

# Where are my brothers?

John Nystrom, CTC 2006

## 1. Intro

### 1.1 You gotta resign first.

About a year ago Freddy Boswell, Judy Bokelman and Dennis Steenwyck asked me if I would speak tonight. I said sure. But don't you usually have somebody from **outside** the organization do the banquet talk? When did we change that? Freddy said, "We didn't. **You have to resign** before the next CTC."

Tonight Corey Wenger has agreed to sing this song for us at my request. This is for you.

## The Last to be chosen

Words by Ray Boltz

Music by Steve Millikan and Ray Boltz

Today in the school yard, they're choosing up sides.  
One child just stood there, with tears in his eyes.  
He'd been there before, and everyone knew  
He'd be alone, when the choosing was through.

But high in the heavens the father looked down  
He saw what happened there on the ground  
The angels rejoiced when he said to his Son  
"Watch what I do with this one."

Chorus

The last to be chosen are the first he will call  
And what he does through them will amaze one and all  
It won't be the hero that carries the ball  
The last to be chosen are the first he will call

Don't be discouraged, Don't be afraid  
God is not worried with the choice that he made  
Others may laugh, and doubt at the start  
But he sees what's there in your heart

Chorus (last time through)

The last to be chosen are the first he will call  
And what he does through them will amaze one and all  
Standing for Jesus when others may fall.  
The last to be chosen are the first he will call

## 2. Jokes

### 2.1 If . . . You belong at CTC

It's great to see so many people here this year for CTC. I guess we have a new attendance record. But seeing so many people here really makes me wonder if they all belong here. So, I have prepared a test for you so you can decide for yourself if you belong at CTC.

If you can walk off a plane and into an airport that is not in your home country and is not even in your country of assignment, but you **know where the only power outlet is** where you can plug in your laptop, you probably belong at CTC.

If you have read more of the **Bible this year on a PDA** than on paper, you probably belong at CTC.

If you have ever been sitting in church reading the Bible on your PDA and thought, "Should I be doing this? What if somebody behind me thinks I'm **playing Tetris**?" If you have done that, you probably belong at CTC.

If you have ever had **mosquito repellent** on your arms remove the paint from your computer, then you probably belong at CTC.

It was great to have a lesson in **sign language from Geoffrey Hunt** this week.

And then spoken language lessons from **Judy Bokelman**.

Judy said she wanted to build **Capacability**. But she didn't mention **Sustainapacity or sustainativity**.

Freddy said we should watch something **closely**.

John Wimbish: FieldWorks is going to **behave it correctly**.

I missed part of the NRSI presentation. I had to go to the **Private Use Area**.

Seriously, it's been great to be here at Jaars. These **yellow signs** on the doors saying don't go through here or don't enter there are new to me. I understand there are security and traffic flow issues.

Now we know what **OpenOffice** means at Jaars: it means there's no yellow sign on the door saying you can't use the door to enter the office.

I really wasn't bothered by this whole thing till I bought a **Toshiba computer** from Jaars and there was a label on the lid, "Do not use this lid to gain access to the keyboard."

And you already heard about the **car I rented** from Jaars. The **driver's side door** said, "Use the other door," and the **passenger side door** said, "Do not use this door to gain access to the vehicle." I got in anyway, though. So **the one I rented** is now the one with the broken rear window.

#### 2.1.1 Special meals on Qantas

I hope you all have a good trip home. How many have a flight longer than eight hours?

I have two 14-hour flights and two 9-hour flights on this trip. A while back I noticed that people who order **special meals get them earlier**. Sometimes up to an hour earlier. So I called Qantas to get my

seat assignments and order special meals. The Qantas rep said, “What kind of special meal do you require, sir?” I said, “**Well, whaddaya got?**” She said, “Well sir, what are you trying to avoid?” I said, “I’m trying to avoid staying awake an extra hour waiting for my meal on the 14 hour flight across the Pacific.” See, if you’re coming from Waxhaw, when your midnight flight finally leaves LAX and they start serving an hour and a half later, your body thinks it’s 4:30 in the morning. So going to sleep is the top priority. The special meal come early, so what’s on the tray is pretty irrelevant.

