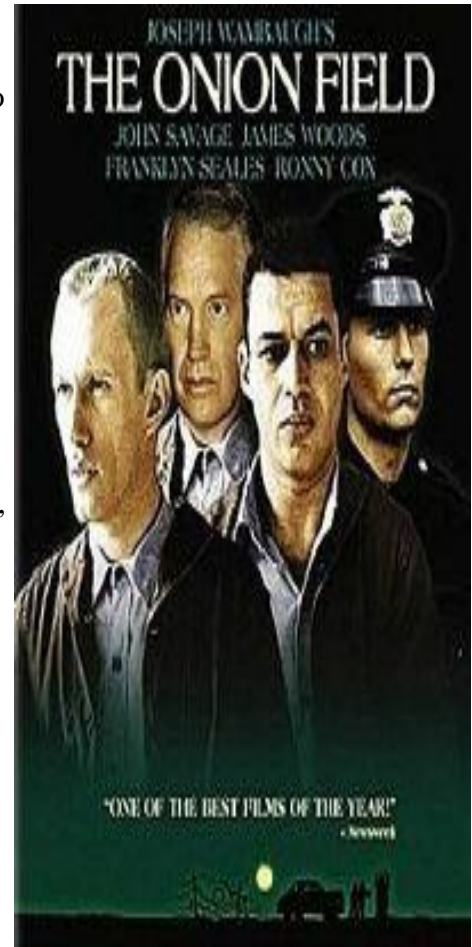
Just *one*.

From some *one*.

Not a program, not a production.

Just some *one* stopping to care.

Hey, buddy, can you spare a hug?

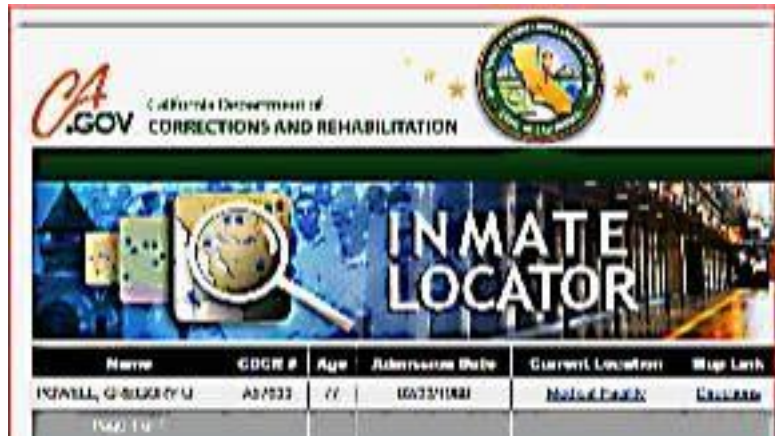


**TODAY** if you hear His voice, don't harden your heart against Him.

**“Encourage the oppressed”** Isaiah 1:17

It was December 12th, 2003 when I wrote this story. Now it's December 19, 2011, and this headline demands attention:

## Study: 1 in 3 Arrested by 23 Years Old



A shocking report released today, (Monday), says nearly one in three people will be arrested by the time they turn 23-years-old. The study is in the Journal of Pediatrics.

The national study is an analysis of data collected between 1997 and 2008. The arrests included: truancy, vandalism, underage drinking, shoplifting, robbery, assault and murder.

It did not include minor traffic offenses. Not all of the arrests may have resulted in criminal charges.

*1 in 3!*

These are crazy numbers which explains much of the craziness of our world today. But perhaps not tomorrow!

In "While it's still called today", I asked the question "Where were all the caring people?" and the clear answer is "too". Too busy, too tired, too callous, too self-centered. And this includes me.

In December, a young man walked into our shopping mall and started shooting. Yes, he killed people before killing himself.

And I will always wonder: had he and I ever brushed shoulders in the crowd? Had I seen him before? If I had, did I take the time to connect with his eyes and smile?

Which is why I sometimes go to McD's, just to wait for God to send the people who need encouragement, to smile and to listen to them, Appointments. I'm never, ever disappointed.

This *you* can do.