

## Relax Kid, Have another Popsicle, God Loves You

My wife Angie and I were sitting in the front yard the other afternoon, minding our own business, thoroughly enjoying my impromptu dissertation on the state of the Middle East, when out of nowhere a crazy bird flies up and starts beating his wings in my face. I'm not going to lie. I screamed like a little girl and fell sideways out of my chair.

In a feeble attempt to save face I rolled to my feet with my best Jackie Chan impression. After I'd made sure the bird was gone, I dusted off, hitched up my pants, and teased, "Get back over here Angie, you big sissy, it's just a little ole' bird."

Angie just rolled her eyes. Easing back into her chair, she soon had her face buried back in that magazine she'd been using to tune out my foreign policy bluster. Yet within minutes the little bird was back, hopping around in the grass behind us.

"That's weird," Angie commented.

"Yeah," I said shaking off a sudden shiver, "It freaks me out. I wish it would just go on."

"No, not that." she replied, "I'm talking about a grown man being so scared of a little bird!"

"Ha ha . . .," I countered, knowing she had a point. I *was* as jittery as a mob informant giving the commencement address at his witness protection program graduation ceremony.

Then it came to me, "I'll bet that's the same baby sparrow I had to run out of the garage last night. It's was too young to figure out how to fly *under* the door. I spent ten minutes trying to nudge it out with my fishing rod. He probably just likes the sound of my voice."

Angie flipped a page, "Yeah, well that makes two of you."

Just then the bird flew up, hovering again just over my head. Angie took off, but this time I bravely stayed put. Carefully shielding my face, I offered out a hand. Would you believe that wild little critter landed on me? Yep, he perched right up on my wrist like he owned the place. I heard Angie gasp. I grinned like Sylvester the cat.

Our kids noticed the commotion and came running up from the cove. Angie shooed them back as best she could, hoping not to miss how this drama would unfold. However, my daughter Kailey, who fancies herself our resident animal specialist, couldn't stand me getting all the attention. She bullied past Angie's barricade intent on offering the little sparrow a bite of her Popsicle. When she got too close, little Tweety spooked and flew off. I haven't seen him since.

Now I'm not a big bird lover, but I'll admit, I've been a little worried about Tweety. I mean, he's obviously not thinking straight. Why else would he try to befriend me? I'm not even in his species! What if he takes up with someone not so nice? He could end up spending the rest of his life trapped in a cage, or worse.

Little Tweety should be out doing bird things, pursuing God's bird calling for his life. Instead, he's no sooner learned to fly than he's hanging out in strange garages. It just makes you want to sit his parents down and ask, "Do you know your little Tweety's out there right now looking for love in all the wrong places?" Of course there's no better way to ruffle feathers than to fly up in somebody's beak about how they raise their chicks. Besides, I realize it's not always the parents fault.

It's just I wish every child could grow up with the assurance they are loved and accepted, especially by God. If they had that revelation they'd be a lot less likely to fly off half cocked. Even if they did migrate in the wrong direction for a season, they'd always have a sense of where their true home lies. (*Even the sparrows and swallows are welcome to come and nest among your altars and there have their young, O Lord of heaven's armies, my King and my God! How happy are those who can live in your Temple, singing your praises. Psalms 84:3-4 NLT*)

But anyway- Angie and I are on the same page about one thing, the day we nudge our kids out of the garage they won't have an excuse to end up behind bars, or worse. If they do, it's on them. We will have done all we can to show them and teach them the love of God. (*What is the price of five sparrows – two copper coins? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows. Luke 12:6-7 NLT*)

-Guy Sheffield 9-25-07