She laughed and told me the options.

I’ve been doing this for a few years now. I have been getting the low fat/low calorie meals. Those are pretty uninspiring. But this time I’m trying **Kosher Jewish**. Next time I’m going to ask if they have **low-fat gluten-free lactose-intolerant low-sodium Asian vegetarian**.

### 3. Introducing myself

#### 3.1 Beginning MS-DOS, I just coach.

Well you’re probably **wondering if I belong** at CTC.

If people ask me if I’m a translator, I say “No, **I don’t play anymore. Now I just coach.**” My role is coaching a group of translators as they translate into their languages. But mostly my role is coaching the Papua New Guineans who coach them.

Shortly after Bonnie and I arrived in PNG, we decided to work in the **Arop** translation project. I needed a job **for a few months** until the other team working in that project left. One of the directors asked me to help another translator, but my job included knowing what to do with a computer, which I did not. So I went to a beginning MS-DOS course. This was around **January 1988**. The teacher was **Brian Chapaitis**. A few weeks later he asked me to teach the next beginning MS-DOS course. I said no way, I can’t teach that course. I just took that course. But he said I’d do great because I would teach it from the **students’ perspective**.

*So this is how I was introduced to the Wycliffe concept of qualifying for a job.*

So I taught the course two or three times and got a reputation for knowing something about computers when I barely knew anything. But I discovered that it can be **fun and very satisfying** to help another translators figure out how to use their computers in their work.

In my experience with CTC, CTWC, then LSB, and now CTAG, seeing the **progress** that we have made in the last **ten years** toward **becoming one team** that glorifies the Lord together as we serve him has been an awesome experience.

**And if it weren’t for CTC, LSB and CTAG**, I wouldn’t be on Qantas eating a Kosher Jewish meal.

### 4. Mark 10:23-31

Speaking of Jewish, if you have your Bible, in paper or on your PDA, turn with me to Mark 10:23 and let’s hear from our Messiah.

Jesus has just told the **Rich Young Ruler** that he should sell all he has and give the proceeds to the poor. You remember his response. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

We pick up the story in verse 23.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

<sup>24</sup> The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

<sup>26</sup> The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

<sup>28</sup> Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”

<sup>29</sup> “I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

## 5. Is the promise true for me and for you?

### 5.1 Is this promise true?

What most of us **have in common** is that we have done what the disciples are telling Jesus they have done: We have **left our homes** and our families to serve our King.

It’s time for a **reality check**. I’ve been in Wycliffe now for 23 years.

Oh, thank you so much for making those unbelieving faces. Yes, I joined right out of kindergarten. *When I was in the intro to literacy class, they taught me how to read.*

Anyway, time for a **reality check**.

Jesus said these words and we are **giving our lives** to translate them, but are they true **in our own lives**?

In August 1983, the guy who was welcoming Bonnie and me into **membership** in Wycliffe quoted Psalm 68:19, “Blessed be the Lord, who **daily loadeth us with benefits**”. He went on to talk about all the insurance stuff and financial arrangements and other ‘benefits’ that Wycliffe members get. But that’s **not the really good stuff** we got when we followed our King on this journey.

The good stuff is all this stuff Jesus promised us right here in these two verses.

### 5.2 How Jesus has made good on this promise in my life

#### 5.2.1 I’m finally at home in the Kingdom.

When I was in high school, there were a few main groups: The **popular** ones, the **jocks**, the **geeks**, the **burnouts**. I didn’t fit in with any of them. But when I became a Christian, the Christian kids I met **accepted me** for who I was. I didn’t have to act or talk or dress a certain way to fit in. A year later I was one of their leaders. Jesus had given me **new brothers and sisters**. I finally fit in somewhere.

In the years that followed, the Lord provided **more and more** brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers and on and on.

But a gift isn't really a gift **until you receive it**. And **I wasn't** really receiving it.

### 5.3 What I learned from WWNE

I've never had much **compassion**. I think I'm pretty hard-hearted actually. So sometimes I would ask the Lord to help me to be more compassionate. Well, you know what they say—**watch what you ask for**, you just might get it.

