

# Have You Brightened Anyone's Day Recently?

By Roy Lawrence

**M**y wife and I are lucky enough to have a house by the sea, not far from New Brighton on the Wirral coast of England. Most days I go for a walk along the seafront. There I meet all kinds of people, who are also out to take the air.

They sometimes include a local cyclist who has come to recognise me. When he meets me, he always calls out: 'Good morning, Major!'

It is quite in vain that on more than one occasion I have told him that, though I was once in the army as a national serviceman, I never rose to the dizzy rank of Major. But it never seems to change his greeting.

He reminds me of an old nun in Liverpool who has the habit of addressing all clergy as 'Bishop'. I met her some years ago whilst leading a conference at the convent where she lives. She greeted me warmly: 'It is lovely to have you with us today, Bishop'. I explained to her that I was a fairly lowly Church of England Vicar, a very long way from being a Bishop, but soon she was at it again. 'Can I make you a cup of tea, Bishop? Is there anything you need for the conference, Bishop?'

'Sister, Sister,' I said. 'I really am not a Bishop.' Then she came clean. 'I know you're not', she said, 'but I call all clergy "Bishop". I find it brightens their day!'

Well, what about you and me? I wonder, have you and I managed to brighten anyone's day recently?

## Two Timely Tales

There are various ways of doing it. It could be by something you say—as with the cyclist on the prom or the nun at the convent. Or perhaps by other instances, like these two that come to mind.

When our two sons were at school, we sometimes used to take them to a nearby café for tea and cakes. There we would be served by an elderly waitress, who adopted the practice of addressing all the schoolboys as 'Young Master'. It was regarded as something of a joke at school but you could see that quite a number of days were brightened by it. It may seem a small thing, but it is better to brighten someone's day than to darken it.

Perhaps even more important than the way in which we speak is the way in which we listen, or perhaps fail to listen.

If I go back in my own mind to my teenage days, I remember an occasion when I attended a residential conference. I knew absolutely nobody who was present. Everybody else seemed to me to know each other well. They were chatting away happily at lunchtime on the first day, while I sat on my own, feeling increasingly isolated and insecure. Then suddenly there was an elderly clergyman sitting next to me. He smiled and said: 'I don't think we have met yet. Tell me about yourself'. He was a brilliant listener, and in no time at all I found myself telling him all about myself. He seemed to find it interesting. In fact he seemed to find me interesting, and it was not long before my gloom started to lift, my day started to brighten, and from then on I began to enjoy everything that was to follow.



## Little Things Mean a Lot

Quite little things can have the effect of brightening the day for someone. St David, the patron saint of Wales, seemed to know this well. It is said that his last words to his followers were: 'Do the little things in life'.

There is, I think, a secret behind the ability to brighten a day for others, whether by the way we speak, or by the way we listen, or by some small act of courtesy or care. It lies in believing that every human being is significant and worthwhile. The Bible tells us that we were all made in the image of God, and even though we have damaged and distorted that image, it is important to know that we can look for it in everyone we meet.

George Hoare, a British magazine writer, understood this very well. He used to quote a little poem, which had come into his mind one day when he was preparing to give a talk to a church group. It went like this:

I care not what a man may  
be, as long as in him the Christ  
I see.

George always looked for the Christ in everyone. I reckon that this was why, like so many others, I invariably felt better for being with him.

He used to make me think of some words of CS Lewis, the writer of the Narnia stories and *The Screwtape Letters*. I was deeply affected by CS Lewis in my earlier years, and my growth as a Christian was influenced by him in no small way. Once I was privileged to meet him.

Many of the things he said and wrote have remained fixed in my mind. One of them was this: 'After the blessed sacrament, the holiest sight your eyes will ever see is that of the person you happen to find next to you'. The world would become a better and brighter place, if we were all to accept this perspective.

So here's to CS Lewis and St. David and George Hoare and the elderly clergyman who listened to me at the conference. To the old waitress who called the school-boys 'Young Master' and the Sister in the Liverpool convent and my friend on his bicycle on the New Brighton prom.

If we learn from them, then, I think I can promise you, the world will light up just a little and, as the Chinese proverb puts it: 'It is better to light even a small candle than to shout curses at the darkness!'

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# You Better Slow Down

*By David L Weatherford*

Have you ever watched  
kids on a merry-go-round,  
Or listened to rain  
slapping the ground?  
Ever followed a butterfly's  
erratic flight,  
Or gazed at the sun  
fading into the night?

*You better slow down,  
don't dance so fast,  
Time is short, the music won't last.*

Do you run through each day  
on the fly,  
When you ask 'How are you?',  
do you hear the reply?  
When the day is done, do you lie in your bed,  
With the next hundred chores running  
through your head?

*You better slow down, don't dance so fast,  
Time is short, the music won't last.*

Ever told your child, we'll do it tomorrow,  
And in your haste not seen his sorrow?  
Ever lost touch, let a good friendship die,  
'Cause you never had time to call and say 'Hi'?

*You better slow down, don't dance so fast,  
time is short, the music won't last.*

When you run so fast to get somewhere,  
you miss half the fun of getting there.  
When you worry and hurry through your day,  
it's like an unopened gift thrown away.

Life is not a race,  
so take it slower,  
Hear the music  
before the song is over.