

Thoughts for a Terrific Day

1-10

(TFATD-001)

Singing Birds

I was listening to the birds singing and chirping one morning. It was still dark outside but they were making their happy “good morning” songs anyway. I realised that they were probably hungry and it was still too dark to find food as the sun hadn’t come up yet. In winter it stays dark for much longer in the morning than in the summer. So they weren’t singing so happily because they had all that they wanted right then and there.

Their songs weren’t sad moaning songs telling us that they wished to find food. Whether it was light or dark, whether they had food to eat or not right then, they still made their happy songs of praise.

The birds were glad for a new day. They had faith that the sun would shine again soon. They knew that Jesus would take care of them and give them all they needed.

It’s not that they only know how to make pretty sounds, as I’ve heard them squawk and make loud and less melodic music when something isn’t right and they need to tell others about it. So when they were singing in the early morning, after a long and cold night, it was because they chose to make beautiful music anyway.

I hope I can learn from the birds how to do that. I want my voice to speak glad words, and to show faith in Jesus’ loving care, no matter what I feel. I want the first thing I say each morning to be a song or word of praise.

Jesus sees me and knows what I am feeling and needing, and just how long I have been waiting for something I want. So I will sing and praise no matter what, knowing that He will care for me.

Psalm 59:16

I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning.

(TFATD-002)

Breakfast Cereal

I was making a special breakfast—rice-almond granola and coconut milk. To make rice-almond granola I needed to blend the almonds into a powdery flour, then separately blend the cooked brown rice into a sticky blob. I would need to then knead those ingredients together to make the dough that I could form the granola balls with to bake.

For the milk I opened up the hole of the coconut and poured the milk into glasses. To make it white I'd need to crack the coconut and cut out pieces to blend with water. I would then need to strain it and add that white coconut water to the sweet coconut milk in the glasses.

As I was beginning to cook and was about to blend the cooked rice I looked over at the cups of clear coconut milk waiting to have the coconut blended and the white water added to them. A thought came to me: what if I didn't do everything in the right order or way it was meant to be done?

If I used all the right ingredients but mixed the order I did things in, the breakfast would turn out totally different, and probably wouldn't be that enjoyable. If I blended the coconut milk with the rice it would be a runny cold cereal rather than a crunchy one. If I mixed the almonds and the coconut together in the blender they wouldn't stick as well when I tried to knead it like dough.

If we want a good result to come about in the end we have to think about the way we do things, and realise that it makes a difference. When we do things, how we do them, and what we try to do makes a difference on our day. Sometimes it is fun and good to just do things spontaneously—like if we get a good idea and right then is the only chance to do it. Other times it's best to wait or to think about things longer to make sure we are doing things in the best way.

Not every idea that comes to mind is going to help us or others to be happy, healthy and to get our jobs done. It's good to pause when a thought or idea comes to our mind, or when we have a job to do and to think, "How can I do this well? Is now the best time to do or say that? Would it be better to do something else instead? What would be the right thing to do right now in this situation?"

Stopping to think and pray can save us from making a mess of things, and will help to make things easier and better for us and others.

1 Corinthians 14:40

Let all things be done decently and in order.

(TFATD-003)

A Wet Tent

We have a fun tent that is made out of cloth and has a plastic bottom. It's a strong one and good for play in the backyard. We put it up sometimes for something new to do every now and then. But we can't keep it up all the time.

Do you know what happens to grass when it is covered by cloth, or a piece of plastic, or a piece of wood? Well, the grass turns brown and withers as it can't receive enough sunlight to continue growing well. So, after several days we take the tent down to let the grass get sunshine.

The tent needs to be real dry before we pack it up, however. If it's a bit damp and we put it into the plastic case and store it in our shed then it would get mouldy, and that's not so nice. We need to pack the tent when it is all the way dry.

One time it rained and got the tent all wet—inside and out. It was a bit of a rainy storm and it was also very windy during that rainstorm, so the tent needed to be taken down as the strong wind was blowing it over. We didn't want it to break or for the metal poles to get bent, so we took out the poles—but we couldn't put it away until after the storm passed and the sunshine dried it out.

