

Surprise, Surprise!

Okay, I admit it: I've been a fan of Jim Nabors since I first learned about him. A native of Sylacauga, Ala., who early in his career was a radio personality in Chattanooga, Tenn., Nabors is best known for his role on *The Andy Griffith Show*, and then took his character to his own television series, *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.*

Sticking in my mind are two words he used to repeat in almost every episode of his television show: "Surprise, surprise!"

Surprises come in many forms and guises; some good, some borderline amazing, some awful, some tragic, some hilarious. But one conclusion we can make is that surprises are seldom boring. Surprises are woven through the fabric of our lives. They come at us at unexpected and unpredictable times.

Writer Charles R. Swindoll describes some of the ways surprises impact us. Some surprises refresh us. On days when we are feeling low, out of the blue comes a card or letter of affirmation or appreciation. It could be an unexpected telephone call or a hug of reassurance that sends us soaring. Some surprises relieve us, like the occasions when we fear that family members or friends may be the victims of a storm or a traffic accident, and then we hear that they are all right. Some surprises rebuke us, such as the story of a minister who received a simple pair of gloves for services rendered and felt disappointed, until he discovered a \$10 bill stuffed into each finger and thumb.

One of the most remarkable accounts of surprises was contained in a *Dear Abby* column. A young man from a wealthy family was about to graduate from high school. It was a custom in their affluent community for parents to give their graduating children a new car, and the boy and his dad had spent weeks visiting one dealership after another. The week before graduation, they found the perfect car. The boy was certain it would be in the driveway on graduation night.

On the eve of his graduation, however, his father handed him a small package wrapped in colorful paper. It was a Bible. The boy was so angry he threw down the Bible and stormed out of the house. He and his father never saw each other again.

Several years later, news of his father's death finally brought the son home again. Following the funeral, he sat alone one evening, going through his father's possessions that he was to inherit when he came across the Bible his dad had given him. Overwhelmed by grief, he brushed away the dust and cracked it open for the first time. When he did, a cashier's check dated the day of his high school graduation fell into his lap – in the exact amount of the car they had chosen together.

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Life is short. God is sovereign. All plans are in His hands, not ours. When God repeats "Surprise, surprise!" through various events of our lives, let us not waste valuable time asking "Why me?" or "Why now?" or "Why this?"

Just keep in mind: Your Father loves you, and He does all things well.

--Beecher Hunter