#### 5.3.1 Migraines:

##### 5.3.1.1 On the office floor

About the time we went to PNG, I started getting a lot of migraine headaches. Sometimes they would last for **two or three days** and I would be totally incapacitated. I have photos of me lying on the floor of our translation office in Arop village. I'm just lying there **on the floor**, wearing sunglasses and listening to the translators.

##### 5.3.1.2 Family thoughts in bed

I used to lie in bed with these headaches and I couldn't do anything but **lie there**. But somehow it seemed every time this happened, I would get to thinking about **how blessed I am**, especially to have such a great wife and two great kids. And I'd get to thinking about the people who **support** us back home and what a blessing they have been.

##### 5.3.1.3 Migraines mostly gone

More recently, we figured out **what was causing** my migraines. Now if I get enough sleep, stay hydrated, stay away from chocolate, caffeine and a few other things, and sleep with my special neck pillow, I don't get migraines very often anymore.

**But I thank God for what I learned** when I had them more often.

#### 5.3.2 Weakness and Tiredness

In 1998 I went to **Vanuatu** to do a workshop on Paratext and Shoebox. Apparently I picked up some kind of bug there. When I got back to Ukarumpa, I was really sick. I was **tired** all the time and **weak**. Some days I was so weak I could not sit anymore after **10:00 in the morning**. I'd have to go to bed. Other days were better, and my strength went up and down, though **I was never normal**.

*Please, **no comments** on my never being normal.*

You all know Brian Chapaitis. His wife Helen is one of our doctors at Ukarumpa in PNG. I asked her once why they were not calling my illness "**Chronic Fatigue**." She said, we won't call it that until we give up trying to figure out what causes it. Chronic Fatigue just describes the symptoms.

*So I called it **WWNE**—*Wimpy With No Excuse*.*

#### 5.3.3 Depression

I had never been depressed before, but when I had this illness, some days I would just feel **really sad, but for absolutely no reason**. It felt really weird. Some days I would say to my wife Bonnie, "Today, if there's **bad news**, I don't want to hear about it. Please just keep it and tell me tomorrow." Sometimes she would suspect I was feeling like this and would say, "**Well, do you want to hear it?**"

## 5.4 Tsunami and aftermath: God can use a tragedy to do what he wants with us.

I had this illness for **about three years**. It started right before a tsunami wiped out our village in **July 1998**. Most of you have heard that story or at least parts of it, so I won't repeat the whole thing here. There's a good 8-minute video version of it on that Wycliffe USA DVD, "**Pass the Vision**."

### 5.4.1 Arop team takes the ball and runs with it

**Half** the people who speak the Arop language were killed in that tsunami, but three of the four Arop translators survived. We always thought we had **good reasons** for making the languages related to Arop wait until the NT was finished in Arop. But after the tsunami, those "**reasons**" sounded **more like excuses**.

So as a team we decided to **include those languages** in the translation project. I had no strength, so the **Arop translators** I had been training started to run things. The result of that is, now they run translation **workshops** whether I'm there or not, and we send a lot of **translation drafts** back and forth by **HF radio email**.

So the Lord really used my weakness to **show his strength** as this multi-language translation project got started.

### 5.4.2 Emotional instability—greater appreciation for people

#### 5.4.2.1 First cry at Ukarumpa communion

But that's **not the only good thing** that happened.

The fatigue illness I had left me a lot **more emotional than I used to be**. One day we were having **communion** at Ukarumpa, and instead of passing the elements around, we had people walk to the front. I was sitting in about the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> row with my family.

I used to be really bothered by the fact that so many translators left PNG for good after their New Testaments were done. We needed their expertise. Then I started **hearing some of their stories**—stories about things happening in their families back home that were pulling them home for years before they actually left. I started **being grateful that they stayed** and finished the job rather than disappointed that they didn't stay longer.

So on this day as couple after couple and family after family went forward and walked past me for the cup and the bread, I thought about what I knew about their struggles. Some had **children** who had caused them **deep pain**. Some had **health** issues that would have given them a great excuse to look for an easier place to live. Some had weathered extremely difficult village situations. Some had parents or **children at home** that could really use their help, **but they stayed**. And as I saw them go forward, I **sat there on the pew and cried**. Not great sobs, just a lot of tears that would not stop.

