



# The Family Friend

*A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.*

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## **Sports At Its Finest!**

The batter stepping up to the plate prompted little concern to the opposing team. Sara Tucholsky is only a bit over five feet tall, and had only recorded three hits in 34 at-bats all season long. A senior for Western Oregon University, she had never hit a home run in her career, and this was one of the final games of the season. The other team, Central Washington University, prepared for an easy out as Sara assumed her stance and waited for the pitch.

Imagine everyone's surprise when Sara hit the ball hard enough for it to disappear over the center field fence. The two runners already on base quickly scored the game's first runs. It was then that fans spotted Sara writhing in pain just past first base. In her excitement she had missed stepping on first base. As she turned to tag the base, her knee gave out. She was unable to get to her feet and complete the journey home. Her first-ever home run would be wiped from the books, and her teammates were prohibited by the rules (they thought) from helping

her.

Just as a pinch runner was about to enter the game (which would have changed Sara's home run into a single), one of the players from Central Washington spoke up. "Excuse me, would it be OK if we carried her around and she touched each bag?" The one asking was Mallory Holton, the star of the opposing team. Unlike Tucholsky's modest accomplishments, Holton is the career leader in home runs for her school. But she knows something about knee problems, and is scheduled for surgery on both of her knees after the season ends.

Nothing in softball's rules prevents members of the opposing team from helping a player round the bases, so Holton and teammate Liz Wallace helped Sara stand on her one good leg and carried her around the base paths. Knowing that they were putting their team at a disadvantage by helping score the run, they nonetheless carried the injured opponent, stopping at each base so she could make the tags.

Western Oregon would go on to win that game by a score of 4-2. But did Central Washington really lose? Sure, they dropped that game, but people across

the nation now know something about them. They've made a deeper impression than if they had taken the easy way out. As Sara Tucholsky said later, "I'm glad to get this story out because it is an awesome thing they did for me. ... In a very close game like that, they did an amazing thing." (For the full details of this heartwarming story, just enter Sara's name in any Internet search engine.)

We need more stories like this. In our time sports has become an outlet for frustration and anger, it seems. Fans generally make life miserable for the visiting team. We well remember the brawl that took place in November of 2004. The Indiana Pacers were playing in Detroit when fans began throwing objects at the Pacers. One of Indiana's stars charged into the stands to throw some fists with spectators, a decision that cost him a 25-game suspension. It reminded us, though, that some take sports far too seriously. Others who are guilty of such extreme behavior can be found virtually any evening at local Little League games.

Here, however, was an occasion when sports rose to one of its crowning moments. Players came together to help one who was injured. They thought about more than just helping

Sara off the field; they wanted her to enjoy a rare moment in the spotlight. It's a scene that should be shown while "One Shining Moment" plays in the background. It truly was a shining moment.

Softball is not mentioned in the Bible, but the attitude this story highlights certainly is. In fact, it's one recommended by Jesus: "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). Recognize that? It's what we traditionally have called "the Golden Rule". We often simplify it as "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It's not a hard concept to grasp, but sometimes extremely difficult to practice.

A story in the Old Testament shows how one did good for another, even at his own expense. David, who had been designated as the next king of Israel, developed a strong friendship with Jonathan, son of the current king, Saul. On one occasion, Saul blew up at his son for being friends with David: "For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. Now therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die" (1 Samuel 20:31). Saul was right: Jonathan would never be king if David was allowed to live. Did Jonathan consider joining plot to remove this rival to the throne?

Such a thought never entered Jonathan's heart. 1 Samuel 18:1 tells us why: "... the soul of Jonathan was knit to the

soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Instead of helping his father eliminate the competitor to the throne, Jonathan aided David in his escape from the king. He could have had the throne for himself, but Jonathan chose to do what was right. His love for David made the difference.

You probably know that the Greek language (the language in which the New Testament was written) has different words for our English word "love". The most impressive of those is "agape". Here's one passage where its uniqueness stands out: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43,44). Behind Jesus' command to "love" our enemies is that word "agape". As you'll quickly realize, this type of attitude is rare.

Agape is a love that is committed to the other person's well-being. Instead of being just a feeling (as we tend to view love), agape means that I will do good for you even if I don't have good feelings toward you. The world doesn't teach me to do good things for people that hate me, who abuse me and who persecute me. The world advises me to get rid of them, if possible. But I made a decision many years ago not to be ruled by the world. Jesus is now my Lord, and His counsel is what I follow. Even when His command

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goes against what I have been taught, I'll work hard to do it.

Paul elaborated on this remarkable trait of Jesus' followers: "Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:20,21). When I have the advantage over my enemy, I'm tempted to "get even" with him. The Lord, however, tells me to use the opportunity to do good. In doing so, I'll be making a statement to the world about the superiority of love over force.

In many stadiums across the world, fans cheer when an opposing player goes down with a serious injury. But the actions of Mallory Holton will be remembered for much longer than the final scores of games that have been played. The scenes of Holton and Wallace carrying Tucholsky - their "enemy" - around the bases speaks more powerfully than dozens of lectures. This episode reminds us that there is within each of us a spark of the Divine.

Let us fan that spark into a cheering, warming blaze!

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