

# The Lakeside



## Message in a bottle

Verse of the day for Monday February 12, 2024 - Ephesians 4:2

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Read Ephesians 4 for meditation and inspiration.



## ***HEALING SPIRITUAL GOODNESS***

Dear Lakesiders and friends,

I remember serving a church in New Jersey when a minister member of the Presbytery had a serious problem and much of it came out of the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I was shocked at how he was treated. He was isolated, then ostracized and finally forced out. He was a good guy, he had done some really amazing things with his church and proved to be a faithful servant of God. But one mistake brought him disgrace and heartache. I remember sitting in a meeting where his situation came up and a friend of mine sitting close to me said, “You know the church is the only army who shoots their wounded,” It seemed so very true as I watched this tragedy unfold. That’s why I love the following story.

Several years ago in a TV documentary on Apartheid, a very interesting custom of the Babemba tribe in South Africa was featured. Within that community, antisocial or criminal behavior is rare. However, when it does occur, the Babemba have an interesting and beautifully creative way of dealing with it.

If a member of the tribe acts irresponsibly, they are placed at the center of the village. Work stops, and every man, woman, and child in the town gathers around the accused in a large circle. Then, one at a time, everyone, including the children, call out all the good things the person in the center has done previously. All the positive attributes and the kind acts are recited carefully and at length. No one is permitted to exaggerate or be facetious. It's serious business!

The ceremony often lasts for several days and doesn't stop until all are drained of every positive comment they can muster about the transgressor. Not one word of criticism concerning the accused's irresponsible, antisocial deed is permitted. In the end, the tribal circle breaks up, a celebration begins, and he or she is welcomed back into the community. This overwhelming, positive bombardment strengthens the self-esteem of the accused and causes that person to resolve to live up to the expectations of the tribe. Proof of the success of this creative response to wrongdoing seems apparent because these ceremonies are quite rare. One wonders if, perhaps, borrowing from this technique might be a good idea, at least in certain family or church situations in which a member has gone astray.

We all know how difficult it is to make profound changes in our lives, though the need may be apparent. We recognize that there is a need for change, but we need help. Help first from our God, but also from our tribe. I would love to hear that the church is the one army that heals and restores the wounded in the healing love of Jesus our Lord and Great Physician.

In His Healing love,

Roger