Not tears of sadness, but **tears of joy**. Joy at seeing the Lord **glorifying himself** through these people and their lives. And I'm sitting there thinking, Lord thank you for this couple and their faithfulness. Thank you for how you have shown your power and love and faithfulness in this person or that family. It was overwhelming.

For a long time it really bothered me when this would happen. **American men don't cry in public**. But now I kind of let it happen and say, "Lord, if you want to touch me this way, then I can handle people seeing me cry."

So a few months ago I was at Ukarumpa in our **Meeting House** for church on a Sunday morning and I was doing it again. We were standing up **singing a hymn** and I was looking around at the people around me and just thinking about various people that I could see from where I was standing and what a **wonderful scene** it was.

As I looked around and saw all these people that we are connected with, I **thought about some of the things I know about them**. Things that make me appreciate both **their faithfulness to God** and his faithfulness to them through the difficulties in their lives.

As I looked around me, I saw so many that have **touched our lives** and whose lives we have touched. People who have **served** us and that we have served. Our lives form a **beautiful web**. Take one family out of that web and it would be completely different. What a great family we are a part of. What a mighty, awesome God we serve.

I'm sure some of the people around me **wondered at the tears** streaming down my cheeks. They didn't know it was partly their fault.

I could give **names** but to most of you they would just be names. To me they are **precious treasure**.

So I'm standing there thinking, "What an **awesome privilege** it is to be here at Ukarumpa and to know these people." The more I thought about it, the more I looked around and saw more people who have proven the Lord's faithfulness. People who have made a major contribution in PNG, many times at **great personal cost** to themselves.

**A few weeks ago it happened again**. I got to church **late** and had to sit in the back. This only meant that more people were visible from where I sat.

I could go on and on about the **amazing saints** I could see from there. **Humble people** whose lives almost yell out "What a mighty God we serve!" **I am rich beyond measure** because of the people I have been privileged to know.

Remember that movie, "**It's a Wonderful Life**"? In that final scene all the people who have been touched by George Barkley's life come to celebrate with him. It's a great scene.

But that was **just a movie**—a fictional story about imaginary people portrayed by actors who make a living pretending to be somebody else. But what we have here is **the real thing**. Worshipping the Lord surrounded by those people at Ukarumpa or surrounded by you all is **better** than that and we get to do it all the time! We have **real people** with **real stories** about a **real God** who absolutely delights in expressing his nature through them, and making their lives more beautiful than all the **flowers** he has designed.

But **beauty** truly is in the eye of the **beholder**. It's not beautiful to us if we're not looking.

Some people love to read **biographies** of famous missionaries and other heroes of the faith. We don't have to. **We live among heroes** all the time.

It's a far more wonderful life that I had imagined when I joined our King on this journey.

## 6. Blank check

I used to say **starting a translation project** is like writing a blank check. You have no idea what it is going to cost you. The same is true for most of you. Maybe that's **not a big deal to you** that you did that, that you made that commitment and signed that blank check years ago and you have lived it out.

You may think, “What’s the big deal, **we see this all the time** in the type of people we have in our organization or our branch or our entity or our department.” **That’s my point exactly. That** is what the big deal is. **The Kingdom of God** is all around us. When we take the time to **notice it** and glorify God for it, we **receive** a tremendous blessing. **When we don’t notice the heroes of the Kingdom** around us and the awesome things the Lord is doing in and through them, we miss out.

They say you are **the only Bible** somebody else may ever read. And we think about how that relates to **our interaction** with unbelievers. But it should affect **how we perceive each other** as well. People all around us are **preaching sermons** with their lives all the time. Sermons about what **real love** looks like, **beautiful messages** about grace and faithfulness and forgiveness and perseverance. Great sermons **preached mostly without words**.

**Are we listening?**

## 7. About the song

This is my **seventh** CTC in a row. And for me, it’s a great **privilege** to be here with all of you. I think the Lord has been **teaching me to listen** to your sermons, the ones your lives are preaching constantly, which is why I had them sing this particular song tonight. I had them **sing it for you**.

