



He Who Wins Souls is Wise

The Story of On-Tract.com

By Gloria Graham

On a scale of one to ten, how do you score yourself in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ? What is your compassion level for the lost? I can tell you that it doesn't take Evangelism 101 to reach God-pleasing answers: you can start in quiet confidence by passing along a tract called *Smiles* in obedience to our Lord's command to "*Go and make disciples of all nations.*" (Matthew 28:19)

Tract distribution is taken seriously by Larry Kent, founder of **On-Tract.com**. Why a tract? If you ask him he'll probably give a generous smile before answering.

When he was fresh out of high school, his dad convinced him to attend Grand Canyon College in Phoenix, Arizona. (Because his dad was on the faculty, Larry's tuition was free.) However, a Christian college was not where Larry wanted to be, but he made friends and stayed all four years.

At 19, he sat on his bed searching through his Bible, determined to find a loophole so he could live out his desires without feeling guilty, then admitted he could find none and knew he was faced with a decision: receive Jesus or reject Him. He chose to reject Him.

However, God was softening the soil of Larry's heart in ways he tried not to notice. He was required to attend chapel regularly and had to take nine hours of Bible classes. God met Larry in the same bedroom where He was rejected two years earlier. On April 4, 1971 Larry prayed, "Jesus, if you're real I want you to take charge of my life. I have made a mess of it." Immediately he knew God had heard and answered that prayer.

In late 1974, Larry landed his first full-time job as an accountant with KPMG in San Jose, California and passed the CPA exam the next May. That same year he followed in his father's steps and became a member of The Gideons International. In 1978, with his wife and two children, he moved to Seattle, Washington, after receiving a job transfer.

The lowest point in Larry's life came in September 1982 when his wife filed for divorce. He had three children at the time. Larry has remained single but God has given him a heart of compassion as a result of the challenges he has faced.

Soon after his divorce, he started attending Overlake Christian Church in Kirkland, Washington. The pastor, Bob Moorehead, was so zealous about soul winning that Larry found it hard to believe. Proverbs 11:30, *He who wins souls is wise*, began to be a continual challenge to Larry; he knew he wasn't wise in God's eyes if that was His criteria.

When Pastor Moorehead announced that the church was going to offer training in Evangelism Explosion, Larry knew he needed to sign up. One of his early assignments was to share with someone what he had learned.

Just before the next session, Larry was having dinner at Godfather's Pizza and still had not completed his assignment. He floundered for courage then asked God to give him more love than fear. He then turned to a man at a nearby table and asked, "Would you mind if I practice a presentation I'm learning for a class I'm taking?" The man agreed and several minutes later the Gospel was shared in a friendly, non-confrontational way.

Larry remembered a saying he once heard: "Anything worth doing well is worth doing poorly at first." He decided to apply this to learning how to share his faith as well as continuing to ask God for His love to overcome his fear.

Over a period of time, this fledging evangelist began to share with others what it means to know Jesus in a personal way. "I wasn't bold about it," he admits, "In fact, I was always fearful but I knew how important it was. I found it easier to leave tracts in restroom stalls so no one would know they were from me!"

However, after completing the Evangelism Explosion class, Larry went on to serve as a trainer for the program for the next fifteen years until he moved to Orlando, Florida in 1998 to serve as a senior auditor for a Christian ministry.

The first four years in Orlando Larry found that he seldom shared his faith. He thought it strange that after joining a Christian ministry, his desire to witness was so diminished. God began working on his heart and he found himself concerned that so many Christians were like himself, not sharing about the Lord.

God prompted him to write his own gospel tract and to start sharing his faith again. Larry wanted to clearly communicate our problem of sin, God's solution and our need to both repent and place our trust in Jesus Christ. The message also had to fit on one side of an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper so that it would not look like a typical tract.

The initial title was Good News, Bad News. While the ink was still wet on the first attempt of verbiage for the tract, Larry asked a co-worker to translate it into Spanish. "My goal through the presentation is to move [people] one step closer to the Lord--to realize that their good works are not enough."

Like e-communication, enthusiasm has no boundaries. Larry, eager to "share the power" of the gospel, busied himself making arrangements for a newspaper ad. When Orlando folks woke up September 12, 2002, they unfolded their paper to a bold one-third page gospel presentation in the Orlando Sentinel.

A blitz of hands-on activity began with apartment doorknob tract distribution in Orlando. Up in Washington State a friend seized the opportunity, with the help of many from her church, to hand out tracts at a Luis Palau event; an Hispanic minister's wife in Arizona used the gospel message on the tract on her Spanish language radio program.



One day the thought of adding funny one-liners to the flip side of the tract struck Larry and from that it was subsequently named *Smiles*.

In 2005, Larry began taking his tracts to the Orlando International Airport, along with his friend Dolores Livingston, and as they walked about the terminal they distributed them to passengers. This continued until March 11, 2006 when Larry was stopped by two Orlando police officers and an airport employee who told him he was not authorized to distribute literature there. One of the officers prepared a Trespass Warning and told Larry he was subject to arrest if he was found on airport property any time within the next six months.

Larry learned from Matt Staver of Liberty Council that a process was in place in which he could apply for a distributor's permit with the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority. That would allow him to once again distribute gospel tracts at the airport without being restricted by the Trespass Warning.

These days you'll find Larry Kent up early Saturday mornings attending a Gideon prayer breakfast and then driving to Orlando's busy airport. He is often joined by his friends Paul Johnson and Amalia Lemos. "Any large airport is a ticket to global evangelism," cites Larry. Evidence of this is that in a recent month people from 202 countries and territories visited Larry's **On-Tract.com** website.

The impact of the tract surprises Larry. "I included it in my Christmas cards," one man e-mailed; a Louisiana insurance company said they slipped tracts into their mailings to their customers. From Hawaii, a lady prayed for ideas to share the gospel and then, in her home, she found the tract Larry had given her. A mother said her teen daughter on a short-term mission trip gave out tracts in India. And from Ghana, a pastor e-mailed his enthusiasm about all the calls he gets after handing out tracts on the beach during a holiday.

One supporter in Kenya said she went house to house with the Swahili translation. And a Ugandan pastor also distributed tracts from house to house; "I'm excited, every Sunday I see new faces at church."

Larry Kent sees the hand of God working out His purposes to reach all nations. Tracts are serious business. The website, **www.on-tract.com**, is where *Smiles* can be found and its gospel message is in dozens of languages. You are welcome to download the tracts for free and to request them to be personalized with your church's name.

On-Tract.com has links to Global Media Outreach's websites where seekers can connect with online missionaries and sign up for a free 30 day Bible study in multiple languages.

Because you and I are surrounded by folks who too often distance themselves from church, why not share *Smiles* with them? The clear gospel message is illustrated through stories of a driver, a convict and a skydiver.

Someone said of Brother Larry, "he's comfortable in his skin," yet he is not hesitant to admit that fear still creeps to the surface. Just a short time ago, at a store checkout line, he offered a man and a woman a *Smiles* tract. "They accepted it, and I escaped unscathed," he mused. His next thought to himself was, "Why am I so timid? I have the best news in the world!"

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