

What
REALLY
Matters?

Echoes of Grace

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contents



3 What Really Matters?



9 Finding Peace



12 Sweet Ride

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What **REALLY** Matters?

One hundred thousand pounds of dynamite along with gas, gunpowder, detonators and fuses waited for use in the copper mine up in the hills five miles away from Nacozari, Mexico. Their explosive might lay quietly in the storage dump of the bustling town of five thousand nestled in a bowl-like valley a little south of the Arizona border. Just outside the vast storage dump, Jesús Garcia climbed back up into steam engine #2 to drag the open-topped boxcars of hay, about ten thousand pounds of dynamite in wooden boxes and supplies up the steep grade to the mine. As the train began to pull out of the yard, sparks flew out of the smoke stack and settled on one of the dynamite crates. Smoke quickly began drifting up out of its sides. It was shortly after 2:00 p.m., November 7, 1907, less than a week until Jesús planned to celebrate his twenty-fourth birthday.

Despite his age, Jesús Garcia Corona was already highly respected and loved. He'd begun work at the American-run mine at seventeen years old and with-

in only three years had risen from waterboy through four promotions to full-fledged train engineer. The Moctezuma Copper Corporation thought enough of him to send him to the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. His reputation for his excellent work ethic and clear head had grown steadily. Just the month before, the brakes of his wood-fired steam engine had failed while running on the steep grade. Jesús immediately reversed the engines, dumped sand on the tracks to increase friction and got the train stopped only fifteen feet from the end of the tracks.

The handsome Jesús with his dark black moustache and jaunty hat found plenty of time for his childhood sweetheart, María de Jesús Soqui. Now that she was his fiancée, he frequently found occasions to hire the best bands in town to serenade her.

Back at the supply depot in Nacozari, a mine official stepped from his office and spotted the smoking box of dynamite. His screams sent García and his crew scrambling to put out the fire.

But sparks and wind ignited the box cars filled with hay and the smoke from the dynamite box thickened steadily. Then small flames began to spurt from the box. Over the din and smoke a voice rang out, "Get out... go away... run... leave me alone!" The fireman was kicked from the cab and the remaining crew or-



dered to decouple cars that hadn't caught fire. Then Jesús slammed the engine to full throttle and raced for the edge of town. He couldn't let the train run by itself; the steam would quickly die out and the engine roll back down the grade toward the dynamite warehouse, his fiancée, his mother and the other five thousand unsuspecting residents. Jesús García gunned for the far side of a small ridge that would shield the town from the railroad tracks.

Nearly two thousand years ago Jesús García's namesake sat in a large upper room somewhere in a far larger town than Nacozari and on the edge of a far more explosive situation. For four thousand years, the situation had been worsening and difficulty mounting. Unless something could be done, all those He loved faced certain destruction.

Straining with all its might, the little engine passed behind the small ridge that shielded Nacozari. Ahead lay a small Camp 6, something like a small suburb to the town. If Jesús could just make it past the camp he would be able to leap from the train and let it roll ahead into a mountain wilderness. He cleared the final two houses. Only 160 more feet and he could bail out.

Thousands of years before Jesus Christ had no plans for "bailing out." He allowed Himself to be seized by those that hated Him and brought to an unjust trial. There the judge declared, **"I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him"** (Luke 23:14), just prior to turning Him over to

the mob to be cruelly tortured. The Lord Jesus Christ knew exactly what He had to do in order to liberate the ones He loved from the explosive, destructive mess of disobedience and sin that they (and we) had created. His plan included horrific suffering where He would be punished by a holy God in order to take away the sin of the world. Matthew 27:42 says, **“He saved others; Himself He cannot save.”** And so calmly, consciously, purposefully He offered Himself up as a sacrifice for sin.

