

Reach UP

A Life Transformational Magazine

Winter 2020

Different
But... *The Same*

Faith
Same Kind of Different as Me

Lifestyle
Sweet and Easy Gifts to Make

I'm thankful for the people who did not give up on me.

In the 90s, I moved away from a very wealthy town in California and went to work in the inner city. There I lived in tenement housing and tried to help kids and their families. I was blonde and petite, and I looked as if I had no idea what people living in such difficult circumstances was like in the great nation of America. The ministry paired me with a woman who lived in the projects of East New York (ENY). Back then, ENY was known as New York City's "killing fields."

I'll never forget the night we met. Wanda D. walked down the stairs, took one look at me across the crowded room, and in a loud voice she declared, "She ain't gonna' last!" Turns out others thought that too because I found out later that they were placing bets on how long I'd stay.

That was the beginning of my relationship with Wanda. I'm glad she didn't refuse to work with me. I'm glad I didn't take offense and demand someone else – someone nicer and more polite. Wanda was my teacher before she became my friend. Her first statement about me worked to harden my resolve. I lasted, and East New York became my neighborhood.

Few relationships follow a straight line as they develop. That is evident in the book, *Same Kind of Different As Me* by Ron Hall. You'll probably get what the title means by the end of the story. Certainly Ron's relationship with Denver Moore didn't follow a straight line toward deep brotherhood. If either one of them would have given up on the other, all the good they eventually did for the homeless would never have happened. And quite frankly, neither of them would have become the better person.

I'm glad Jesus did not give up on me. God sent Jesus to earth as a baby, and that truly was a straight line from the heart of the Father to you and me. But our response to the gift of salvation through Jesus may not have been a straight line back to God.

The good news is, God has not given up on you! He's not going to either. I'm pretty sure that the person who gave you this *Reach UP* will help you "reach UP." God's hand is extended to grasp you and carry you through this life. He will hold on forever.

I'm not giving up on you either,

Crystal Knapp

Table of Content

Lifestyle

Sweet and Easy Gifts to Make	Page 2
Foolproof Guide to Better Decision Making	Page 5

Faith

Same Kind of Different as Me	Page 3
Talk it Out	Page 7

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Sweet and Easy

Gifts to Make – All Under \$2

by Karen Duckett

I have a big family and love giving gifts, but I don't have the money to buy something for everyone. Although I am not a crafts person, I still make a simple Christmas candy creation every year for the people on my list. These candies are colorful, delightful, and delicious. Everyone loves them!

Red-nosed Reindeer

YOU'LL NEED:

- Chocolate Bars
- Candy Canes
- Colorful Paper
- Googly Eyes and Red Pom-pom Balls (or just make the eyes and nose out of paper)
- Mini Glue Gun and Glue Sticks
- Scissors



1. Cut the ears and mouths out of colored paper.
2. Glue two candy canes and paper ears to the back of a chocolate bar. Let dry.
3. Glue eyes and nose to the front.



My friend made her reindeer like this.

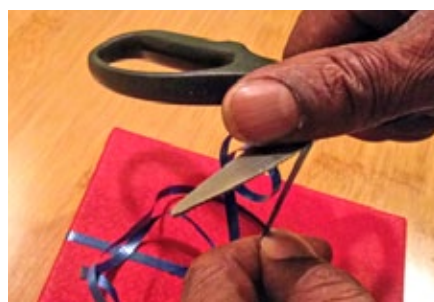


You'll need hot chocolate mix, mini marshmallows, googly eyes, pom-poms, plastic bags, white glue, tape, and ribbon.

1. Glue eyes and nose to the plastic bag. Let dry.
2. Place the mix and marshmallows in the plastic bag.
3. Tape the bag closed. Tie the ribbon on, then curl it.



IDEA: You can get a mini glue gun and glue sticks for about \$5. Share it with a friend and split the cost!



To curl ribbon, tie the ribbon on the gift. Then place one ribbon end between one blade of open scissors and your thumb. Pull the ribbon through as you press gently with your thumb. The ribbon will curl right up!



Look at these other Christmas gifts you can make with candy, a glue gun, and ribbon!

