



## Ransom Notes

### Great News!!!!

The email arrived. "Congratulations on your AAdvantage award." I blinked twice and thought, Oh! I wonder what the award is? Maybe a free first class upgrade for our June trip to Africa. My eyes continued. "Great news! We've successfully completed your request and are pleased to present you with the following AAdvantage award -- 77,500 miles as a flight award."

Suddenly my brain got busy. Something is goofy here. I did not take a long flight on American Airlines, nor did I purchase some additional miles. Slowly, oh! so slowly, my smile vanished, my heart accelerated, and my head said, "No! No! It's happened. I've been hacked." Then the long, several day process began in an effort to reduce to a minimum the financial and emotional loss.

Thanks to several hours on the phone, beginning with the dreadful, mechanical voices repeating their canned messages over and over, I found a human. Yes, actually three humans who listened, cared, and worked at least four hours with me

to begin a process of renewal. I have nothing but praise for the airline staff who assisted me through the complicated computer challenges.

I will not bore you with any additional details, except to say I have a new American Airline frequent flyer number. I've also made my first ever, and hopefully never to be repeated trip, to the police station to report the theft. I waited for their completion of the form, and then stumbled many times as I figured out how to send the form on to American Airline. The 'stolen' 77,500 miles have been returned to my account. Needless to say, this will be one event, in a very eventful life, that I will probably never forget. I will, also, forever thank one AA, on-line voice who patiently helped me as I stumbled.

Reflecting on this mixed experience of joy, frustration, fear, and yes, a bit of discouragement, accompanied by thanks for staff who cared sufficiently to grab me by my 'figurative' hand, and lead me gently to restoration of damaged and lost benefits, my mind suddenly jumped with excitement. Yeah! Our spiritual life resembles this experience, but in a most enhanced and more rewarding adventure. Let's think together for a moment.

The birth of your first born is immediate. Medical staff announce the arrival of the new life. Parents breathe a sigh of relief, accompanied by a prayer of thanksgiving at the GREAT NEWS. Grandpa and grandma, along with friends, shower the newborn with smiles, congratulations cards, and maybe a rattle or a trunk full of toy teddy bears. Shortly, the new family member is bundled up and gently carried from the hospital to his or her new home. Mom and Dad are ecstatic in anticipation of the rewards of 'parenthood'.

Hardly, however, has the new one arrived home, before a bit of that ecstatic joy is dampened. Changes in routine, feeding and caring for the new born, and lack of sleep are but a few of the adjustments necessary. Thank goodness, just as with my challenges with the hacking of my air miles, competent relatives, friends, and professionals are delighted to help. Often advice reflects mixed opinions of current childcare techniques. For example, Remember Parent: "You'd better eat those last THREE cookies before your FOUR children bound in the door."

To truly appreciate joy, a person needs to have experienced a bit of sadness. Growing up I took healthy knees for granted, in fact, really not thinking about them at all. Now, with knee replacements for each, almost everyday I say a little prayer of gratitude for 'un-aching' knees. Sometimes a person must experience financial or work challenges, before really being grateful for the bountiful blessings of food, family, and colorful flower beds that have surrounded their days for so many moons. My restoration process, however, took the help of many people, including medical, therapy, and numerous friends, along with the helping hand of the Great Physician, God Himself.

I think our 'friend' Satan schemes and disguises his actions designed to sound so exciting and desirable. Sometimes it takes a friend, a Friend called Jesus and/or His earth followers, to rescue an ordinary human person from disaster with our spiritual life. *"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith"* (1 Peter 5:8-9a). GREAT NEWS, however. JESUS SAVES! So . . .



BE ALERT FOR PHYSICAL SCAMS — But also for — SATAN INITIATED SPIRITUAL SCAMS

WHEN CHALLENGES COME — GRAB ONTO GOD'S HELPING HAND