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Chronicles In December

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If you are new to my writings, I like to, from time to time, share some of my older journals from when I first got here at USP Tucson, in December of 2012. So much has happened, and there is so much growth in learning how to live in prison. Not every story is about who got stabbed, or some ruffian who doesn't know how to act; television has done a terrific job on making every fallen man worthless. My hope by my journals is to shed light that there is value in every man, but sometimes we as inmates have to see it in ourselves in other inmates.

The following journal comes from my December 19th, 2013 entry; at this time (June of 2016) has been almost 3 years, and the journal was about a year AFTER I got here. I think, when I write, I am only sharing maybe 10% of what I could actually write; consider that I've been writing for 3+ years... imagine what I can share.

Don't get confused here; I got here (USP Tucson) early December of 2012, and started writing entries a week later, by mid December of 2012. THIS entry is based off almost a year AFTER I got here, mid-December of 2013. As I type this, it is June of 2016.

Anywhere, as I always say, when there is a point I need to share more, or "color" in some extra comments, I will "pause" during the journal, to kinda step out of the thought to share more insight with you. Ok, let's begin...

December 19th, 2013: It's 9am on a canteen Thursday. Yesterday we got our Christmas Package, which was BETTER than last year's. We got Egg Nog too. Today, while I was taking a shower, I was reminded of how God blessed us to be able to receive a nice package. Everybody got one: from the best to the worst of us. God blessed us all, and I was reminded of how God prospered us all.

(PAUSE: In Federal prisons, inmates get what is called a "Christmas Package"; a bag full of goodies, dependant on the compound. Some get snacks, some hygiene, some clothing, or some mix. USP Tucson gives out a big plastic bag of snacks. It's a good morale boost during the holidays, and we all enjoy it.

I noted early that God blessed us: surely He did, but note, it's not the prison that GAVE it to us. The packages are paid for by OUR canteen money. The more we spend in the year in canteen, the better the package. Some thought that the prison actually spent money on us...

pardon me while I laugh a few minutes....

Anyway, let's continue...)

My prayer is often for healing, prosperity and protection for us. So God came through for us yesterday. He also gave me wisdom of how to deal with Abe. For a whole day, I didn't talk to him, and he was wondering what he did to make me mad. I forgave him long before, but how to deal with it, I wasn't sure. I had planned what I was going to say; I had it all figured out.

(PAUSE: If you've read a number of my journals, you know of Abe. Abe was so much like my little brother, and we were cellies for a time. He was like 22 (but looked like he was 18), and we got along very well. We did have differences, but we always talked it out. But at this period of time, we were playing around, and he bit my finger, and I was upset about it. And when I get upset at somebody, I don't talk to them.

I knew I had to talk to him sometime, but I was fuming as to what to do about it. But I also knew I had to forgive the kid. I knew he didn't mean it, but I had to make a point. So for a day or so, I didn't speak to him... he knew something was wrong, but didn't know how to deal with it. It was up to me, the older one, to resolve this situation. Ok, let's continue...)

Yesterday afternoon, while we were on lockdown to get our Christmas Package, it was quiet in our cell. Abe sat on his bed, quiet...and confused...and sad. I looked at him,

deciding what to say, and when. But at that moment, something said to me, "pull up a chair right in front of him".

So I took a chair, sat it directly in front of him, as he sat on his bed, facing me. I sat down, looking directly at him with a neutral look. After a few seconds, Abe managed to look at me, and said, "Yes, Mr. Fred?"

I leaned over to him, and gently said to him, "If you EVER bite me like that again..." and showed him the blood clot on my left pinky, courtesy of Abe. I left the sentence trailing, not finishing it. I had wanted to say what I'd do to him... or what I SHOULD have done to him. But for the life of me, I couldn't say it. It was like the Spirit was holding my tongue, as if to say, "you've said enough".

So Abe sees what his bite did, and was quite apologetic. The way he said, "I'm sorry" was similar to a repentive child to his dad. How could I NOT forgive him? And I figured it might get emotional, so I was quick to say, "It's ok". He told me he didn't know why I was mad at him, and had to figure out how to talk to me. But once he said he was sorry, I quickly forgave him. Then, as a gesture of good will, and to reconnect us as cellies, I playfully tapped the kid on the nose, and said, "Now, can I have my buddy back?", to which he said, "You never lost him."

(PAUSE: I mentioned how Abe and I got along; guys, you have no idea how important it is to have a good friendship

with a person while you're doing time. Staff and officers like to say that there is no friends in prison; that is a lie. You can have good friends if you are yourself a friend.