Do it your way!

- Use paper eyes instead of googly eyes.
- Make a nose of crumpled red paper instead of pom-poms.
- Use whatever candy you want and can find.
- Get your kids involved!

Same Kind of **DIFFERENT** as Me

by Ron Hall

My wife, Debbie, and I became Christians in 1974, and we both lived purpose-driven lives. Her daily purpose was seeking the face of Almighty God. At that point, my only purpose was seeking the face of the “almighty dollar.” I was a successful and wealthy international art dealer, but my marriage to Debbie was about to collapse because of an affair I had with another woman. I was looking for an easy way out of the difficult situation. Debbie, my amazing wife, offered me a path of lovingkindness and forgiveness. After much prayer and by God’s grace, I chose the path she offered.

While we were building our new home, my wife began having vivid dreams in which God would speak to her. One night, she dreamed that a new homeless mission would be built near our home. In her dream it was a beautiful building just for women and children. Another night, she dreamed about a homeless man. “I saw his face,” she told me the next morning. “Like Ecclesiastes 9:15, he is a poor man who is wise. And by his wisdom our lives and our city will be changed.”

Debbie convinced me to begin serving meals at a homeless shelter in hopes of finding this man. Serving the homeless had never crossed my mind before. After a frightening encounter with an angry homeless man in New York, I had shunned homeless people. I would often ask myself, *What will happen to me if I stop to help them?* Debbie, on the other hand, had a heart for the

poor. Whenever they crossed her path, she asked herself a different question: *What will happen to them if I don’t help?*

Two weeks after Debbie and I started volunteering at the shelter, I found myself standing off in a corner. One Tuesday a huge, barefoot man charged into the dining hall of the mission screaming that he was going to kill everyone he could unless the person who had stolen his shoes gave them back.

“That’s the man I had the dream about!” Debbie told me excitedly as I hid from the man. “And I believe I’ve heard from God that you have to become his friend and find out what my dream is all about.”

“But I wasn’t at that meeting you had with God,” I hollered back, “and if I’m going to be friends with someone who wants to kill everyone, I think I should talk to God about it myself!”

That night God told me that being friends with a homeless man was a small price to pay for the forgiveness He and Debbie had shown me. So, for God and Debbie, I realized I should look for a way to reach out to this guy. However, my arrogance made me think that this man had nothing of value to offer me.

After searching for him for five months, I found him and miraculously got him into my car, although at first he only screamed at me to leave him alone. “I would love to leave you alone,” I told him, “but my wife told me I have to be

your friend!”

He liked Debbie so he promised to think about being my friend. Two weeks later, he sat across the table from me on a sidewalk outside Starbucks. “There is something I heard about white folks that really bothers me, and it has something to do with fishing,” he told me.

I told him that, since I was not a fisherman, I was not sure I could answer his question.

“I’ll bet you can!” he responded. “I heard when white folks go fishing, they do this thing called ‘catch and release.’”

“It is a sport,” I told him.

“Well, if you are fishing for a friend, and you are planning to catch and release, then I have no desire to be your friend!”

I sat there, my heart nearly pounding out of my chest. But I knew this had to be the man of Debbie’s dream because the words he had just spoken to me were the wisest words I had ever heard on friendship. They cut straight to my heart. If I ever heard from God in my life, it was at that moment.

This man whose name was Denver was about to rewrite my life story. Within days, Denver became my teacher and I became his pupil. He still found it hilarious that I would sit on the curb alongside him and listen to “the old fool who never went to school.”

Denver taught me the important difference between blessing and helping. He once asked why I was always giving out dollar bills to the street people and dishing out spaghetti at the mission. "I like helping the homeless," I told him.

"Mr. Ron," he said, "you aren't helping anybody! All you are doing is making yourself feel better about being rich. You may be blessing people with your money and service but a dollar bill and plate of food won't change a life. That takes love. If you are really serious about helping somebody, crawl down into the ditch with them, bandage up their wounds, and stay with them until they are strong enough to crawl up on your back and get out." He added, "It's like an old hymn we used to sing on the plantation: 'When nothing else could help, love lifted me.'"

