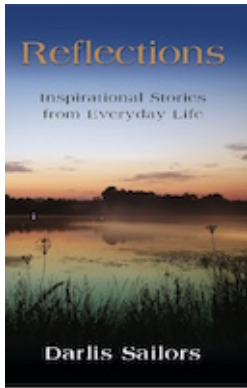


Reflections



Inspirational Stories
from Everyday Life

Darlis Sailors



Life generally comes as a package of daily routines, but by taking time to reflect on our experiences we can find positive solutions for the future and avoid repetition of past mistakes. Memoir is a popular form of sharing practical life lessons and creative non-fiction makes it fun to read. These inspirational stories stand alone, so you can read from cover to cover or enjoy choosing titles that catch your eye. You will find some of the humor and challenges we face in everyday life, especially in relationships. None of us knows the future, but we can learn from the past; therefore, these stories have been written with a sense of hope and encouragement, along with suggestions for improving everyday lives and relationships.

Reflections: Inspirational Stories From Everyday Life

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REFLECTIONS

**Inspirational Stories
from Everyday Life**

DARLIS SAILORS

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CHAPTER ONE

CLOSE TO HOME

ABOVE AVERAGE

It is said that the average person moves eleven times in his lifespan. Considering our transient culture, I'm guessing the "above average" category has a major membership. I got a head start on it while growing up in a Midwest minister's home. We moved about every five years until Dad got a call to the Southwest. He and Mom stayed in place there for over twenty years, but I moved on to college and got married.

When I met my husband, he was way "below average." He had lived in the same house his whole life. I was so impressed. What would it be like to live in the same house in the same town all your life? I had already moved six times by the age of sixteen.

When we married, my husband and I planned on working career jobs while doing church volunteer ministries. God allowed us to start that way and in our first three years of married life we lived in two different apartments, one small duplex, a church parsonage and a small house.

For the next twenty-five years we worked in full-time ministry as associate pastors. Sometimes housing was provided. Other times we had to find our own.

We lived in five church parsonages. Two were located next to the church, which created non-privacy issues. We also experienced thin walls and noisy neighbors in two duplexes, limited parking in three condos, and the joys and expenses of ownership while in four single-family homes.

Even while ministering for twelve years as pastors in one church, we made three moves. We started with the parsonage, a

mobile home next to the church, but my dream was to have my own home. In that community, affordable pit-set mobiles outnumbered stick-built homes. We left the parsonage and moved two more times before retirement, each time to a pit-set mobile.

My husband might have been “below average” on total moves made while growing up, but he was definitely “above average” in flexibility. His resilience when called upon to move always amazed me.

A friend once gave us a plaque that said, “Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be broken.” Life is not stationary; it moves from infancy to retirement, from kindergarten to college, from single life to becoming a couple, and from job to job. Changes! Blessed are the flexible.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, “There is a time for everything.” The next eight verses list twenty-eight contrasting activities. To those I would add, “There is a time to move and a time to remain . . . flexible, that is.”

GOOD GIFTS

I did not grow up with a dog for a pet. My husband did. But we have had many friends with lovely dogs in a variety of breeds, such as Arthur---a Wheatland Terrier, Sasha---a Shih Tzu, and Sitka---an Alaskan Husky.

We once worked with a pastor who said, “If your dog loves you, don’t ask for a second opinion.” Pets are a source of comfort and unconditional love that is appreciated by people of every economic level. I know some people abuse their animals and it’s hard to stomach stories of blatant mistreatment, but I’m thankful for agencies who do their best as rescuers.

Arthur was a rescue dog. He became trained and certified to make weekly visits to a Veteran’s Home. He knew which room to go to and would walk right up to the door and wait. He was self-controlled, patient and very sensitive to each person. When someone passed away, he would not leave until his owner took him into the room patted the empty bed and said, “All gone.” Arthur would usually put a paw on the bed or touch it in some way. Then he was ready to go and did not stop at that door again.

Sasha was ready to jump into the car all week long, but our friends said she knew she could not go when they were getting ready for Sunday church. Instead of her usual “let’s go” antics, she would settle down quietly into a snugly spot as they left.

Sitka enjoys his igloo-shaped dog house out on the patio, but he does well indoors. My friend is a caregiver for her mother and Sitka has been a comforting companion to them.