But it was taking a long time to get dry, as it kept raining off and on for several days. Also the dew that sets at night kept making it all wet again. I wanted to hang it up to dry, as that would make it dry fast, but I was too short and not strong enough to lift the heavy tent up to put it on the line to dry.

I would try, but because I couldn't reach high enough, I couldn't hang it right and the wind would blow it off and land it back on the ground. Each day it just kept getting wet again. What should I do? It was starting to get all kinds of bugs on it as it was on the grass most of the time.

Finally, one day I asked my husband—who is tall and strong—to help me hang it up. He did, and did it easily. The sun and wind dried it and we could then put it away at last!

It reminded me of what prayer is like. It's not something hard to do. What is hard to do is to try and do things on my own without asking for Jesus to help me. If I just keep trying to do things without asking our big and strong Jesus to help, what I'm trying to accomplish may never get done, and it will just make things harder for me. I just need to ask for His help and things will go so much better and jobs will get done much quicker.

Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

(TFATD-004)

Thoughts for a Terrific Day: Apple Tree

We have an apple tree in our back yard that looks different in each season of the year. Right now it is spring, so the tree is full of pretty white apple blossoms. The children like to stand under it and get a “spring snowfall” as I wiggle the branches and make lots of white petals flutter down. We say, “It's snowing!” just for fun! We ate our breakfast outside under the pretty tree today, and some petals even fell on our food!

The tree is never always the same. Nearly every day there is something different about it. Well, actually every single day there are lots of things that are different, but it's not always noticeable. Some days we see the difference more clearly.

For example, yesterday the blossoms were starting to cover the tree, but today nearly the whole tree looks white and is completely covered in flowers. It is springtime and that is how it looks now. But in a while

the petals will all fall off and we'll get to see very tiny apples beginning to grow on the tree. Then every day the apples will get a tiny bit bigger and new little ones will start to grow, and the leaves will get bigger too.

One day the tree won't look white anymore, but all green with many leaves and little growing apples. It's a tree that grows green apples, rather than red or yellow ones. Once the apples are getting ripe we'll have something else that is white in our tree. I bet you can't guess what! The sulphur crested cockatoos—that are all white with a few yellow feathers sticking out at the top of their heads—will be in our tree, very happily snacking on those apples!

It's fun to watch the birds! The tree is like one big bird feeder. The cockatoos will grab on to a branch and sit on it, but then they'll balance on one leg while the other claw picks a small apple and holds it, like we do, taking bites off of it! But it's not as easy for them as it is for us. People eat apples while sitting or standing on the ground, but for the birds, if they drop it the apple falls all the way to the ground.

After a while there are less and less apples on the tree. The hungry birds were very happy for the summer food snacks, and the grass under the tree gets a snack too. It gets covered with all these apple bits that have fallen from the munching birds. The grass grows so well there, as the apples that fall eventually turn into soil again and make the soil filled with good nutrients. But that's not all that makes the grass under the tree grow so well.

When summer is past then comes the autumn and the leaves turn colour and start to fall. Wind blows and after awhile the tree looks completely different. It hardly looks like a tree anymore! It's a frame of sticks and branches.

Winter time lets us see all the branches that have worked hard all spring and summer to hold the leaves and apples. We get to see and appreciate a new part of the tree—what has been nearly hidden for so long under the pretty flowers, leaves and apples. We see the branches clearly then.

Trees without leaves can make a pretty pattern too, when you see them contrasting against the sky. It's like a silhouette showing an interesting and pretty design. The tree always seems beautiful, no matter what it's displaying or what season it is.

Our lives too, go through seasons in a way. Things are often changing for us, we grow, we age, we have sick times and healthy times, and no two days are quite the same. But if we have our arms up to Jesus in praise—like a tree does—and we keep the sap of His Word and love running in our hearts and minds, then no matter what we are doing or what situation we are in, or what age we are, or what we are experiencing and going through, we can be useful and pretty.