Denver also made me realize that homelessness is not a government problem—it's a church problem. I don't know how he knew this, but he told me that there are about as many churches as there are homeless people in America. "If every church would take in just one homeless person, the problem would be solved," he explained. "I'm not a very smart man, Mr. Ron, but it seems to me there is too much Bible studying and not enough Bible following!"

Once I spoke harshly about a homeless man whom I thought was drunk, and Denver told me, "God doesn't need no more judges; He has court houses full of them. God needs servants, so stop your judging and serve."

It didn't take a college degree to realize that Debbie's dream had been from God. A few months into our friendship with Denver, he told me, "Because of what Miss Debbie is doing for the homeless, she has become precious to God." He then warned, "When you are precious to God, you become a target for Satan. The thief comes in the night, so watch your back. Something is about to happen to Miss Debbie!"

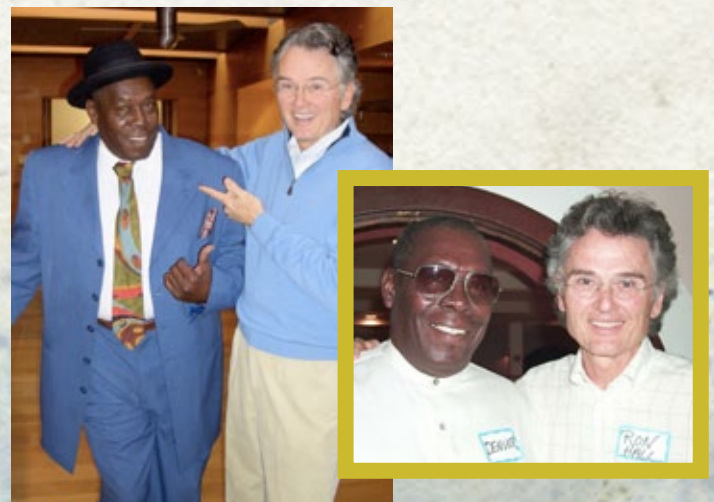
A few days later, Debbie was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. For nineteen months we fought to save her life. Denver became a soldier in the army of the Lord and fought alongside us. This man, whom I once thought little of, became the man God used to comfort us the most as we faced our darkest hours. Debbie's final words to me were, "Don't give up on Denver. God is going to bless your friendship in ways you can never imagine."

With Debbie in heaven, Denver moved in with me. He said the Lord spoke to him before her death and told him to follow Debbie's example by serving the homeless as she did. Together, we did more than four

hundred events for the homeless, which helped raise more than \$100 million that was spread to missions all across America. Debbie's dream had become a reality. Four years after her death, Denver was named the Philanthropist of the Year for his work on behalf of the homeless in Fort Worth. The new mission in Debbie's dream was built. To God be the glory!

Denver lived with me in my home for more than ten years until he, too, joined Debbie in heaven. Our friendship was life changing for us both.

In the words of my friend Denver: "Whether we are rich, poor, or something in between, the earth is no final resting place. So, in a way, we are all homeless—just working our way home."



Denver Moore and Ron Hall



Ron Hall and Denver Moore's story can be found in their book and movie, *Same Kind of Different as Me*. They also co-authored *What Difference Do It Make?* with Lynn Vincent and created the Same Kind of Different as Me small group Bible study shortly before Denver passed away last year. Ron's new book, *Workin' Our Way Home*, tells the story of the ten years they lived together. Find out more at www.SameKindFoundation.org.

Ever make a decision that turned out badly? I think we all have. Wish you could do things differently? I think we all do. But how?

As a life coach to people in rehabilitation programs, I have found that when people learn “emotional intelligence,” they become better at thinking wisely and learn to make reasonable choices about how they act.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify, use, understand, and manage emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate well, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict. This helps you have better self-control and make better decisions.

For example, one aspect of emotional intelligence is thinking about how your actions might affect yourself and others. People who have low emotional intelligence do not consider the consequences that may result from choosing to drink and drive. If they would stop to think before they acted, they would not only save others’ lives but also save themselves from either death, serious injury, legal problems, or imprisonment.

