



Ransom Notes

Lost and Found

The patient remains under the influence of the anesthesia. A several inch incision has been closed. The teen-aged, football hero will shortly be rolled to the recovery area. As the team collects the surgical instruments used during the surgery, the air is suddenly filled with a shout of distress. "It's missing. We're missing a pair of forceps."

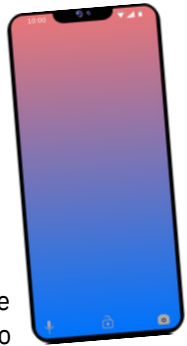


The team quickly rechecked, and checked again. Yes, they were short one pair. As reality set in, a voice was heard to say, "Oh! Fiddle. It is just one pair. We have many more and we're all exhausted. Let's send the lad up to the recovery area, clean up everything else, and go home. Besides, I have a party to attend."

I can almost hear you gasp as your brain sorts out the implications. Probably wild disagreement from the staff is heard in response to this crazy recommendation. Ultimately angry and weeping family will respond as their son is unable to recover. A law suit might even follow.

A second scenario happened this week. A friend and I had dashed out to catch a bite of lunch, followed by a short trip to the bank to cash some checks. Upon arriving home, I was putting away my jacket, and other items when suddenly I realized I had a problem. An item was missing. You guessed it. My phone was nowhere to be found in my room or office.

I quickly dashed to the garage to check out the car, thinking perhaps I had left it there, but no, nothing appeared that resembled my Apple tool of 'great value.' Grabbing my keys, I returned to the restaurant, inquiring at the counter if a phone might have been found and turned in. A pleasant cashier went to the back area, and shortly returned, her hands empty, causing my heart to groan inwardly.

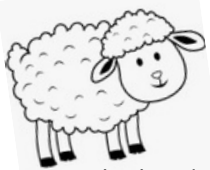


She was accompanied by the manager, who immediately attempted to call my phone, hoping that we might hear it ring. In fact, she even joined me as she repeated the call while we stood near my car. Nothing, nada, no ringing, just peace and quiet. Thanking the helpful lady, I drove home, repeated the search, and finding no phone, began to plan how to survive without my calendar and other important information stored on the phone.

The following morning I returned to the bank, almost certain I had not even taken my phone into the bank the previous day, but I was desperate. Sharing my loss with an employee, he acknowledged that no phone had been turned in and as I turned to leave, he speaks. 'Have you attempted to use the search for lost phone app that is probably on your phone?'

Of course I had not done that. We had just tried to call the phone with no response. My new friend quickly asked a fellow employee to loan him her Apple phone. A second, much younger banker joined the duo, and together they did about a three minute mumble, chatter, try, and search scenario. I provided the password for my phone. Suddenly the youngest employee looked up with a sparkle in his eye. 'It's at Concordia,' as he showed me a mini-map on his phone. 'That's where I live,' I quickly responded, thanked them profusely, and dashed home.

Once again the search of our apartment began. All other tasks were delayed. Finding the phone was first priority. We tried calling again, but no ringing sound was heard. Then, one last look in my closet, under the hanging garments, in a far corner, you are anticipating what happened. Words of rejoicing leaped out of my mouth as I got down on my knees in order to reach the little black item, hidden back in the dark corner. I raced into the other room to share the good news. I even emailed a couple of friends who knew of my disastrous loss. Celebration filled the apartment.



And then, I thought of Luke 15 and Jesus' conversation with tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, and scribes on a day so long ago. A trio of lost items was brought to their attention. One shepherd, owning a hundred sheep, suddenly realized one was missing. What does he do — clean up and go home for dinner? No, he leaves the ninety-nine behind and searches until the lost is found. Story two, Jesus shares the actions of a woman who had ten silver coins, loses ten percent, and searches diligently until the lost coin is found. She then dashes to tell everyone the lost is found. Finally, the Master shares the familiar story of the Lost Son, and once again the rejoicing when the lost returns home. Jesus was passionate about finding the lost. Sadness and frustration were replaced with celebration and rejoicing following recovery of the valuable assets.

Modern day followers of the Way perhaps can make some 21st Century applications. There are millions, and billions of people who never, ever, ever acknowledge the Lord, or worship, or even just say His name, except as a slur. They are LOST. Our challenge today is to first admit there are lost souls. We must then spring into action, not sit down and nibble on popcorn. The search must begin, even if at times that means leaving our comfort zone of staying with family or sharing a pew with our best friend. The search may be to new territories in your home town or far away. A caring heart for others, perhaps even for an undeserving neighbor or stranger, is essential to success. Team work continues to play an important part in finding the lost. Lone Rangers are not necessarily always the best search teams. Won't you open your eyes, identify a lonely, lost neighbor, family member, or even an immigrant or a total stranger, and begin the search to find a way to return him or her home to God and His family of believers?