Nothing is ever the same for anyone on Earth—just like things are always changing on our apple tree. I hope I can smile and be a help and encouragement and act as lovely as the tree in our back yard, no matter what season of my life or situation I am in.

Psalm 1:3

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

(TFATD-005)

Thoughts for a Terrific Day: The Old Wooden Gate

It was a windy day today, and our wooden gate to our backyard had blown open. It wasn't safe for it to be so, as out the gate was the short driveway leading to the road that cars would whizz along. I went to shut it and to secure it with a piece of rope. However, when I did, a little splinter of wood poked right into my finger. The wood on the gate is getting rather old, and the sun is drying it and is making it rough.

It didn't hurt much, thankfully—not like another time when I was cleaning my room. Once when I was 12 years old we had a wooden counter in our room. I was cleaning up the room and a big splinter of wood poked me. That time it hurt quite a lot. Both times it happened to me was when I was doing something good.

It seems more to be expected that when we are doing something we shouldn't do, or we are being rather careless, that an accident happens or something doesn't go perfectly well for us. But when we are doing what is right and still something unpleasant happens, or we have an accident, sometimes it gives us a question in our mind, wondering why it happened.

It's easy to think that if we hadn't been doing the job we were doing that the hurt wouldn't have happened. However, the truth is, that no matter what we are doing, as long as we are in human form and are living on the Earth, we will continue to get bumps, and hurts, and accidents. It's just the way we learn, and the way things are.

We can avoid many hurtful things if we are praying and careful, and most of the time we do avoid and miss out on so many things that could have gone wrong. We don't realise that we missed out on getting hurt at times because, well, it didn't happen.

Sometimes small hurts, or even some that don't seem too small, are actually a help to us. Why? Because they make us wiser and teach us things, and what we learn from it may help us to be more careful and to avoid worse things. When something hurts us, there are often many other things that didn't happen—that could have—but we were fortunate that they didn't, and that we were kept as safely as we were.

I like to think of the little bonks or things that seem to not go quite right or as well as we wish they would, as a little part of something much bigger. I like to use that difficult thing as a reminder of something much greater and wonderful that we do have, and to be thankful for it.

Take for example a leaking tap in the sink. It can be bothersome and sometimes hard to fix. But if I think about what bigger and better thing that I do have that it reminds me of, I might remember to be glad for something like this: I'm living somewhere that has nice and easy clean running water, and I can be glad that I even have a house to live in. Many people don't have those blessings.

So, if on my way to do something good I get a bonked toe or a hurt hand, well, maybe I can use it to realise something important that I've forgotten to thank the Lord for in a while—like the fact that I can move

and use my body and I'm not crippled in some way. And I can be thankful that it's not all the time that I get hurt.

No matter who is trying to do the right and good thing, and to obey the Lord and others who are telling them what's right, things won't always go perfectly, and not everyone will try to make it easy for us either. We just need to learn to thank the Lord for all the other things that are still right and good—the many and bigger things, and then don't let the hurts stop us from helping others and doing what is best.

If a mountain climber said he would only climb a mountain if it was a smooth and easy pathway up to the top, and if he never got any bumps, he'd never make it up any mountain, right? But even the rough path and steep climb makes him a better climber, because he gets stronger with each bit of difficulty.

So if we have a positive reaction when something happens to us that we don't understand, and we choose to learn something from it—something that might really help us later on and we'll be glad we learned—then we'll get stronger and wiser with each bump!

Proverbs 24:16

A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.

(TFATD-006)

Thoughts for a Terrific Day: Lego Pieces

Each verse and promise in the Bible is so amazing and can help me in so many different situations. Sometimes I'll read a verse and I'll notice one thing that it's talking about, and then at another time in my life I'll realise something else the verse is telling us—something I didn't notice the first time.

