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God Sure Does Work In Mysterious Ways!

I was at a recent wrap up meeting for The Festival of Praise last month and there was a speaker by the name of Steve Thomson who had written a story and produced a DVD, CD and Book entitled The Story of Lydia. The Story really struck a chord with me and from his description, it was chocked full of Blessing that appeared to be a wonderful resource for Character Building, particularly with our young people. The following day I checked out www.thestoryoflydia.com. It was quite interesting and when I delved into his background and into the background of The Story, I found it to be quite serendipitous, so much that it could be a movie in itself. The Story of Lydia was the result of an event that occurred following the shattered, yet left intact exquisite piece of Crystal – a red wine glass or for those of us who don't drink, a water goblet. It started to all come together for me especially when I realized the story had a wonderful Pro Life message, a parallel between the somewhat priceless value of a fine piece of Crystal and that of a child. What an amazing story but this isn't even the story... God sure does work in mysterious ways! I think the best place to start is to ask Steve to tell you about the production and how it has evolved into a near larger than life episodic adventure for him and his associates and Steve is a definite storyteller...

As parents and educators we need to change!

I won't go into the background on how the story came about as it is detailed on the project web site. In short, The Story of Lydia was inspired by a true story which took place in Denmark beginning in the 1920's.



The Story of Lydia

A remarkable young Danish woman, by the name of Lydia, gives up all her worldly possessions to go on an amazing journey to the city of Jerusalem where she started the first orphanage for Jewish and Arabic children. The Story is amazing and tells of Lydia's struggle and coming to grips with leaving her widowed mother and family behind to start a new life - a new life that would include the uniting of a dying infant with Lydia, and the unconditional love that develops between a young woman and a beautiful child, so desperately in need of a mother.

There is a lot more to this story and it has evolved into something incredibly important with the assistance of so many who share an ecumenical spirit including Evangelicals, Catholics and Jews, working side by side. In fact the original music was written by Evangelical artist Brigitte Manuceau with the English Lyrics written by David Bacha, a Catholic. Frankly, I really don't take the credit for the story as I am just the messenger – but the way things happened, it's pretty remarkable!

Let me share just a few events that transpired after I finished the rough cut of the picture. I originally presented the program to CTS TV and the Director of Programming, Rob Sheppard, a wonderful family man and a genius programmer... he came up with the CTS slogan, "TV You Can Believe In" - so he's good! Rob said to me, "You know Steve, Lydia could be a modern day biblical figure" and picked up the program for broadcast which was a real breakthrough

for us. Shortly after meeting with Rob, I was at a film festival and I was telling my colleagues about this great new project I was working on, an animated cartoon, a musical, inspired by a true story. They listened intently and after I finished telling them the story a lady tapped me on the shoulder and said "excuse me but I couldn't help but hear what you were saying and it really is of interest to me." She handed me her card, her name was Cathy Greco – a woman who is deeply involved in the Student Success Program for the Catholic Separate School Board. The next day I sent her the script and a week or so later we got together and I showed her our rough cut of the picture. She told me, "Steve, do you know that you covered all the Beatitudes and then some?" I was kind of shocked as I didn't write the story with this in mind... perhaps someone else's plan. Needless to say, this confirmed my hunch that this is what The Story is to be used for – Education. Later I downloaded The Eight Beatitudes of Jesus according to the Gospel of St. Matthew 5:3-10. I couldn't believe it, there they were... not once, not twice but threefold. I was even more convinced that what I was working on was something very special, so I started to rework the Tutorial and wound up creating a separate book we refer to as A Guide to Watching The Story of Lydia with Children (currently available to parents for free by registering on the web site).



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Steve
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Lydia's Message of Hope!

The actual Tutorial is more advanced and designed for teachers. So here we are... we have this story that actually appeared out of the blue, we caught the attention of Canada's favorite Family Broadcaster CTS and we were noticed by the School Board, finally being awarded with not one, but two Accolade Awards for Family/Children Programming and Voice Over Talent. Now, over the past few months we were blessed yet again... John Dawson, Program Coordinator and Music Director for The Archdiocese of Toronto's Office of Catholic Youth gave us their blessing and through the assistance and guidance of their Director, Dr. Christian Elia, we have been retooling the Tutorial so that it will be very efficient for teachers with lesson plans covering the Primary, Junior, Intermediate and Senior levels. It was Dr. Elia who suggested that we put a stronger emphasis on the Pro Life aspect in the Tutorial and helped me get into a recent Pro Life Symposium put on by the National Campus Life Network (NCLN) – an event that was ever invigorating. They had incredible presentations and really opened my eyes to a bigger picture. One of the speakers at the event was a woman by the name of Angelina Steenstra, National Coordinator of Silent No More Awareness Campaign – The Truth About Abortions: Experience vs Rhetoric, and her testimony really moved me. After she spoke I introduced myself to her and told her what I was doing and posed

the question "Why Didn't You Think of Adoption?" (She was 15). So there is definitely a need for this story, not only from the Character Building aspect and the concepts of creating a better dialogue and communication between Children, Parents and Adults but from a Pro Life point of view... if only Angelina was aware of adoption. After watching the program, Angelina had this to say, "The Story of Lydia and all that it contains will help to build the civilization of truth and love. It answers the call of **Pope John Paul II** to build the culture of life."

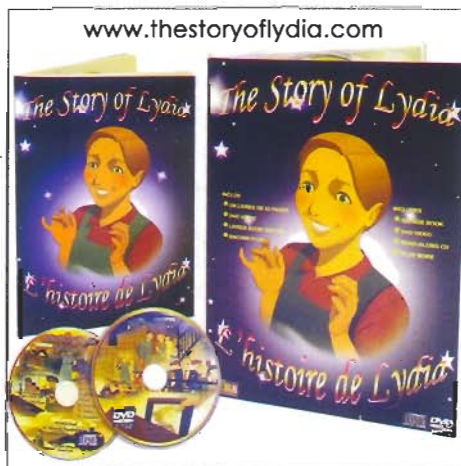
You know it is no coincidence that major sports clubs, Hockey, Football, Baseball, Soccer etc. have such a great success rate, and how, as adults, we fail the same children when it comes to building character, instilling values and faith. I have a theory, these sports clubs with huge budgets start enlisting kids when they are very young, in their formative years and you know something, these kids grow up to be adults and even into their senior years they know

everything about their game... they have retention... it is not uncommon to see 80 year old fans in the stands – as parents and educators we need to change. If we want a strong Christian community or a community that has stronger character and integrity, we have got to start young, and spend the money in the right places - that's what is missing. Lastly, I think Archbishop Collins when speaking on discipleship at the NCLN Symposium summed it up best when he said there are 7 words that make for good discipleship and they are **Call, Variety, Conversion, Relationship, Community, Vision and Mission...** but I guess that's another story...

Steve Thomson is the President of Backstage Productions International and an award winning Producer, Director and Writer who took a hobby and turned it into a career!

He can be contacted by e-mail at steve@backstageproductions.com and would be delighted to come to your church or community to introduce you to The Story of Lydia. Contact Selwyn Harris at (416) 291-4913 for more information.

*Help Spread Lydia's
Message Of Hope!
Caring
Sharing
Tolerance
Understanding
Unity*



**A wonderful musical on DVD includes
a 52 Page Book & CD featured
on CTS Television**

"DVD aims to teach kids power of prayer"
The Catholic Register

"I think it would be excellent in the school system,
and I plan on using it."
Maureen Murphy, Educator

"I think the way we reach out will have to involve
multimedia even more and this is going in the right
direction."
John Dawson, Archdiocese Toronto, Office of Catholic Youth

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