She says, “Sitka likes to take me on walks and I’ve met a lot of neighbors. Sitka is such a people-lover.”

When I see the interaction between various kinds of pets and the people who care for them, I think of James 1:17 which says, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights. . .” The Creator of the stars, sun and moon, “saw ALL that He had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). I’d put pets in that *good* category.

One of the key ingredients in relationships with pets is mutual affection. Happiness flows from us to them and vice versa. I’m glad God made these gifts in such a variety of species, colors and sizes. I always have a little trouble with things labeled *One Size Fits All*.

LETTING GO

To recover from loss of any kind, we must first acknowledge it. We never fully recover if we just “suck it up” and keep going, because emotions don’t disappear. They go undercover and come out incognito. For example, resentment may appear as anger, and bitterness as lack of forgiveness.

We need to follow the fisherman’s example of catch and release. To catch an emotion is to acknowledge its presence. As long as the fisherman hangs on to his catch, he can tell the same story over and over. It’s there and he knows it. But if he wants to have something new, he must release what has already been caught.

When I was a caregiver for my father I had a few emotions to catch and release. I found myself getting angry, then I realized it was caused by resentment. Dad had three children. Why did I have to be the caregiver? My brothers had good reasons for not being involved on a daily basis, but I had to choose to release my negative emotions.

I’m sorry to say that before I became a caregiver I often visited and prayed for the sick, but I don’t think I ever gave caregivers much thought. Now when I see them, I think of a phrase from John 15:13 (NAS), “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” Caregivers are definitely on my radar now.

After Dad passed away I wrote *Caregiver’s Choice*, a poem I believe was part of my grieving process. While Dad was alive my life was not my own, but I made a choice. I refused to be a victim. Psalm 119:45 explains God’s Word as my source of

victory. It says, “I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.”

I hope it’s a source of encouragement to others. Letting go of negative emotions may be a caregiver’s challenge, but friends and family have a challenge, too. How will you show appreciation to the caregiver closest to you?

CAREGIVER'S CHOICE

By Darlis Sailors

I walk up a hill and sit down on a rock
It's fun to look down like a bird in the air
Who flies where it will in space wide and free

Out here it feels calm, no one to talk or turn up the TV
No one who needs me
I close my eyes and feel at peace
I need this time, I need this space

Up here I feel free, like a bird flying high
With no drag on my wings to stop my flight
I breathe in fresh air and let go of my stress

A break from life, now back I go
Down to the house that feels so small
Back to the one who needs me
I've made a choice—while there, I will freely serve

LOVE LETTERS

A long-time friend once sent an email to ask if I remembered a song called *Love Is Why?* I replied, “Neither my husband nor I remember the words, but maybe you can find them online.” I knew she sang solos and thought that was why she had asked.

Weeks later we received a surprising letter, written on the back of a well-worn piece of music. It was dated Sunday, August 7, 1966 and titled *Love Is Why*. My husband had sent this letter to dear college friends shortly after our engagement. They had found it while sorting boxes in preparation for moving.

Many times over the years I had heard my husband say, “I love you,” and he had done many good things which proved he meant it. But these words from the past were very special.

He had written, “. . . forgive this letter if it’s a little mixed up—you know how it is being in love . . . what a feeling . . . Darlis is everything I’ve been looking for since I was sixteen . . . and I’m really grateful to God that I found her . . . I’m in love, I’m in love—Wow!”

There was another surprise at the end, because I had written, “. . . he asked me Monday night and got the ring Tuesday (he chose it by himself and I love it) . . . we just feel made for each other and I couldn’t be happier . . . I’m glad he feels so happy too.”

Looking up from the letter I said, “Isn’t it great that we still feel the same way?” He replied, “Yes, but can you imagine

someone saving a letter forty-eight years? I'm so glad she sent this. We'll save it too."

There's an even older love letter that has been sent to each of us. The Bible is so full of words expressing God's love that it's hard to choose only a few, but Jeremiah 31:3 says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love . . ."

Do you think *I love you* should be proven with actions? God thought so. "This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10). God said, "I love you," and Jesus said, "I love you, too," as he humbled himself to come to earth as a baby—living, loving proof of God's love.

