

Subj: Typing my way through December 20
Date: Sat, Dec 21, 1996 5:33 AM EDT
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Dear Mom, Dad, Siblings, and Sibs-in-law,

My project right now is to work through my anger. I've already accomplished what I needed right now by posing you as my imaginary audience, so if you feel any discomfort reading this triatribe, feel free to direct these bits, bytes, and gnashings of dentition to the round file.

"But behold, I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good."

We could have just said it was hyperbole and a defective translation, but the Father commanded His resurrected, Glorified, Son, in whom He was well pleased, to deliver these words to the Nephites, too. Tough stuff!

Today was our 28th wedding anniversary. A few days ago I posted a message to a couple of my Internet divorce support groups requesting their feelings about observing their wedding anniversary. I got about 50/50 for and against, from both sexes. The women who were for it said: please not a phony expression of love, but thanks for the good that there was and showing some respect for me.

On my way to Novatek one day this week I noticed a little billboard on the Springville Road: "Doc says give her a gift certificate." ("Doc" is the owner of our favorite restaurant, Magleby's). So I obeyed, got the certificate, and a card. When I checked my E-mail that night there was an inflammatory note from her denying some of her recent misdeeds, blaming my distress about them on my distorted sense of reality, and totally distorting some things I had tried to communicate. But I had already chosen kindness, and the anger rolled off like water of a duck's . . . well, to be honest, not quite that cleanly, but not quite like Brer' Bear off the Tar Baby.

The card depicted a young Navajo girl in beautiful red rock surroundings hugging a doll. Inside it said "wishing I could send you a smile and a hug." Here was my message:

December 20, 1996

Dear Betsy,

I don't know how you feel about this day. I want you to be able to get on with your life, and if you would prefer that I not observe this and similar occasions, I will respect your wishes.

I myself wish to remember December 20, 1968 as the beginning of a long marriage, filled with much joy and happiness. Nothing can rob us of the memories of the good that was in it. I hope with all my heart that through our Savior's infinite mercy that which was wrong in it will be eventually healed -- even if I must wait until the resurrection.

Thank you for the good times. Thank you for nine wonderful children. Thank you for the good influence you have been in their lives.

I know that this is a dark time for both of us, and undoubtedly much difficulty lies ahead. I sincerely want to try harder to acknowledge your viewpoint, to work with you within the framework of reality, to cooperate

with you for the good of our children, and to leave judgement to God.

Regarding the message of this card: this is my sincere wish. I am not yet confident that I could deliver either a smile or a hug personally, but I do wish I could, and someday I might. I have learned that I can pray sincerely for your health, happiness, and well_being, and I do so daily.

The enclosed gift certificates are for you, no strings attached, in honor of any or all of the following, (whichever you feel most comfortable with):
our
anniversary, Christmas, and Joseph Smith's birthday.

With sincere respect,

Tracy

I had sent her a card and 28 roses (one for each year of our marriage and each day of our separation) in September asking for one more chance to save the marriage by seeing our counsellor together -- a promise which she had previously broken and which signalled to me that she really wanted the marriage to end). I expressed my love for her and told her I would wait patiently for her reply and keep the offer open until the divorce became final. I begged her to keep my initiative very confidential so as not to raise false hopes with the children. Without so much as acknowledging my note she told many others about it, saying I was putting unbearable pressure on "all of us" and making "our" lives chaotic. So she did tell the children, and used my initiative against me. Her answer, three weeks later, was a psychoanalytical dismissal of my feelings as part of a destructive cycle.

Although I still keep that offer open, I have gone through the mourning for the marriage and accept that it is dead. The anniversary note was not about saving the marriage -- just trying to have a more peaceful divorce.

I awakened this morning (our anniversary) aching to hold her in my arms,

and
sad, but no longer angry. I've been tempted several times with anger
during
the day, but each time have caught myself and said a silent prayer.

This evening I called Betsy to ask permission to visit Susanna in the house.

(She has forbidden me to enter it without her prior permission and presence). Suzy and Patrick are leaving for law school in Texas early tomorrow morning, and I missed them when they came by my place earlier in the evening to give me a Christmas gift of a framed photo of them with Libby.

When she answered the phone I said "Hi, Betsy, Happy anniversary". "Oh, that!" was her answer. (Didn't acknowledge the card or gift, but I truly had resolved not to care about her response, and miracle of miracles, I felt no anger -- just sadness). I asked if I could come to the home to say goodbye to Suzy. She didn't answer -- just handed the phone to Suzy. I took a pot of boiled new England dinner that I'd prepared for the children last night (only Spencer came, so I had taken him out to dinner and to a movie -- something I couldn't have afforded if they'd all come) and a tray of fresh brownies. She didn't even show her face when I came to the house. But I had a sweet 5-minute goodbye with Suzy.

That's the third time I've been in the house in 5 months -- hope I don't get in trouble for not having her explicit permission.

All the kids were there with Suzy's best friend, visiting with each other, making the place bright with their joyful laughter. Mary, was putting henna in Suzy's hair and they were all making wisecracks about the mess. I longed so much to belong there with them. That's why I'm asking for joint custody and "nesting." (The kids stay in the home and the parents take turns on the "nest" -- usually one week at a time). It just isn't fair in a "no-fault"

divorce for the mother to banish the father from the home and make his access to his children so difficult. I'm really praying hard and asking many others to pray that her heart will be softened on this issue. Would you, too?

I'm not asking you to take sides -- I'm grateful to all of you for the respect and care you have taken in this difficult situation. Please just pray that I can have decent access to my children.

Oh, I do still pray for reconciliation and saving the marriage, too, but I know the way things are now the divorce (or at least the separation) is necessary for my survival. I truly do not believe I could have survived much longer in the atmosphere that developed over the last two years. This prayer is more of a "Thy will be done" kind of thing. There could yet be a miracle. Patience and waiting. That, and faith. "I believe, help thou my unbelief."

I started to cry after I left the house and had a good bawl in the car, then went for my nightly walk in the canyon (tonight Provo canyon) and got my equilibrium back. The canyon is about the only place I can sing hymns and pray aloud without concern of others hearing. Not only do I rarely encounter another soul at night, but the wind in the trees and the sound of the river drown my voice. The many beautiful reminders of the Creation help me feel closer to God. It's as close to a temple-like setting as I can have right now. I came home feeling that life is worth living and truly hoping that my anger will soon be behind me.

Thanks to all of you for your love and support, and wishing you all pure Christmas joy,

Tracy

PS: Please treat as extremely confidential any thoughts or speculations I have expressed about Betsy and I ever getting back together. Like some of the promises in our Patriarchal blessings, this hope might not be realized till the resurrection, and rumors of this support could be very harmful to the children.

PPS to Sherlene, who sent me a very interesting dissertation on "serial marriage" today (you'll have to guess whether she's for or against it):

Dear Sherlene,

Aw shucks! No rich widow or divorcee for me? How about this instead?

" . . . Coriantum took to wife, in his old age, a young maid, and begat sons and daughters . . ." (Ether 9:24).

J/K! :<)

PPPS:

Q: BTW, what do you think my favorite Internet abbreviation is?

A: HTH (hope this helps!)

PPPPS: I copy this to Daniel the younger because he's my terribly honest reality check and helps me to perceive things from the children's point-of-view. He has some difficulties with the concept of nesting -- would

enjoy hearing from each of you on the subject, reserving, as always, the right to ignore your advice!

PPPPPS: Do Charlotte & Nancy have E-mail addresses? ☐

PPPPPPS and truly the last: Liz, I got your package today. Duh, who am I supposed to give to this year?

----- Headers -----