

"Honk If Something Falls Off"

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It may have been just a bumper sticker. It may have adorned no better than an old worn and dented blue pickup truck. But, it sure stirred my thinking. Hopefully it can do the same for yours.

Conjure up the image of that truck as you thoughtfully read a few times its simple yet simply profound traveling message of wisdom.

"Honk if something falls off."

Did you see it? Do you see it? Yes, I know it was meant in a humorous vein, but it presented me (a preacher's curse / blessing) with some healthy life lessons and holy reminders. Allow me to lay them out here.

First, it is no small matter to know and admit you are not perfect. Whether your life is like that humble truck, or be it a spotless, shiny Lexus (pick your favorite fancy vehicle), none of us are perfect. The sooner we admit that, the better off we all are.

That truck owner knew he had a well worn means of transportation. One susceptible to falling apart without notice. He did not need us to tell him he was not the picture of perfection. He knew it and wanted us to know he knew it.

Wait a minute - you say - if he knew he might lose a part, he should not be on the road. Maybe so. But what guarantee do you have that you will never lose a piece in your travels?

Let me be clear: living an "I'm not perfect, so get over it" life is not what we are advocating here. Admitting that your imperfections show up on occasion is another matter.

Second, this driver - God bless his sweet soul - assumes that people will be so kind as to inform him if he drops a chunk of truck on his journeys: a muffler, bumper, a hubcap, the transmission. With wear and age, the old truck may just accidentally litter the road. This is not something he wants, but knows may happen.

Yet, he is an optimist. His expectation is that - brace yourself for some serious analogy abuse - as he travels down the road of life, his fellow travelers are on the same road he is on. If they see him lose something, they will let him know with a friendly, informative honk and maybe even a wave. Much like they would want him to do for them.

Maybe this dear old driver doesn't get off the farm much. Most honking is not friendly. It may be informative, but what is being conveyed is not usually helpful information. Usually it is angry, critical, judging, shaming.

Also, the waves that most often accompany a horn blast are often not full-fingered hand encounters - if you catch my drift. Indeed, if something of yours falls off in my lane of life, I'm going to let you hear about it alright. But so much for pity, compassion and understanding. Try condemnation, vilification and humiliation.

The way we respond to people's imperfections, one would think their old trucky lives meant to drop pieces in our path, at us no less. "Accident? No way! That was personal. Don't try to tell me your humanity is showing. I know better."

Oh for the assumption that if my imperfections crop up at an inconvenient time to you and unbeknownst to me, you will let me know, all the while assuming it was nothing personal. Please let me know, not every one else but me.

Such a sweet and humble request: "Honk if something falls off." It speaks of community, a shared commitment to accept and watch after one another, to cover for one another.

Let me make myself clear: if you follow me long enough, you will indeed see something (s) fall off. It is just going to happen. Do I want it? No. Can I prevent it. Sometimes, yes, but not all the time. Will it happen at a time and in a way that is inconvenient to you? Sadly, it probably will, possibly causing you pain. Does it mean I wanted it to happen? God forbid!

But if - I mean when - it does happen, may I ask a simple favor? One I will try to return the best I can. Can we count on each other to honk if something falls off?

Note: if the owner of that old blue pickup happens to read this, give me a call. I have a gift for you. You certainly had one for me, one for which I am thankful.

Romans 15:7 "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

Ephesians 4:29-32 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the

Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." NIV