When I began to ask the Lord **what I should say** to you all, for a long time, this song is the only answer I got. This song **illustrates** verse 31: “Many who are first will be last, and the last first.” It’s an **illustration** of one of the many ways the **Kingdom of God is upside down**.

And when I hear this song, I think of you.

### 7.1 Virtual Music Video

There’s **no music video** to go with this song. I was going to have **my son** make a music video of this, but he was too busy during his school break.

So tonight you and I are going to create and watch a **virtual music video**. A real music video has real music and people you can see. A virtual music video has neither. You have to imagine both the music and the video.

I’m a **translator**, so I can’t just do this without making sure people understand the context. I’m sure most of you have done this thing they call choosing up sides. A group of kids want to play a game, like soccer or basketball. Usually you pick the two best players, and you make them captains. Then the captains take turns choosing players. As each player is chosen, he walks over to join his captain. This goes on until everybody has been chosen. Of course the best players always get chosen first and the worst ones last.

I know it’s risky, after an exhausting week, to ask you to close your eyes. But I’m willing to risk it. Now close your eyes and imagine this music video with me.

I picture a little boy named **Billy**, about 11 or 12 years old.

Anyway, Billy’s not the best **athlete**. He’s not the most **popular** kid in the school. Some kids are **jealous** that Billy always gets the highest grades in **Math** and **Science**.

Now in the video we see Billy **walking up to the group** just as they start choosing up sides to play soccer. His head is hanging low as the other boys are chosen one after another and go to join their teams. We hear part of the song,

Today in the school yard, they're choosing up sides.

One child just stood there, with tears in his eyes.

He'd been there before, and everyone knew

He'd be alone, when the choosing was through.

He's not really crying, but as we zoom in we can see the tears welling up. He knows that if he **blinks**, those tears are coming down his face in front of everybody. That would be a disaster, so he turns around to wipe his eyes with his **shirt sleeve**.

As he's wiping his eyes, we hear,

But high in the heavens the father looked down

He saw what happened there on the ground

The angels rejoiced when he said to his Son

"Watch what I do with this one."

He gets in the game and does his best, but he's not really very good.

In the **next scene**, it's later the same day. We see Billy in his room at home. He's **sitting at his desk praying**, pouring out his heart to God. We hear him saying, "Lord I want you to use me, but I'm such a geek. How could I ever amount to anything? Everybody at school thinks I'm weird and they never want me on their team. I know you love me and want to use me, but I just don't see it happening . . ."

We hear the words to the song:

Don't be discouraged, Don't be afraid

God is not worried with the choice that he made

Others may laugh, and doubt at the start

But he sees what's there in your heart

Here's where my video has alternate endings. In each one, as **little Billy** is sitting at his desk praying, he **morphs** into a full-grown man, still sitting at a desk praying.

#### 7.1.1 Bill the pilot

In the first one, Bill is at a **small wooden desk with binders** neatly stacked against the wall. He finishes praying and slowly stands up. In walks another man who says, "Looks like the clouds are breaking up, Bill. If you're going to make it all the way out to Sissano and back, you'd better take off now." Bill walks out to a blue and white Jaars plane and takes off for the jungle.

#### 7.1.2 Bill the programmer

In another version, we see Bill at a desk with **three monitors**. The left-side monitor has sloping Arabic. The one on the right has Hebrew, and the one in the middle has all that indented stuff with long words that only a programmer can read. I can't read it. It's **Hungarian** to me. We hear Bill praying, "Lord God help us find this bug. If they can't do this part in Nastaliq, there's really no point

in any of this. CTC is just three weeks away and we really want to release this.”

### 7.1.3 Bill the hardware tech

In another ending to my virtual music video, Bill’s praying at a large, old, beat-up desk. There are all kinds of **computer hardware all over the place**. There are bare hard drives to his left, a dusty old external floppy drive is on the window sill. To his right there’s a monitor with the back cover off. Two laptops are open right in front of him. We hear him praying, “Lord, help me to prioritize all this stuff. There’s no way I can do it all.” He finishes praying as a **man walks in with a laptop** and says, “Bill, I just can’t figure this out. It worked fine last week, but now it just won’t load my data. I know you’re busy, but Steve is coming to check Acts next week and right now we can’t do anything.”