Foolproof Guide to **BETTER** *DECISION MAKING*

by MaryAnn Gardner



Sometimes when I interview clients, I’ll ask what they were thinking when they decided to get behind the wheel of a car and drive right after having drunk alcohol. They often respond, “I wasn’t thinking.” They tell me they never thought that they might be arrested or get into an accident.

Before you do something stop and think. Ask yourself, “What are the possible bad consequences of this action? What are my other options?” This will help you make a good decision.

Here are a couple more key points for better decision making:

- **Figure out what the problem really is.**
- **Learn to understand and consider other people’s values, behaviors, and feelings.** Some people have difficulty controlling feelings of anger and rage. They use these feelings to try to solve their relationship problems. If this is you, take time to think about how the other person may be feeling and thinking.
- **Understand (or at least try to understand) why people respond to you the way they do.** Becoming more self-aware and considering the feelings of others will improve your relationships, both with others as well as yourself.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

GALATIANS 5:22-23 ESV



Some people combine the use of drugs and alcohol with uncontrollable rage, and it is a recipe for disaster. Many people have antisocial behavior because they lack the skills they need to work with others. But that can change!

Wherever you are in life you can learn those skills. It is never too late to learn how to work well with others in social situations and to avoid rejection.

The following list describes the way a person with high emotional intelligence thinks and acts. Put a plus (+) mark beside statements where you are strong. Put a checkmark (✓) beside a description that you need to work on:

- I am able to handle criticism without giving excuses, blaming others, and being in denial.
- I have an open mind without judging others, and I don't react to a situation without listening.
- I do not dismiss others' ideas just because they are not my own.
- I am a good listener.
- I am honest with myself and other people.
- I apologize when I am wrong.
- I listen with empathy, which is compassionate and active listening.
- I recognize thoughts and feelings - both mine and others.
- I think of solutions and am a problem-solver.
- I consider the possible consequences of my actions.
- I consider what other people's thoughts might be.
- I reconsider my own thoughts.
- I consider the difference between right and wrong important.
- I make wise choices and learn from past mistakes
- I work to solve conflicts between myself and others.
- I know how to stop myself when I need to.

Now that you know what you need to work on, do so a step at a time. This will radically improve your relationships and your life in general. You will be able to better manage what life brings.

I have seen great success in the decision-making process of people as they take simple steps to increase emotional intelligence. And if it's true for them, I know it can be true of you. Keep working at it. I believe in you.



Do all you can to add to your life these things: to your faith add goodness; to your goodness add knowledge; to your knowledge add self-control; to your self-control add patience; to your patience add devotion to God; to your devotion add kindness toward your brothers and sisters in Christ, and to this kindness add love.

2 PETER 1:5-7 ERV



MaryAnn Gardner, MS, M.Ed-HS-BCP, currently is the Director of Life Change Programs of the Bridgeport Rescue Mission. She is passionate about inspiring hope and teaching life skills so her clients will have the help needed to become all they can be. If in Bridgeport, CT, tune into to her radio show on WICC 600 dealing with the crisis of opioid addiction.

TALK IT OUT

WITH *Janice*

Take some alone time and let these questions from Janice Almond guide you to answers and deeper thoughts.

Learning more and digging deeper are good ways to know yourself better and become the person God sees you to be. Our friend, Janice Almond, jotted down some subjects and questions from Ron Hall's story to help you think deeper and grow personally and spiritually. Whether you have a talk session with some friends or just an alone time with pen and paper, don't pass these by.

1. Prejudice: How does prejudice affect your life and the lives of others?

2. Being Open-minded: If you are an open-minded person, how does that benefit your life and the lives of others?

3. Fear: The Bible says in 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out

fear." How does this verse help you to manage your fears?

4. Value: How do you determine your value and the value of others?

5. A True Friend: Give some qualities of a true friend.

6. Understanding: What are some conditions that allow understanding to take place?

7. Tolerance: What are some conditions that allow tolerance to take place?

8. Obeying God: The Bible says in James 2:26b, "faith without works is dead." In what ways do you show your faith? What actions of faith have you seen others take?



Given to you by: