

## GIANT RELIGIOUS SALE

Pastor Fred recently visited the big city. Of course, to us in Cedar Crossing, Profitville, where Fred lives, is a big city. Big city to him would be substantially bigger. It would be big enough to have an Ed's Discount Auto Parts and Religious Store. Fred sent me a text to let me know about a giant religious sale going on at Ed's. Please note that all our texting is in full English. We haven't forced ourselves to learn all the shortcuts yet.

Fred: I'm in West Clark City attending a conference. I've still got a couple of hours before it starts, so I thought I'd do a little looking around. I ran across an interesting store, and I wanted to let you know about it in case you wanted to come up and have a look. Ed's Discount Auto Parts and Religious Store is having a giant religious sale in case you need anything. I'm about to go in, and I'll let you know if there are any good deals. Right up front they have a display with books and DVDs. Ah, here's a book that looks interesting—*Tweeting and Texting for Church Dummies*. Perhaps we

should get one and share it. What do you think? It's 50% off.

Arnie: Sounds interesting, but I say you should buy it and I'll just pick it up from when you text or tweet.

Fred: Okay, but I may have to charge you a learner's fee. Now this looks like ... uh ... an in-depth study. The sign says "Obadiah" is out this year. *Professor Gerhard Mallik's Commentary on Obadiah* is only \$5.99. It's some 500 pages long.

Arnie: Obadiah? ... I've never read anything 500 pages long unless I absolutely had to.

Fred: There is a radio going at the next table. It has a sign saying, "Too Hot to Handle Anymore". "Name Your Price". What's playing is an infomercial for a product called RIAB: Religion in a Bottle. You ever hear of it?

Arnie: Yes, I saw that infomercial on late night TV one time. The theological implications reach into a somewhat questionable area. I'd pass on it.

Fred: There is a young man at the next table who appears to be offering some kind of coupon book. I'll get right back to you ... yeah, it is a coupon book called "Sins for a Dollar". According to the young man, if you commit one of the sins in the coupon book, you tear out that coupon and put it in the collection plate at church and that sin will be forgiven. It's only \$6.99 and dealerships are available. It could come in handy if we don't make our budgets at the end of the year.

Arnie: You are pulling my leg, aren't you, Fred?

Fred: Not about the coupon book—that is true. About us using it ... yes, I'm just having a little fun with you. Now this looks interesting. I think this is something you could use, Arnie, with being a little more rural than me. It's a multi-purpose tool. It's got 2 knives, scissors, pliers, file, 3 screwdrivers,

and more—all in one compact foldable tool that's easily carried in your pocket. But what makes this particularly appealing is that it also has a fold-out cross for emergency situations.

Arnie: Hmm ... that does sound intriguing. How much is it?

Fred: Normally, it's \$19.95, but with the sale today, it's only \$9.95.

Arnie: Pick one of those up for me, will you, Fred?

Fred: You bet. I think I'll go ahead and get one for myself, too. Hmm ... here's an electronic visitor detector. I wonder how that works. Okay ... you have to implant chips in your members that deactivate the detector. Then when a visitor passes by without a chip, an alarm sounds ... You probably know when you have a visitor anyway, so never mind ... Bull Moose Cream—great for chapped hands and for polishing gold offering plates and communion ware. What do you think?

Arnie: No, I don't think so. It could affect my dairy farmers.

Fred: Last year's Easter eggs are 90% off. Could be a real bargain if we could figure out how to change the date on them.

Arnie: I think our time could be better spent.

Fred: Yeah, you're probably right ... Okay, how about *24 Knockout Sermons on God's Plan for Pet Discipline*? They are practically giving this away. Apparently, it only has 23 sermons because the author's dog ate one of the sermons and nobody at the publishing house bothered to count the number of sermons.

Arnie: Pet discipline? ... Not really an issue in Cedar Crossing.

Fred: They have a free Usher and Greeter Recruiting Service available. “We bring them to you, dead or alive”: Bruno’s Enterprises.

Arnie: Sounds like a nightmare I once had.

Fred: Okay, then here’s *143 of the Most Common Excuses Given by Church Members and How to Answer Them*. Written by Rev. Jack Liars and published in ... it appears to be a little dated ... in 1942.

Arnie: With today’s fast paced world and technology, there are probably a whole lot more than that now. Pass.

Fred: Whoa ... here’s something we’ve been talking about for a long time, a Denominational Survival Kit. Okay, let’s see what all they have in this thing:

Officially certified anti-atheist hand sanitizer

A leather notebook with all kinds of pockets for religious material from your denominational headquarters

A gold embroidered copy of the best-selling book *Why I'm Right and You're Not*

A flashlight with your customized church imprint on it to help those who are not right find the light

A copy of *Buford's Comments on Clerical Protocol*

An extensive collection of Sainthood medals and coins

A DVD called "Perfecting the Use of Circumlocution in Your Arguments"

An abridged dictionary of obscure theological words

And much, much more

All made in the USA

Arnie: I bought one of those at last year's district convention. *Buford's Comments on Clerical Protocol* is about the only thing I've used.

Fred: They've got a lot of cool stuff here, Arnie. Unfortunately, I've got to get to the conference now, so I'll sign off. After this, that conference is probably going to be pretty boring. Are you going to come up?

Arnie: As much as I'd love to, I've got to mow the grass at the church this week. Delbert is out of town. Don't forget to get me that tool.

Fred: Will do, Arnie.