Some people think God's love letter is too long and too hard to read. Relax. The Bible is considered a collection of sixty-six books of various lengths. You don't have to read them all or understand every word to get the meaning of its message. Try reading about Jesus, God's love in action, in one of the *Good News* books labeled *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*. You'll find a love letter that only God could write.

WHAT IS LOVE?

By Darlis Sailors

LOVE is fragile,
Like a flower in bloom.
Nurture it carefully,
Let it grow.

LOVE is challenging,
Like a trail in the woods.
Explore it slowly,
Discover its joy.

LOVE is valuable,
Worth effort and time.
Invest it thoughtfully,
Reap the rewards.

LOVE is emotional,
Up, down, twirled around.
Buckle your seatbelt,
Risk the ride.

LOVE is sharing,
Both laughter and tears
Open your heart,
Widen your world.

MOVING ON

I was married and gone from home when my mom asked if I thought they had been good parents. I thought back upon the financial sacrifices they had made to take family vacations and put food on the table. I also remembered help with school projects and their teaching of moral and spiritual values.

On the other hand, I thought of not being allowed to folk dance or square dance in gym, not being allowed to go to a friend's birthday party because they were going to a Disney movie, and not being allowed to read even a Christian book for teens about sex.

I shared some of the negatives with Mom, but told her overall I felt she and Dad had done a good job of raising us. Her question helped me realize I had felt like a victim under some of their restraints; however, instead of anger and rehearsing complaints against the way I was raised, I had moved on to my own choices. I was an adult now, out on my own. Life choices were mine, not theirs.

The first movie I ever attended was *Sound of Music*, and twenty-two years after that childhood birthday party I went to see *Bambi*, just to see what I had missed. I chose to read Christian books about sex and marriage, but I never learned to dance because I discovered I had two left feet.

The things I had to deal with were not life-threatening like some childhood issues people must overcome; however, they did affect my life view and who I was. Parenting skills do not arrive in a neat little package along with a baby's birth, so most parents struggle with "How will I do this?"

I believe we all grow up with some residual effects of our upbringing. As youngsters we are taught to respect our parents, teachers and elders. They have great influence upon our lives, but for how long?

Moving on from childhood to adulthood brings change. The Apostle Paul said, “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me” (1 Corinthians 13:11). Maturity means growing in ability to take personal responsibility for our choices.

A physical move usually includes sorting things out and boxing them up to give away. Moving on into maturity may include some sorting out and letting go of emotional baggage from our childhood. The nice thing is, there’s no age limit on that move.

THE BROKEN BULLDOG

When a friend was commenting on something she had done forty years ago, she said, “My mother seems to bring it up from time to time. I don’t think she’s ever forgiven me.” That brought to mind “the bulldog incident” with *my* mom. Not that she ever brought it up over the years. She didn’t need to, because I never forgot it.

I was in the third grade and my class had “Show and Tell.” In a nine-month school year lots of things would have been shared, but the one thing I remember is mom’s broken bulldog.

That small ceramic knick-knack, about two inches high and three inches long, was special to her and intriguing to me. I begged to take it for “Show and Tell,” but she consistently refused. I would not give up. “I’ll take good care of it,” I promised for the umpteenth time. Finally, she relented and I proudly headed off to school clutching my prize in a small brown bag.

My school was a two-story, brick building and my classroom was on the second level. I couldn’t believe what happened. I tripped UP the stairs! Naturally I was embarrassed, but I was horrified at the tinkling sound as my hand slammed down to gain my balance. When I got to the top of the stairs and looked in the bag, my heart fell. The little dog was in tiny pieces.

I remember the sad look on mom’s face when I walked into the house after school, explained what happened and showed her the evidence. Her simple response was a quiet, resigned, “Oh, Darlis.” She never reminded me of the incident, but I

always wished for a replacement. I never found one, but years later I tried to give her a small ceramic dog of another species. She was not impressed.

I learned a couple of things from the bulldog incident. First, do not expect good results from willful, headstrong choices. King Saul learned the same lesson. He chose to make a sacrifice to God, instead of waiting for the prophet to do it. Samuel arrived late, according to Saul's time table, and his message from the Lord was, ". . . to obey is better than sacrifice . . ." (1 Samuel 15:22).