### 7.1.4 Bill the Director

In yet another version, Bill’s desk looks more like an administrator’s desk, with **calendars and personnel charts** on the wall. We hear him praying, “Lord, how are we ever going to make this budget stretch until the end of September? Thank you for trusting me with this responsibility. But you know I can’t do it. Only you can.”

Whether he’s doing a highly-visible job or a behind-the-scenes one, in each version of the video, as we see full-grown Bill making a huge difference in the Kingdom, we hear those words again . . .

Don’t be discouraged, Don’t be afraid

God is not worried with the choice that he made

Others may laugh, and doubt at the start

But he sees what’s there in your heart

The last to be chosen are the first he will call

And what he does through them will amaze one and all

It won’t be the hero that carries the ball

the last to be chosen are the first he will call

Chorus (last time through)

The last to be chosen are the first he will call

And what he does through them will amaze one and all

Standing for Jesus when others may fall.

The last to be chosen are the first he will call

## 7.2 Each of you is Bill

You can **open your eyes** now.

*Somebody please **wake up Brian Chapaitis**.*

**In my mind, each one of you is Bill.** Some of you probably did experience being chosen last. Some of you were the captains.

But to me, **you** are the ones who are carrying the ball.

**You** are the ones about whom the Lord said, “Watch what I do with this one.”

You are the ones who “amaze one and all.”

The stuff you guys do is astounding.

### 7.2.1 We're not carpenters or truck drivers

Translators like me are not **carpenters** who can go to Home Depot and buy new tools. We're not **truckers** who can go to a dealer to buy a new truck or fix our old one. **We rely on you** to build our tools, to maintain them, to fix them, to improve them, to bail us out when we do something dumb with our data.

Without you, we go back to **paper and pencil**.

*Or even worse, we could end up doing everything in **Microsoft Office**.*

### 7.2.2 Adapt It as an example

**People ask me** if computers make translation **faster**. I use Adapt It as an example. Whenever you translate from one language to another, there are always **easy parts and difficult parts**. Adapt It helps the translator deal with the easy parts, the predictable parts that a computer can help with. It helps him deal with them quickly and easily so he can spend more time on the parts that are really hard to translate—the parts that only a human can do after a lot of work. So in that way Adapt It helps a translator use his time on the things that really matter.

I could have used FieldWorks or Insite or ToolBox or MyWord or any number of things. But the point is the same:

That's what all of you do. It may not be as obvious as that, but basically that's what IT is all about, isn't it? **You guys do what you do so the rest of us can get better results sooner.** Without you, we **waste a lot of time** on the things that just slow us down.

### 7.2.3 Small improvements are a big deal

When you guys make a **small improvement** to a program, or teach me a **little trick** that helps me do my translation or my administrative work better, you are making a **huge** contribution. That little thing you did may be something I'll end up using multiple times a day for the next ten years. Multiply that by the 20 translators I work with in 11 languages, or by all the translators in all the languages we're working in now and will work in during the next decade, and you can see **what a huge impact that can come from just one of you doing just one thing**. Add up the thousands of little improvements you make over the years, and there's no way you could ever measure your impact on all of the people who get the Bible in their hands through our work. And look how many of you there are.

You are the ones carrying the ball.

You multiply the effectiveness of the rest of us.

*If I wanted to cripple WBT & SIL, I would **attack this conference**, not the International Conference.*

#### 7.2.4 Serving the servants with flexibility

One of the exciting things about this time in the history of Wycliffe is that we have an ever-broadening variety of types of projects we are involved in.

**Things get really interesting** when the people involved in one of these non-traditional types of projects run up against aspects of SIL and WBT infrastructure that were built for more classical type projects.

If I'm reading the trends right, in the next five years you will see more opportunities to **think outside the computing box** than you saw in the last five years. Embrace those opportunities. Enjoy them. And then write a really interesting **prayer letter** about it to your supporters. They'll love it.

#### 7.2.5 Conclusion on first will be last

Jesus said, "But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

The last to be chosen are the first he will call.

