

## The Christmas Card

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Hebrews 13:2 ESV*

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2 ESV*

When Cody lost his good friend Jones in a bombing attack Cody's supervisor told him it wasn't his fault and that it was time to take some R&R. Cody traveled to the States to give his friend Jonsie's dog tags to his fiancé. He also wanted to meet Faith, the girl who sent him a Christmas card. Since Cody had no living family he imagined home and community through the note and picture she sent. It became a life-line for him during difficult times. Have you ever received a letter or card that was a life-line for you?

Good relationships are built on trust and common interests. Good relationships should bring us closer to our faith, family, and values. When Faith's long-term boyfriend came to visit, his interests pulled Faith away from the things she loved. When Faith spent time with Cody it brought her closer to becoming the person she wanted to be. Do your relationships draw you closer to the things that are important to you? Beware of relationships that leave you feeling uneasy.

Good relationships bringing comfort in the middle of loss. When we're not feeling strong ourselves our presence and love can still bring strength and healing to someone else. Even though Cody felt deep pain over the loss of his friend, he was able to give comfort to Jonsie's fiancé. Cody said, "I would have given my life for him. I came here to tell you that he really loved you."

Who has been a comfort to you during difficult times? Is there someone who needs you to give comfort?

Karene and Jeff tell their real-life Christmas Card story in the Bonus Features. When Karene started communicating with a soldier in Afghanistan she had no idea how much her letters would mean to him. She also treasured the letters and emails he sent to her. It can be very dangerous to communicate with strangers, but the two were comfortable talking together since they were introduced by a couple that knew them both. Good relationships always start with trust. Trust is based on knowledge.

When actor John Newton told about having the heart of a soldier in the Bonus Features he shared what it was like to play Cody in The Christmas Card. He said that Cody was tough on the outside, having been a soldier for many years, but vulnerable - just a kid on the inside. Although Cody could handle himself as a soldier he was like a fish out of water in the middle of a family that loved him.

Are there situations when you feel very vulnerable? Where do you feel right at home?

It isn't safe to trust just anybody these days. We have to be careful and not get into situations that are dangerous. Get to know people before you trust them. Don't make commitments to someone you don't trust. Don't develop intimate relationships until you have both long-term friendship and commitment. The best relationships are built doing things God's way.

*Dear Lord, we thank You for the angels that you send into our lives. Help us to give love to those around us who need our support. Give us relationships that strengthen our love for You and Your people. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*