A verse can be just what I need to encourage me when I am sad. Yet that same verse might teach me an important lesson that I need to learn some other day when I read it. Yet again, that same verse might be the answer I needed when I had a decision to make and I prayed and Jesus reminded me of the words in that Bible verse.

The Bible has so many things that are easy to understand, yet there are many things that keep people all over the world trying to figure out and discover what it means—like discovering a mystery. It can be simple but also complex, and it helps people of any type in any situation. I was thinking how it's kind of like Lego.

Each verse is like a different Lego piece. When you look at each piece they look simple, and when you turn it this way and that way it looks different too—the top view, the side angle, the bottom and so forth. And when you put different pieces together they can make endless creations and designs. No one has ever discovered all the things that can ever be made with Lego, right?

That's the same with the Bible and the verses in it—every time you read it there will be something new to discover. And just like Lego is used to build things, God's words in the Bible will help us to make our lives interesting and fun and useful.

Just like each piece can look different depending on the way you look at it, so can the verses in the Bible show us different things every time we read them. And just like each piece can be used in so many different ways to make lots of types of Lego creations, the promises in the Bible can be used again and again in all kinds of situations that we are in.

Have you ever been building something out of Lego and are looking for just the perfect piece to fit and work the way you want it to? That's like doing a Bible study and finding out something interesting and amazing. And when you find a verse in the Bible that has just the answer you needed, or the promise you were looking for, it can even feel better than that great feeling of, "Finally! There's the piece I needed!"

God's word can help us to complete our jobs for Him, giving us just the answers, the solutions, the guidance and instruction that is needed.

Jeremiah 15:16

Thy words were found... and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.

(TFATD-007)

Thoughts for a Terrific Day: Melons

Little children can be funny and cute when they are learning to talk and do things. When my youngest son wants to eat or drink something he usually asks for "too much." That is his way of saying "plenty." He wants to have a big over-sized portion sometimes, just for the fun of it. –Like a watermelon slice the size of a plate, or an extra-tall glass of natural juice that we make with blended oranges and water.

He especially asks for these big portions at times when he isn't feeling so well and something is making him uncomfortable. He seems to think that the bigger the portion, or the fuller the cup, the better it will make him feel. Of, course it doesn't really help the hurt, or discomfort, or tiredness go away, but he just thinks it's what he needs to have. We do our best to give him what he thinks will make him feel better, but then we pray for him and Jesus heals him.

One time he was tired and grumpy when eating his bedtime snack of rock melon, and he noticed that one of his brothers had their rock melon on a different type of plate and it was cut into strips that looked like French fries. He thought at that moment that whatever someone else had was better than what he had. He asked to have things just the same as his brother. So I gave him a matching plate and cut his rock melon up in just the same way.

He wasn't feeling well and so then fussed for it to be cut up even smaller, he said he wanted it cut up, because it wasn't big enough. –Now that was something I couldn't do: cut it smaller to make the pieces bigger! I could cut them smaller to make more pieces, but not bigger pieces. So, to try to make him feel

better, I cut each piece smaller and said, “Are they big enough now?” and he said, “Yes.” It was funny, and we were kind of chuckling about it.

Sometimes when you are tired, or hurting, or sad, or something is bothering you it can be hard to say the right things. Sometimes people even say the opposite of what they are actually feeling or wanting. It can be hard at times for people to express what is actually the problem or to even realise what they really need. It can help, in those situations, when others try to understand what they are actually needing, and what their heart or mind is trying to say.

When people start saying things that don't quite make sense, or they sound a bit mixed-up, or are feeling upset and aren't talking very nicely, it's good for those around to think for a moment, “What is really the matter?” and see if they can guess what would actually help them to feel better. It's good not to get too fussed about each word that is said imperfectly and to then start to get bothered about what people are expressing, if it's not coming out just right.

Sometimes asking questions can help you to find out what is actually the cause of their outburst, or unkind words. When someone is real young—like our two-year-old boy—they probably won't know what is really wrong and aren't able to express things clearly. When people are older, however, talking with them and praying for them might help them to feel better, and may help them to express what their heart is really feeling and what is actually on their mind.

