

**32963 Faith Page article, September 30, 2010**  
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### *God Messages*

A few weeks ago we answered an invitation to go to a beautiful little town in order to lead worship in the small chapel there. Arriving late at night, we entered the parsonage to find a note on the table asking if we would be willing to meet with the family of a young teenager (we'll call him Tom), who had been tragically killed a year before, just a few hundred yards from where the chapel stood. Early the next morning, seated in the parsonage, Tom's mother introduced us to him in a way only a mother could. She spoke with tenderness and love. She asked if it would be possible to mention something during the chapel worship on Sunday morning about its being the one-year anniversary of Tom's death. "All his friends are coming up for the anniversary of his death and we want to remember him in some way," the mother said quietly.

The next morning, the chapel was indeed filled with young people who had come to remember Tom. Their bright faces and sad eyes told us so much about the love and respect they had for this wonderful young man whose life had been so tragically cut short. We had not prepared for such an occasion, and so we decided that Casey would pray and Bob would preach what had been originally planned, and we would let the spirit of God move as it would.

The sermon began as planned, with the story of a foul ball at Yankee stadium that landed in the glove of a seven year old boy. The boy was thrilled beyond belief by this gift from out of nowhere. The rest of the sermon suggested that God is always sending unexpected things, like foul balls, into our lives, and we simply need to be open enough, awake enough, aware enough, to reach out and catch them and discern their meaning for us. God's message to us could come in a word, or an event, or a hug. In fact, God is always trying to reach us, connect with us, and lead us toward his grace. To make the point, at the end of the sermon, Bob pulled a baseball from his pocket and instinctively threw it into a crowd of teenagers in the front pew. He had not planned to do this, he just felt compelled to do so at the moment. A young man caught the ball and the crowd laughed a bit at the surprise of a baseball sailing through the chapel. Then we said a prayer, sang a hymn, and left.

But an astonishing thing happened. A few minutes after the service concluded, the mother of Tom, the young man we were remembering that day, came up to us, beaming. She thanked us for the service and then said, "You may not know this, but the ball you threw into the crowd at the end of the sermon was caught by Tom's brother. He was with Tom the night he was killed in the accident. It has been so hard on him. Thank you. It felt to him as if a message of grace was sent directly to him today."

Yes, God is always sending messages our way. Sometimes they are words of challenge, sometimes words of clarity, and sometimes just words that say, "I know what you face, and I know this is hard for you, but I am with you. You are not alone."

Are you alert enough to catch whatever message God is sending your way? We hope so. It's bound to be significant!