

Look for Jelly Beans

Nancy Ortberg, a nurse who gave a sermon entitled *Matters of the Heart* at Willow Creek Church in Illinois, told about an occasion when she was working in a busy emergency room.

“We had a regular visitor, Billy, a cute 2-year-old with freckles and tousled blond hair. For a year, Billy had been in and out of the ER with what the doctors diagnosed as asthma.”

The source of the illness was a mystery to the medical staff. Billy hadn’t had asthma as an infant, there wasn’t a family history of asthma, and there weren’t obvious signs of allergies that would cause it. But the symptoms were asthmatic.

“Sometimes we treated Billy and sent him home; other times he would end up in the pediatrics ICU because his breathing was so labored,” Ortberg said.

This continued for about a year, and the staff grew fond of Billy. He came yet another day with breathing difficulties, and one of the medical interns decided, on a lark, to look up Billy’s nose.

“He found a black jelly bean that Billy’s brother had put there a year before. What came out with the jelly bean wasn’t pretty,” Ortberg said.

“We had treated Billy for the wrong condition for almost a year. In light of that circumstance, I put signs on the walls of the emergency room that said *Look for Jelly Beans*. When you’re working in the ER, properly diagnosing a problem can be the difference between life and death.”



Ortberg’s story is a reminder to all of us that we can overcomplicate a problem when a simple solution is at hand. Sometimes, as my grandmother would advise, the answer can be “as obvious as the nose on your face” (I couldn’t resist that!).

It is prudent to stop and think about a problem before you rather than rushing to judgment.

– Beecher Hunter