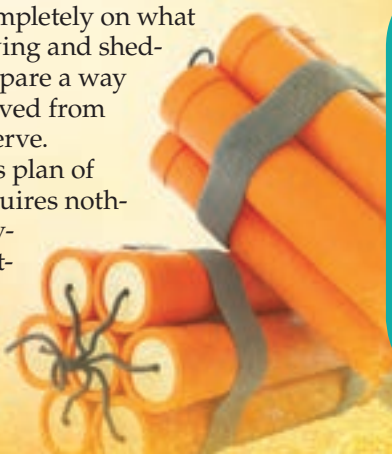
Below in Nacozari, at 2:20 p.m., windows across town were shattered by the sudden detonation of ten thousand pounds of dynamite. For two minutes, gravel and hunks of metal rained from the November skies. And then it was over. Somewhere near Camp 6, searchers found a single boot with a few unrecognizable remains attached. Ashes from the remains and the boot are now buried near a beautiful bronze bust commemorating “The Hero of Nacozari.” This fall, the town, now known as Nacozari de García, will hold its annual parade on November 7 in honor of their fallen hero. When someone stubs their toe and yells “Jesus,” they aren’t talking about Jesús García. A monument stands in Mexico’s capital in his honor.

Of course, some honor the memory of Jesus Christ as well. But many hate, despise or ignore Him or scream His name when they are angry and frustrated. Why? No doubt there are many reasons, but this one at least is fundamental: the “Lord” at the front of His full title. He’s not just a loving friend, but also someone with authority over us. Any

supreme authority over us exposes the rebellion hidden inside our sinful nature. Remember when one of our parents or our teachers ordered us to do something that went against our personal wishes, hopes and “what made sense” at the time? Regardless of whether our temper flamed up outwardly or our resentment smoked inside, the response proved what kind of hearts we have—rebellious ones. **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked”** (Jeremiah 17:9).

Another key reason for the hatred is tucked away in this wonderful statement from His Word. See if you can find it. **“When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”** (Romans 5:6). No one in Nacozari had to admit they were helpless or ungodly to benefit from Jesús García’s courage. But to receive the benefit from Christ’s death on the cross, we must admit that we have disobeyed and sinned against a holy God. Unable to rescue ourselves, we depend completely on what Jesus Christ did in dying and shedding His blood to prepare a way where we could be saved from the judgment we deserve.

The beauty of God’s plan of salvation is that it requires nothing from us but receiving it. Jesús García acted with monumental courage—literally. However, he acted



without prior plan for the good of ones he loved and with hope that he would escape death. He almost made it before suffering instant death. The Lord Jesus Christ with clear purpose acted this way. **“When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son”** (Romans 5:10). That death involved hardly-imaginable physical suffering on a cross and unimaginable suffering from God as punishment for sin He had not committed.

What really mattered for all those in Nacozari on November 7, 1907, wasn't the local soccer match or the lunch menu—it was the courage and sacrifice of Jesús García. What really matters to you today isn't your next raise or who wins the next World Cup—it's how you respond to the love shown to you by Jesus Christ. **“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”** (John 3:36). Will you honor the Son of God by believing and receiving what He says?

Find out more about what really matters in the next story, *Finding Peace*. ◀



FINDING PEACE

In Enoree, South Carolina, during a choir practice, a baby at the gathering began crying. The choir director, who was the baby's grandmother, took him and tried to comfort him, but to no avail. The baby was uneasy. Another woman said, "Give him to me." She held him, but he continued to cry.

He was held by another woman, and he continued to cry. Eventually, his father stepped up and offered to hold him. As soon as he picked up the baby, he stopped crying and soon fell asleep.

"Interesting," said the grandmother. "He found peace in the arms of his daddy."

This little episode reminded me of the famous quote: "You made us for Yourself, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in You." How true.

So often in life, people do all sorts of things to find peace. Many turn to drugs and alcohol, and others turn to money and fame. Some engage in New Age practices, and some try different religions, or they live an immoral lifestyle. Despite their best efforts, they still come up short and find themselves empty. They find there is a hole

or void in their lives that cannot be filled by the things of this world. In all honesty, it is a hole that only God can fill.

The Bible tells us that real peace and lasting fulfillment come through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Romans 5:1). Jesus came into the world and died for our sins. He arose from the grave and is alive to give us peace, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. He offers these blessings as a free gift because of His love for us. **“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Romans 6:23).

Isn't this wonderful news? God, the creator of the universe, loves us so much that He sent His Son into the world to free us from sin and guilt. He also came to free us from judgment, the penalty of sin, which is eternal separation from God. **“God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”** (John 3:17-18).

Jesus invites us to come to Him. **“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28).

Are you in need of rest? Have you been searching for peace? Do you need the forgiveness of

sins? Then come to Jesus today. Ask Him for forgiveness and the free gift of eternal life. He has promised that all who come to Him will be accepted. **“Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”** (John 6:37).