**Maybe you were last** as a kid, but you are first now. In my book, **you are a Big Shot** in the Kingdom of God. Usually being a Big Shot in God's Kingdom means doing something the King needs done but where most people don't see you or recognize you as important. **But I know** how important you are, and I know the Lord does. I hope you do too.

### 8. I got over it

Eventually I got over my fatigue illness. I finally found an infectious disease doctor who would not give up. So **Dr. Reifsnyder** in Florida is an **MK** himself and a former missionary and has a lot of experience treating missionaries who have picked up weird bugs. So he figured out that it was a virus called **HH6** and I got to take the medicine they give you for shingles.

*He gave me my medicine in a small box that said "**Shingles Starter Kit**." I said, "What's this, just add water and you get shingles?"*

I have had no symptoms for **5 years** now.

*Please, **no jokes** about my other symptoms.*

### 9. Conclusion

<sup>28</sup> Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"

<sup>29</sup> "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

This is **what the Lord promised**. My guess is you have already received this gift. I know I have.

Maybe you have not thought much about it. **But the gift is there if you look for it.**

**One of my favorite Veggie Tales Songs is The Water Buffalo Song . . .**

What? Why are you **looking at me like that**? Oh, maybe nobody ever explained this to you. Let me take a minute to explain it. What are commonly called “children’s songs” are really for adults. They usually have **great lyrics, catchy tunes, and an important moral message**. They’re just generally superior to a lot of what passes for music these days. Most adults are embarrassed to buy them for themselves, so the marketing people call them “children’s songs.” The adults buy them for their kids, but secretly keep listening to them when their kids grow up and move out. So that’s the deal. I’m sorry nobody explained this to you before.

Anyway, Larry the Cucumber sings:

Everybody’s got a water buffalo,  
Mine is fast but yours is slow  
Where we got them I don’t know  
But everybody’s got a water buffalo ooooo . . .

But he is interrupted and told if he keeps singing the song, people will start asking, “Where is my water buffalo? **How come I don’t have a water buffalo?**”

But you may be asking—**where are my** brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, houses and lands?

Well, when somebody asked Jesus, **who is my neighbor**, he ended up telling them a story and then said the point was not who is my neighbor, but that I should **be a neighbor**. The point was, who am I being a **neighbor to**?

There are some **young men in their 20’s** at Ukarumpa who sometimes take my son and his friends camping up on the ridges that surround our center. These guys are not asking, “Where’s my younger brother?” or “Where’s my nephew?” They’re **being** an older brother and an uncle and a godly example to these young guys.

You probably chose to sit with those people near you now.

*Don’t look now or you’ll embarrass them!*

They are part of the family the Lord has given you.

These are riches that are **there for the taking**. They are yours, but they don’t make you rich unless you acknowledge that they are there. And **if you begin to acknowledge** that they are there and you begin to thank the Father for them, He will **help you see more** of what he has already given you. He will show you what a precious treasure these people really are.

*And maybe you **won’t have to get** migraines and chronic fatigue to see it.*

This is what the Lord has been showing me and it’s why I had them sing that song, “The Last to be Chosen.”

The last to be chosen are the first he will call

And what he does through them will amaze one and all.

Isn’t God awesome letting us see how he uses these people around us?

## 10. Dr. Seuss writes the conclusion

I saw Dr. Seuss here this week and I told him what I was planning to say to you tonight. I also told him I needed a conclusion. He said, "I'll handle that, but I'm not in a very funny mood this week. I'm actually in a pretty serious mood." I said, "No problem, have at it." So here's what he sent me by email today:

Jesus promised us sisters fathers and mothers,  
Children and homes, not to mention more brothers.  
He's already given this gift beyond measure,  
But you have to receive it or there is no treasure.  
So if you want to give God all the glory,  
Just ask your brother to tell you his story.  
His story of God's love his grace and provision,  
Will show you the gift and give you the vision,  
To see the family he's gathered around you.  
What he's doing in them will amaze and astound you.  
Then when you're jet-lagged and you just can't sleep,  
Start counting your brothers instead of the sheep.  
It profits you nothing just lying there bored,  
When you could be thanking and praising the Lord.