People say things, not because they want you to feel bad, but usually it's because they aren't feeling so great themselves, and they think that saying or getting this or that, would make them feel better. The rock melon, no matter how it was cut, didn't make our little boy feel better, but because we were patiently talking to him and asking him what he wanted, and doing our best to make him feel better by doing all we could, that's what did help. And we knew he was just tired, so he was put to sleep as soon as possible, and this made him feel good and rested and wake up a happy boy!

If we had just gotten bothered by what he was saying, telling him, “It's impossible to help you!” and only listened to the funny words and requests he was making, then it would have only made him cry. When we did our best to please him and were kind, realising that he really just didn't feel so good, then he felt comforted and calmed down, and we helped him go to bed right away so he could have what he really needed.

Colossians 3:13a, 14

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another... And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

(TFATD-008)

Thoughts for a Terrific Day: Peeling Oranges

I was thinking the other day how great oranges are. They are kept nice and clean in a thick peel. They are like a natural box of juice. They contain lots of vitamins and minerals that we need to keep us healthy and growing well—like vitamin C and calcium.

The type we've been able to get lately are especially sweet and delicious. We use them like sugar! When we blend up fruit to make berry jam, we use oranges and pears for the sweetener along with the berries. When we make cookies from blended nuts and brown rice we add a bit of orange juice as well as some of the peel grated finely. It gives it a special taste!

The only thing that stopped me from eating them when I was younger was I didn't know how to peel them. It seemed too hard. But then I found a way to do it. Once I knew how to peel it I was free at last to eat them when I wanted to—and we usually had more oranges around than other fruits, so it was helpful to know how to peel them.

Maybe you'll discover an easy way to peel them, but for me I found it easy to use my thumbnail and to cut a circle with it into the peel. I'd pop out that little circle and that was a good starting point to keep peeling. As long as I could make that little beginning hole then I could get it all the way peeled.

I remember the day I learned to do it. My five-year-old and three-year-old can peel tangerines on their own now, and yesterday was the day my seven-year-old son learned to peel oranges his own now too. How fun! He was finally able to peel and eat one of his favourite fruits that are available now! It must have felt nice to at last have learned that skill.

Maybe there is something hard for you to do, and it's keeping you from being able to do what you'd like. For example you imagine yourself being able to play an instrument and to make whatever songs you'd like—but learning it seems hard. Well, if you give yourself enough of a chance to keep trying, then, like the orange, one day you'll be able to do it and will be able to enjoy the benefits of that new skill.

Another thing it reminds me of is that some things might be fun and enjoyable and good to do, but it seems hard at the beginning. Getting starting on a project can be the hardest part. But once you put forth the effort and get into motion, then it's easy to keep going until it's completed. And you'll be happy that you did it. In the end, the effort will be worth the results.

Galatians 6:9

Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

(TFATD-009)

Thoughts for a Terrific Day: Mysterious Bread

We started noticing something mysterious happening in our yard. We don't eat bread, as it causes us problems, but for some reason on our grass at times there would be big hunks of white bread. I would take them and toss them in the trash quickly when I'd find them. I didn't want them around at all. Maybe the

neighbours tossed them over the fence? It seemed like a careless thing for them to do, but it seemed there was no other way for the bread to appear in our yard.

New hunks of bread would appear again a few days later, sometimes in different places. One afternoon there were two big pieces of bread beside the fence at the back of our yard, but in the morning they were gone, without us moving them at all. Where were they coming from?

Then we spotted the cause! It was something we'd seen before. The cockatoos would get these big chunks of old bread from a neighbour's house, who probably put out old bread to feed the birds during the winter when there wasn't much food around for them to find. The cockatoos would fly up to the power lines or on to the shed roof and sit there to eat the bread. But most of the time part of the bread piece they were eating—or even all of it—would slip out of the grip of their claw and fall down to the ground—right into our yard.

