

New Sticks

Christ the Redeemer Church
May 24, 2009
7th Sunday of Easter

Psalm 1
Rev Gary L. Smith
www.christredeemerchurch.com

(note from Carla Roberts, written after this service to her friends in Christ the Redeemer Church:

Dear Family,

Wow!! I feel so loved, blessed, and proud to be a part of such a caring church family. Please know that you are all loved too! Yesterday was a totally inspiring awesome day at Christ the Redeemer Church. Your prayers, support, and love mean the world to my family and me. I truly feel Gods arms around my family and me. The power of all the prayers is an overwhelming feeling.

The Lord does not give us more than we can handle, and he is walking beside us as we cross this new bridge in our lives. There were a few items that I could not find cards for, but I love everything, and from the bottom of my heart all the way to my bald head I love all of you and thank you.

*God Bless You All,
Carla*

There is an old saying in golf “Practice does not make perfect. Practice only makes permanent.” If you have a bad swing or use bad clubs, you are not going to get better at the game. You are just going to get more permanently worse. In order to improve you have to learn how to swing properly and use the correct clubs. Proper sticks. To improve you have to improve the fundamentals of your swing and to use good sticks.

In 1993 at Bitburg Air Base in Germany I rented a VIP set of Taylor-made golf clubs to play a round of golf with Bud Campbell. I fell in love that day with that set of Taylor-made clubs. The ball went straight and far with an easy swing. I have been meaning every since then to try and locate a similar set of clubs to play with.

Instead I settled to play with my same old clubs. I vowed to not spend money on good clubs until my score improved and until I played often enough to warrant spending the money. I stuck with my cheap clubs, swung harder and harder, and got more and more frustrated with my game over the years. 16 years of practicing with the wrong equipment.

Life just gets away from you. We live with intentions of improving our lives and our games but we just stick with playing with the same old set of sticks. We labor hard to change and improve but make little progress. We want to become better people but we stick with our same old ways, don't we?

This past week Randy wrote me an email and then called me and said, “Dear Gary, take this in the right spirit. Your golf clubs came over on the Mayflower. I am not playing with mine right now for several reasons. Why don't you borrow mine and play with them. If

you do borrow them, go to the driving range first to practice. They are different than those Mayflower-era clubs you use. And don't swing hard. Just let the sticks do the work."

Randy and Carla delivered the sticks to my house a week ago Saturday in the rain. **The sticks are Taylor-made. The kind I have been in love with since 1993.**

I was too impatient to go out to the driving range. So Quin and I went out this past week during lunch one day for 90-minutes of nine holes.

I swung easy and the ball went far. And straight. I never hit the green on the par-3 #2 175-yard hole over the water and through the woods at Aquarena Springs. I nailed it with the Taylor-made 5-iron. Sweet. Putted for a birdie on a most difficult hole.

Quin, a Mississippi boy who is a computer software engineer, said, "So the easier you swing the further the ball goes? Something is wrong with that formula."

"Happy are those who love the Lord's teachings and think about them day and night. They are strong, like a tree planted by a river. The tree produces fruit in season and its leaves do not die. Everything they do will succeed."

The tree by the river does not labor to produce fruit. It is the right material in the right place. It weathers storms and it does not labor. It stands resolutely in the right soil by the river of Life.

You got to have the right sticks in life. The right tools. We need God's Love and God's way to be the center of our thoughts and ways. We need to not swing so hard in life, pick up God's ways, and let His ways do the work for us.

Sometimes life just hands us new tools, even if we are not ready for them. Today all the women in the church have some new tools for Carla.

Carla is going through chemotherapy for her breast cancer. She is going home today with new tools and new notes from some of her dearest friends in life. Scarves. Hats. Note of love.

New challenges. New situations. New scarves. New awareness. New fears. New joys.

With the right sticks you just have to relax and swing easy and let the sticks do the work.

Friends of Carla, come forward and shower Carla with some new tools for her to use in life. New hats. New scarves. Notes of love and encouragement inside each hat and scarf. Carla will be like a tree planted by the river, standing steadfastly in new colorful hats and scarves of love, drinking from the River of Life and Love, resolutely facing the winds and rain that come in the coming days. She can stand peacefully and know that God will do the work within her that He needs to do.

Carla, here are five new sticks for this new chapter in your life. 5 wooden pocket crosses, made out of mesquite wood by Don Fatout. Like a tree planted by the water, may these five small sticks remind you and your family that you are not alone in this. Your parents saw me give you one of these crosses when you were in the hospital to have your chemo port implanted and they admired your cross. So give your mom and dad each one of these new sticks.

For 15 years I wasted my time working way too hard hacking away at a ball with wasted energy. I finally found my dream Taylor clubs. Now if I can just get Randy to cut me a deal! Amen.