In this instance, Abe and I were very tight, but that incident where he bit me caused a momentary rift. But I look at Abe, and many guys I have befriended here, like little brothers. I sat in front of Abe like a big brother would his little brother (Abe looked younger than 22), and talked to him with compassion, not of anger. I wasn't MAD at him, and I am glad God held me in check. I have had similar friendships with many guys here in the 3 years I've been here, but it comes with some level of maturity and a lot of love of Christ in you. A normal guy would have reacted much differently; again, I am glad I acted more wisely with the kid. He didn't mean to hurt me, I understand that clearly. Ok, let's continue...)

So immediately I changed gears, and we started going over our Christmas Packages. It wasn't how I planned... but it worked out perfectly. That wasn't MY plan...it was God's plan, to which I rejoice. I took the time this morning to thank God for blessing us with the Christmas Packages, and the wisdom to deal kindly with Abe. Now, today, this afternoon, we have canteen about 1:45 to 2pm. I'll be ready.

Craig has repeatedly reminded us to get stuff for the get-together... to which is wearing me out. 3 times he's reminded us to get the stuff; it's making me upset. There's issues I have with this: First, Craig doesn't have money...how

is HE helping buy the stuff? He's bummed Abe to buy him some Hot Cocoa for his Pagan celebration; why don't he buy it himself? And if he can't spare the \$1.85 for that, how is he footing the \$4-\$5 that WE'RE spending? I don't like that.

(PAUSE: During the Christmas season, often guys get together to try to make a special meal, using items we can purchase through the commissary. My first Christmas here, I was involved in 3 different "get-togethers". When you are invited to one, they give you a list of what you need to get from the canteen. Most times guys will make burritos, filled with rice, meat and cheese. Some might make a pizza...

Don't ask me how they do that...takes too long, maybe another time, but it IS delicious. But at the time of this journal, my concern was that the guy here (Craig) was bugging me about getting the stuff, when he didn't have it himself. Now, this was 2013; Craig is a good guy, and he's returned to his Christian beliefs since the 2013 entry; so much has changed. But let's continue...)

And second, he keeps telling us to get it to him as soon as possible...but we're supposed to do this on the 27th...the 27th!!! Why do you need all the items NOW? Is Craig going to sit on OUR items for EIGHT days? Why? Why is he so aggressive to get all the stuff in days, over a week before it is needed? I worry about this from a guy who likely didn't put a penny in the kitty, but is sitting on \$30+ of canteen for over a week! If the event is the 27th, I'll wait until next

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Monday, maybe Tuesday. That's the 23rd or 24th... still DAYS before the event. I'm just not comfortable giving Craig my stuff too early. He's not that reliable... I sold him my Egg Nog for 2 USED stamps... but I took it, I'm a sucker for stamps. But I'm not doing that anymore...not with Craig.

He traded cookies for Abe's Egg Nog...not a fair deal to Abe. So I don't really trust Craig with my stuff... nor do I trust the prison to hold it's own, and not go on lockdown inside the next 8 days. I don't trust that, and we end up on the short end of the stick. So I'll buy the things needed...but I'm not giving Craig the stuff until I'M ready, not when he tells us. If he's not put a dime in this, he can't rightly direct us to do it his way.

Black's event is on the 24th, so it makes sense to get it to him by the 21st or 22nd...I get that...and I'm only giving pasta sauce. The Louisiana guy's event is the 28th, but because it's on the 28th, AND we've got guys from different dorms, it's reasonable to get it to Blade as soon as I can. But Craig is here in the block, and hasn't paid for HIS share (likely got Alex to foot his part) and hasn't been the fairest guy to deal with; I'll have to conduct my affairs with discretion. Anyway, close to recall...then lunch...then canteen.

(PAUSE: I mentioned "Black" and "Blade". Those guys were other inmates having other "get-togethers" that I was invited to, so I had to buy stuff for them too. Everybody had

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to "chip in" to make a spread. In Black's case, he was making pizza, fried rice, a cheesecake and giving out cans of soda...not bad at all. My part in that was to buy 6-7 packages of pasta sauce, to help Black make the pizzas. Not a problem.

Blade had burritos, chips and soda...not bad either. I can't remember what I had to buy, I think some Nachos and summer sausage. That turned out very well, and I enjoyed it. I took some of the burritos back to the dorm to share with Abe. I ended up enjoying Craig's too, eventually. I was just concerned about how he bugs us to get the stuff. But everything turned out ok. Craig's get together went ok, I think there was like 8 of us in his cell with a spicy nacho bowl and cheesecake.

These kinda get-togethers can be fun, and to be invited to a few is humbling, but can be a little costly. I joked with my mom, "I may have to hide; everytime I go outside, I get invited to another get-together."

So that's part of my journal, just a little bit of how I dealt with my cellie, and how I felt about a few of the holiday get-togethers. Much more to share later. Until then...

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