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# A GENERATION IN NEED!

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## Sheets, Magnets Ministry and Christmas ?

What do Sheets, Magnets, Ministry and Christmas have to do with each other? Well if you're not following my logic... read on... there is a design connecting them together...

We were living on St. Anthony Street at the time, so I couldn't have been more than five years old. I was laying on my parents' bed and my Dad came in with a basket of newly washed sheets that had been drying on the clothesline in the fresh air outside. He raised the basket up over my head and slowly emptied it out on top of me. I was buried in a sea of clothes and could smell the incredible fresh air locked inside of them. Like a sponge that soaks up and holds water, somehow clothes dried on the line capture the essence of a warm breezy day. He then laughingly helped me resurface and he picked up one of the white fitted sheets - the ones with the elastic sewn in - and he made something that looked like a sail by stretching the corner portion out with both hands and he said, "Now this would make a great parachute." We talked about how neat it would be to have a parachute like that... the following day we cut up an older fitted sheet and made one! I remember playing with it for such a long time. Over and over again I would throw it off the back porch and watch it sway like a pendulum, floating my army figure

now promoted to paratrooper safely down to the ground below. But for me the real joy was not playing with it, but rather the feeling associated with the "idea" of making it. It was the idea of taking something that was not meant for something and creatively turning it into something new. I believe it was at that moment the creative side of me was ignited! At that moment ... an engineer was born!

Fast forward a few years to fourth grade. We were studying electricity in our science class and I had just learned how to create an electromagnet. I made one for myself at home by wrapping a wire around a large spike nail in tight coils and connecting each end of the wire to the terminals of a dry cell battery. This produced a magnet capable of picking up small paperclips. I remember playing with it at the kitchen table amusing myself pretending I was a crane operator picking up paperclips from a pile and then dropping them onto another pile by disconnecting one of the wires. I was so amazed! As I sat at the kitchen table doing my thing, my mom was in front of me at the kitchen sink washing dishes with her back facing me. My dad was in the living room next to the kitchen watching television. It must have been winter because shortly after dinner it was already dark. So... here I am picking up paper clips when this idea pops into my head... "If this small battery is capable of picking up small paper clips..... what would happen if I jammed each end of this wire into the wall socket be-

hind me? I had visions of pots and pans flying out of the cabinets toward my massive device. Even the pan in my mothers hand would not be held back from the powers of my super magnet! I didn't realize I was about to discover something in electronic theory, something I wouldn't completely understand until years later in college when I was taking classes in electronics. But to put it simply, when using direct current (DC) like my battery, a coil has an inductive-reactance that produces eddy currents that act on the iron in the nail and creates a magnet. But to an alternating current (AC), the current found in household wall sockets, there is no magnet because it becomes a direct short circuit! So here I am with my dreams of a super magnet... I jam one end into the



wall socket and then the other. Immediately there were quick flashes like lightning and sparks shooting out followed by complete darkness. The lights are out, the TV in the living room is out, and I am sitting completely in shock (pun intended). My father calls out from the dark, "What

happened?" I responded like any fourth grader... "I don't know..." My Dad checked outside to see if the whole neighborhood was out, but it seemed to only be impacting our house. He headed downstairs to the fuse box to check things out and soon the lights come back on. As Dad was making his way back up the cellar stairs he called out to my mother, "There was a fuse blown, were you running anything?" "No," she replied. When he got to the top of the stairs and stood in the kitchen with the lights on, it was obvious to him my magnet setup had something to do with it. "What happened?" he asked directing his attention toward me. Again I proclaimed, "I don't know..." But the evidence behind me said different, a scorched and blackened wall socket and a small burnt section of wallpaper forced me to revise my answer to be more in line with the truth. I don't remember any kind of punishment metered out, but I do remember the stern warnings about the danger of electricity. Something I never forgot!

I did become an engineer, and for many years satisfied my need to design, and redesign while never forgetting the danger that can accompany the misuse of a design. And now having left high-tech so many years ago to bring the Gospel to students and faculty on college campuses... I am still an engineer of sorts... I'm still thinking of new ways to creatively paint the Gospel on the canvas of our culture and individual hearts, in ways that resonate and touch the broken and hurting world all around us. Whether we realize it or not we all have the desire to create, maintain and appreciate a good design. It's the natural outcome of being created in the image of a God who creates. In the beginning when God created, He created with a God-honoring pur-

pose to exalt and glorify each person within the trinity selflessly. And from that first design spoken into existence every other design was intended to be in sync with that divine purpose. Like the dangers of my revised electromagnet there are dangers when we skew away from a God-centered design. When sex, money, power and fame are driven by a design aimed at self gratification there is a misuse of the original design. However when those things are in sync... we find love and intimacy, we find charity and generosity, we find injustices made right, and we find role-models worth imitating. So what would happen if you were to close your eyes right now... and imagine your Heavenly Father has just poured out on you a full basket of pure white sheets, freshly washed and dried by the Son - resources for you to design with... You breath in the freshness of the Holy Spirit embedded in the fabric, you feel energized and full of hope and great joy... You pray about what new ways you might use these resources for God-honoring designs. And you smile... because now you are ready for Christmas!

Every design and design implementation has associated costs. December is an important month for us from a support raising perspective. For the first time in over 15 years our account balance actually bottomed out in October. It has since come back some, but the trend is not as favorable for sustaining a positive balance. Increased costs and expenses this past year have simply drained our account. When looking at our support needs from a committed perspective (individuals and churches who support us on an ongoing basis) we are receiving approximately 75% of what is needed. The remaining 25% comes from intermittent and one-time donations. Raising support is hard work

and time consuming but so valuable to the ministry we do! It's through our support raising efforts that a solid prayer base is established. It's through support raising that unchurched students begin to grasp that there are individuals, churches, and businesses who actually value and care about them. It's through support raising that some individuals are challenged and receive the call to campus ministry (*happened to me!*). And lastly it's through support raising that our supporters are blessed to see this "generation in need" being reached and transformed by the Gospel. Support raising is indeed ministry!

So would you please join us financially and prayerfully, either with an ongoing commitment or an end of the year (tax deductible) donation? If you're already supporting us, perhaps there's a possibility to make an increase? An average increment of 10% from churches and individuals could set us back on track. Please understand that I do not ask this in any way that diminishes my gratitude for your current generosity, and I am not asking with any expectations, only prayerful consideration. Thank you :)

Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!!!

=== JOE ===

**Be part of it:**

To join us in financial support just fill out the envelope enclosed with this newsletter including a check made out to Missions Door. If you don't have an envelope please include a separate note that you would like to support Joe and Annie Shea and how often in faith you plan to donate and mail to the address at the bottom of this page or simply go online to our website.