



Nom de Plume: \_\_\_\_\_

# Something to Teach

## Idea Worth Teaching: Faith

Pre-reading Activities

**Directions: Read the following quote:**

*"Humor is the prelude to faith and Laughter is the beginning of prayer."*

Reinhold Niebuhr, from *Discerning the Signs of the Times*

### Explore the Language

1. Look up the word *prelude* and write the definition below.
2. Paraphrase the above passage, i.e. put it in your own words.

**Directions: Consider the thinking/writing prompt(s) below. For each one, write a reasoned response. Use complete sentences.**

1. What does having a sense of humor have to do with one's faith?
2. What does laughter have to do with prayer?
3. Do you agree or disagree with the quote? Explain your reasoning.

## *An Act of Faith*

I walked into the bathroom. There was a devil standing before the mirror, brushing his teeth. Yes, I said devil. He was bright red in color, had cloven feet, and a massive potbelly.

"That's my toothbrush," I said.

He pulled the toothbrush free, smiled at me showing fangs.

"I left mine at home."

"You could have lifted the seat too. Before you peed on it."

"I'm a devil," he shrugged. "Whaddya expect?"

It made sense.

"Are you the Devil or just a devil?" I was curious. Not that it mattered too much.

"Does it matter?" he asked. "Besides, how would you know if I was telling the truth or not?"

"You have a point," I admitted. "May I ask why you're here today? In my bathroom? Using my toothbrush?"

"You're in my appointment book."

"Really?" I said, somewhat taken aback. "I didn't think devils kept appointment books. Seems rather inefficient. Old-fashioned."

"How else am I going to keep track of things? I'm a busy guy - lots of clients." He smiled again, more fangs. "Sometimes I lose track of people and the Boss doesn't want to hear excuses. He wants results. If my monthly figures are down, well...there's hell to pay."

I nodded in understanding. Then a realization hit me.

"Isn't there supposed to be an angel around here somewhere?"

"The competition?" the devil said, raising an eyebrow. "They don't show up for nothin'. Good luck seeing one of them."

"So while you're giving me the horns and hooves treatment, I shouldn't expect the halos and harps treatment from your opposite?"

"The first fat baby I see come floating through the window, I wanna take a selfie with him. I'm gonna show it to the guys at the next lodge meeting. They don't even believe they exist. I've never seen one...and I've been around for a long time."

I wasn't in the mood to argue, and I also wasn't in the mood to hang around. Seeing a devil in my bathroom first thing in the morning wasn't the best way to start the day.

"Am I crazy?" I wondered. "Do I need to drive myself to the psych ward?"

The devil spat out the toothpaste and shook his head.

"You really think it's a good idea to drive?"

Clearly he could hear my thoughts. I grabbed my car keys and lit out of my apartment. It didn't seem like a good idea to hang around, especially with the company I was keeping - real or imagined.

"Who knows?" I thought, pulling out onto the street. "Maybe somebody else will see him. Then I'll know I'm not crazy."

# Something to Teach

"Don't count on it."

I looked in the rearview mirror and grimaced. He was sitting in the back seat. Not knowing what else to do, I kept driving.

"Are you hungry?" I asked.

"I can always eat," he said, nodding. "Something spicy though. I like it hot."

"I was thinking of a bagel with cream cheese."

"Suit yourself. Cream cheese is loaded with fat. Heart attack city is where you're headed."

"Aren't you supposed to want me to die?" I asked. "Isn't that the whole point?"

"Are you kidding?" he said. "Not before you've signed on the dotted line. If you die before I close the deal, then what good are you?"

There was an old bagel shop down the street. Water bagels - the sign said. And the smell of the place when you walked through the front door was divine. If anything could dispel my mood and my unholy guest, it had to be bagels.

When I pulled up to the storefront I looked in the back seat. Yep. The devil was still there. I tried to forget about him as I stepped inside, took a deep breath, and maneuvered my way to the front to pull a little paper tab with a number. The devil followed me and pulled a tab too.

"Hey look," he said, smiling. "Look what number I got."

There were three sixes.

Mine was thirty-seven.

"You sure you want to wait around that long?" I asked.

"Hey," the devil said. "I've got nothing but time on my hands. An eternity, in fact."

"I wouldn't listen to that one," a voice said close to me. The accent was thick - European - but I couldn't place where. I turned to look. There stood a little wisp of an old man. He was bent forward, hunched with time, and his knuckles, swollen with arthritis, clutched at a cane. His body bore the ravages of old age, but his eyes were bright.

I nodded. I didn't know what to say.

"Was he my guardian angel?" I thought. "Could he see the devil too? Maybe I wasn't so crazy after all?"

"I know his kind," the old man continued, shaking his head. "I have seen his works. Many years ago when I lost my family."

The old man pulled up his sleeve to reveal a number tattooed onto his arm.

"So what do I do?" I asked. I was at a loss. I wasn't sure how to deal with a devil.

"What do you do?" the man said, smiling. "You eat, of course. Why else are you here? A nice bagel is good for the soul."

I got my bagel. It was slathered in cream cheese, and as I was leaving, I savored the smell of the shop one last time.

I smiled at the old man and thanked him. He nodded in return. Then I looked over at the devil, winked and chomped. It was an act of faith.

*End*