Simply come as you are. Like the baby who found peace in the arms of his daddy, if you believe, you will find peace in the arms of your heavenly Father. Then you will have what really matters — not just now, but forever.

Find out about one thing that doesn't satisfy in the next story, *Sweet Ride*. ◀

Sweet Ride

Conor Delaney sells limited-production Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT's with gull-wing doors, Bentleys and other exotic cars that might cost more than your house. In fact, the average price of the cars he sold last year ran a more-than-modest \$150,000. Sweet rides indeed. His select group of celebrity clients spent over \$16,000,000 with Delaney's Celebrity Auto Group.

What's more fascinating is that the average number of cars bought per year runs from two to twelve. That's right. Some people don't buy the 2014 model; they buy the January 2014 model, the February 2014 model, the March 2014 model... And then they keep on doing the same thing year after year. These aren't stock cars off the lot either; many have custom modifications like entertainment centers.

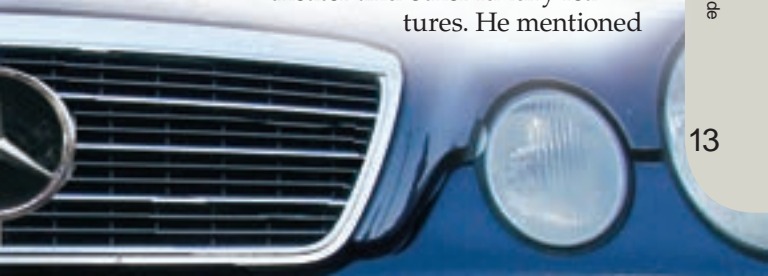
So what's not to like about that? Well, a lot actually. But before we get to the obvious reason that's probably staring you in the face, con-



sider this: Most of these clients are desperate for privacy. Delaney says, "When they text me every few months to give me a new phone number, they know it's safe." Those celebrities can't even hang on to a private cell number for more than a couple of months before they need to change it to run from the hoard of their pursuers. As Delaney says, "Privacy is huge for athletes."

That reminds me of my former neighbor. He worked for a heating and air conditioning company that specialized in the homes of celebrities in the Chicago area where I live. When we dropped by his apartment, he launched into a flow of stories about local sports celebrities he'd met. But the story that stuck in my head was about the renowned basketball star, Michael Jordan.

Approaching Michael's 56,000-square-foot home, he was stopped at a large security gate with its obligatory security cameras. Once down the drive and into the mansion, he got his work done. Then Michael invited him to play a game of pool and take a tour of the small private movie theater and other luxury features. He mentioned



how Michael had to have his movies delivered to the house to avoid being mobbed at the local theater. He wore dark glasses and snuck into private rooms at the back of restaurants to find some semblance of peace. Incidentally, as of this writing, Michael can't seem to sell that house. It's been on the market for over two years and had many price cuts and a failed auction. It seems no one needs a home with a giant indoor basketball court, a cigar room and other trimmings.

There's nothing wrong with a home or a car. But they don't bring satisfaction, peace or even joy by themselves. If they did, then the celebrities buying sweet rides wouldn't need to grab a new one every month, year after year. One thing they crave, the peace to enjoy what they do have, is denied them. Satisfaction, in fact all that really matters, can only be found in a person—Jesus Christ. **“I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee”** (Jeremiah 31:3). That love can be deep, intimate, lasting, personal and its uniqueness privately shared with the One who loves you more than you can conceive. Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour? If you don't, read more of God's way of salvation outlined in this booklet and in His Word and turn to Him now, not tomorrow. ◀

PROFIT OR LOSS?

What will it profit, when life here is over,
Though great worldly wisdom I gain,
If, seeking knowledge, I utterly fail
The wisdom of God to obtain?

What will it profit, when life here is over,
Though gathering riches and fame,
If, gaining the world, I lose my own soul,
And in heaven unknown is my name?

What will it profit, when life here is over,
Though earth's farthest corners I see,
If, going my way and doing my will,
I miss what His love planned for me?

What will it profit, when life here is over,
Though earth's fleeting love has been mine,
If, seeking its gifts, I fail to secure
The riches of God's love divine?

What will it profit? My soul, stop and think
What balance that day will declare!
Life's record laid bare, will gain turn to loss
And leave me at last to despair?

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