



URBAN CURRENT

Don't come to Chicago

Georgia is my Warrior Princess. My high school sweetheart. The love of my life. The mother of my five children. She said, "I do" 38 years ago this summer. She is the good Christian in the family.

In her words...

Don't come to Chicago! There are already too many people. Thousands of cyclists, buses, pedestrians, trucks, construction signs, and potholes are already wrestling to occupy the same space. A one-mile zip to the grocery store becomes a half-hour encounter with three or four one-legged, bearded, homeless beggars standing in the middle of the intersections reaching out to you with a cup and a "God bless you." Getting from point A to point B taxes the mind, heart, and soul. All I wanted was a gallon of milk! Everybody spread out!

So don't come here. There's nowhere to park, anyway. You'll have to drive around and around the block or the parking lot just to get near the cash station. But when you get to the only spot open, you'll have to pay 25 cents for eight minutes of parking. Now you have to guess, how long is the line at the cash station? How many quarters do I have to part with? What are the chances parking enforcement will come by if I gamble and take the risk?

Who needs it? You do not want to come here. If I haven't talked you out of it yet, let me share some of our family's experiences while living here. Computers, purses, wallets, hubcaps, radios, bikes, laundry on the clothesline, rugs on the railing, plants and their planter boxes, jewelry, more jewelry, a new car, a transmission, and I can't even remember what all, stolen.

No. It's not safe. Breaking glass in the middle of the night as someone tries to climb into

our living room. Bullets flying and landing on our front porch. Police checking our bushes for weapons. Blue lights reflecting on our bedroom shades. Sirens screaming. Car alarms blaring. Car speakers blasting.

No. You wouldn't like it here ... unless you need someone to witness to. If your heart aches to tell someone about Jesus, this is the place! I'm on the L (train) headed downtown on a care-free shopping spree with my sister. They look like those gang-banger-type thugs that would grab a girl's purse and run. We hand them a gospel tract. They tell us that they are brothers and that they need God to comfort their mother because their brother had just been murdered. We put our hands on their shoulders and prayed for them. The city's feeling a little different now.

The next night, as I park my car in the garage I notice a man standing in the dark alley watching me. I say, "Hi." He says, "What's the good word?" He knows my schedule. He knows I just came from church. I tell Him, "The good word is that Jesus loves you." He tells me a little of his story. He's one of the Lost Boys of Rwanda. It's the first of several conversations with him about the Lord. The traffic seems a little less irritating lately.

In one afternoon of running errands I speak a word of witness to someone from Palestine, India, Israel, and Poland. I went into all the world without a passport or an airline ticket. I think the city is starting to grow on me.

I see a man standing alone. Armed with my favorite Chick tract, "This Was Your Life," I approach him and say, "Here, you look like you could use something to read." He looks it over and shakes his head. "Polski. No Ingless." Great! He's Polish. Lord, I thought you told me,

Book of Acts fashion, to go and give that man a tract. "Wait, wait!" There's one more tract in the recesses of my purse. It's Polish! I give it to him, "Polski! Polski!" We're both laughing and smiling. That's the closest I've ever come to speaking in tongues! And isn't Chicago a great city?

I put one tract in my purse. I'm going to the Opera. I don't think they let you pass out tracts at the Opera. But, Lord, surely there's one person I could give a tract to. I sit alone. The man next to me introduces himself. "George Bailey." "You don't look like George Bailey." (He's African American.) We laugh. All through the Opera I'm thinking, "Lord, how do I hand this man a tract? What do I say? It will make things tense for the rest of the Opera if I hand it to him during the intermission. I don't know what to say." It's not until I'm home and in bed that it comes to me. "So, George Bailey, how's your wonderful life?" I cry myself to sleep. I wonder if George Bailey's life needs Jesus. I wonder if George Bailey will have a wonderful eternity. This city needs me. It needs you, too. So, please ... come to Chicago. It's a great place to live!



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