The mystery was solved! Once we knew that it was just the birds—not someone being careless—it didn't seem to bother us anymore. Instead each piece on the ground made us feel sorry for the bird that was eating his yummy snack and lost it as it fell all the way down, and they perhaps had to wait until later when we weren't playing in the yard to come back and get it.

We realized that the neighbours were being kind to the animals, and the bread that was there was just by mistake, by some hungry cockatoo that wished it hadn't dropped!

In the book of Proverbs it talks a lot about how good it is to have "understanding." When we understand why people do things or what they are struggling with, or the difficulties they face, and we see the good that they were trying to do—even if mistakes were made—this helps us to feel better and to think more kindly of others.

When we understand the reasons that people say or do some things it can change our whole perspective of the situation. Instead of feeling bothered or puzzled about things, we have kind thoughts and want to help make things easier for them.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (selected)

Charity suffereth long, and is kind.. is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

(TFATD-010)

Thoughts for a Terrific Day: Pretty Bad Weeds

Weeds aren't always ugly. Did you know that? We have a type of plant that grows wild like a weed. If a lot of time passed and no one stopped them, this plant would take over our whole yard. It expands and covers more and more of the ground a bit each day. It has pretty purple flowers on it, and the plant looks full and bushy.

When I look at these weed plants there's a few things that I notice. First of all it looks pretty, because it has shiny dark green leaves, and the purple flowers that are scattered here and there on it look pretty. However, a regular flower bush would stay where it was planted and grow many flowers. This plant does not. It just sends out runners and stems and just keeps covering more and more of our garden. Another thing about this type of plant is that it looks so very bushy, and like it would take a whole lot of work to cut it back and dig it up.

We have strawberry plants growing in a little part of our garden, and one time there wasn't many strawberries growing on them. These weed plants, as other weeds, had crept out and grown into our strawberry patch. It was a big job to take out all the weeds and to dig up the roots, but soon after we did that, we noticed a difference. The strawberries began to grow better and we had many berries to pick! It made a difference to our plants when the weeds were all cleared away.

Before I cleared those weeds I thought, "I need to protect these plants from those weeds, and clear even more of them away, so they can't so easily grow into our strawberry patch." But it looked like very big job, as the weeds were as big as bushes all along the fence beside our strawberries. If I just cut them, they would grow back again. I wanted to take out the roots. It seemed like it would be very hard, but I determined to do it anyway. I put on my gloves, got the shovel, and got to work.

I then discovered something that I wasn't expecting. The roots of this type of weed were not deep at all. It was easier to put them and dig them up than a dandelion! And there weren't as many weeds as it looked like. It was just all a false appearance. The bushy plant looked all fluffed up and big, but under the top leaves was mostly just air! It wasn't as hard to clear them as I thought it would be.

I learned something from those weeds. See, even unpleasant things can teach you something positive! I learned that just because some looks pretty, like many things in shops or flashy magazines, doesn't mean that they are harmless. Something might seem attractive and nice to look at, or listen to, or to do, but it might start to make things harder for you in others ways, and cause your life to bear less fruit, or to be less successful or productive, and make your weak in some way. –Just like those weeds made our strawberries not grow well, even if the flowers here and there were a pretty colour. If I had a choice, I would rather have yummy fresh strawberries!

Also I learned that the appearance of the weeds was part of its protection to stop a gardener from clearing it away, thinking it was going to be a lot of work, and it looked a little nice too. But if I didn't get tricked by it and instead realised that they were weeds that would ruin my garden and yard, and that they were just weak anyway, then I would win over them and have a nice garden.

We, too, need to watch over the garden of our heart and mind, and just because something looks or sounds nice doesn't mean we should let it in. We need to let Jesus the gardener weed out and clear away and protect us from the things that aren't good for us.

With Jesus we are stronger than anything that tries to weaken our usefulness and the good that we can do with our lives. No matter what weeds and wrong thought and habits have grown in our lives, Jesus is able to help us clear it away and have a beautiful and strong heart and life.

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.