Second, I learned the truth of the old saying, "There is never a right way to do a wrong thing." Doing good works will never make up for disobedience. So, what's the solution? First John 1:9 (KJV) says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." No condemnation, no reminders, just a clean, fresh start. What could be better than that? To me, mom was an example of God's kind of forgiveness.

The broken bulldog taught me the value of obedience and it still remains a good reminder.

THE HONOR ROLE

A few years back, I had the privilege of talking with a young college graduate about some heartfelt issues. Her father, who had divorced and remarried, still lived in the area but did not keep in touch. Her mother had moved out of state but kept in close contact. This lovely Christian girl wanted to do the right thing by both parents.

The Bible says we are to honor our father and mother (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Matthew 15:4). Warm fuzzy feelings may or may not come with it, but we are assigned to play *The Honor Role*. What is it? How is it done?

Anyone desiring to honor another is starting from the right point, *humility*---a willingness to declare someone as more important than themselves. We did not get to choose our parents, but we do get to choose how we will treat them. As children we were to obey, but part of growing up is to be able to make decisions for ourselves. So, let's look at some *Honor Role* options:

RESPECT: Treating your parents with consideration and appreciation. For example, is a card or phone call too much to ask as acknowledgement of them on special days?

ESTEEM: Valuing the roles played out in their lives before you were born. After all, parents are people, too. They made choices based on things you may never know or understand.

ACCEPTANCE: Your parents may not have been what you wished for, and you may have even struggled to survive, but cutting them off, or out of your life, leaves a sore spot in all of you.

RECOGNITION: You have a role to play and no one can do it for you. A spouse or sibling trying to cover up by adding your name to a card or gift is not the same as you taking an interest and participating in that act of recognition

I'm happy to report that this young lady took her role seriously. She let her father know that she wanted a relationship with him, including his new wife and family. She had no guarantees, but she humbled herself, opened the door and waited for his response.

His response was positive. A few years later her father passed away suddenly, but because of her earlier decision to play *The Honor Role* she had no regrets.

Perhaps you have already fulfilled that role. If not, and your parents are still living, take advantage of the honoring options still open to you.

WATCH FOR ATMs

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are everywhere these days. Banks began this customer service and then it became so popular that people looked for it in other places. Busy consumers loved the convenience of withdrawals, deposits and access to balances without actually going into their bank.

I'd like to point out that ATMs have been around since the beginning of time. All cultures have enjoyed easy access to them. I'm talking about **Alert Teachable Moments**—those times when a child's interest is high and they simply want to know *why*. Or, maybe it's when they have made a mistake and don't want to do it again.

Family settings are filled with ATMs because they have first access to the child; however, their use is not limited to parents since friends, teachers and others have ATM options, too.

Everyone knows that family life can become hectic while trying to meet a variety of needs and schedules. It's easy for adults to whiz right by the ATM while also pushing the off switch on their child's inquisitive engine.

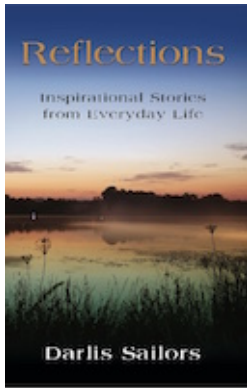
God is quite aware of the value of ATMs. In Deuteronomy 11:19 He said, "Teach (these words of mine) to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Today the house might be a condo or apartment and the road might be a sidewalk or paved street. Lying down could be bedtime or naptime and getting up would be the way you start your day in any culture.

I have happy ATM memories of a curious preschooler. We used to walk her neighborhood and those short walks were filled with teachable moments. Such special moments are fleeting. Like blown bubbles they are there, then gone.

Children basically arrive ready and open to learning about their world; however, teachable moments are not always wordy. Children are observant and sometimes the example you set will do.

Teachable moments can result in cute stories and good humor since children don't understand words on the adult level. You might have recognized an ATM and deposited into it quite wisely, but when you asked for the receipt, or feedback, you were surprised by the misconception.

Based upon my years of ministry experience, I'm convinced human ATMs are not limited to children. Since these opportunities stem from relationships, teens and adults of all ages benefit from them, too. These **Alert Teachable Moments**, though brief, are powerful. Be aware. Use them whenever and wherever you can.



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