

A MESSAGE FROM GOD

There are a lot of reasons I know there is a God. One reason is because of the following event that you are about to read that happened between a young man, Hunter Montgomery and myself last week. The subject line in the email he originally sent to me simply read: A Message From God. Below is his story in his own words and my response:

A Thank You From God; A Rampant God

July 3, 2014 at 9:57pm

Monday, I walked onto my United flight for a business trip to Louisville. I was going through my normal routine-smiling at the flight attendants, making sure I had my headphones, trying to score some convenient overhead space, and of course, wondering who I would sit next to in the usually crammed puddle-jumper.

Today was a bit different. I sat down next to a man, and immediately took out my headphones and iPad. I was planning on putting a movie on and minding my business until we landed. But before I could get my headphones in, the man next to me extended his hand--"Hello.I'm John Pope". I was almost startled at what was taking place. A guy next to me, someone I have never met, introduced himself on a plane. What a ludicrous idea (haha). We have gotten into the habit, as a society, of ignoring one another. The idea of speaking to a stranger on a plane is just not something that happens too often. Cuz cmon, how weird is that??But it was a delightful. It was so absolutely refreshing.

As we took off, he opened a leather bound bible, and began to read. It is then that something came over me. The unique feeling, the very specific feeling, of God tapping my shoulder.

We had a very brief conversation when we landed--and I asked the man if I could have his card, because I needed to send him something. He did not seem bothered at all as he handed me his card and told me to have a good trip.

Below I have pasted the message that I wrote to the man, the man who I later found out is a well respected Houston pastor. And below that is his response. Enjoy.

Dr. Pope,

My name is Hunter Montgomery, I was the gentleman sitting next to you on your flight to Louisville Monday. I wanted to reach out to you for a few reasons. It is funny, ya know, how God works. You of all people know this. The second I saw you pull your bible out, I felt a huge push from God telling me I had to tell you something.

God does that sometimes; he puts something in my head, he tattoos my brain with a spiritual chore. And it is rare that I do not follow through with whatever it is that he wants me to do.

In your case, he wanted me to reach out and tell you a small piece of my story. So, without reason, without justification, without cause--here it is.

I was born in West Texas, San Angelo to be exact. I grew up in a Christian family, and was raised and brought up by some truly amazing parents. We had plenty of money, no abuse, no fights (not more than usual of course haha), no divorce... I had a good life, no reason to stray.

When I was young, before high school, I came across pain medication. I remember waking up one morning, parents at work, babysitter there, and i had a huge headache. I went downstairs to my parents bathroom and found some Tylenol. I looked a bit further and found an orange bottle of prescription Hydrocodone. Up until this point, I was always taught that medicine helps people. When you are sick, it makes you better. When you hurt, it makes you not hurt. So I decided to take one of the pills.

It was that day that my life changed. That was the start of what would end up a brutal, life threatening, fatal disease of drug addiction and alcoholism. It was very progressive, but by the time I graduated high school, I was heavily addicted to pain medicine.

Now, I could go on and on with war stories and tales of my addiction and life as a dope fiend, but that is not my goal. I can certainly share my entire story with you another time, but this email does not serve that purpose. Let's just put it this way-- there is only one reason I lived through it, and that is because God had other plans.

I want to talk about 2007. In 2007, after overdoses, trips to rehab, near death, and prison scares, I somehow was able to be a in a position where God was offering me a chance to live again. On March 23, 2007 I made a promise to our God. I made a promise that if he would help me stay sober, that I would

dedicate my life to helping people. It is an unwritten contract by which I live every day.

Today, I am still sober. Not a drop, not a pill, not a leaf, not a grain-- completely free of drugs, alcohol, and the bondage of self for almost 7.5 years. Today, I have a business degree from the University of Texas, Austin. Today, I have a beautiful wife. Today, I have an amazing home. Today, I have an absolutely incredible 1 year old daughter. Today, I have an amazing career. Today, I travel to treatment centers, universities, hospitals, and I tell my story in hopes that it will save someone's life.

Today... I have God.

I am not telling you this to brag, or boast. I am not telling you this to toot my horn. I am not telling you this for recognition. I am telling you this because yesterday on the plane, God told me to tell you something. He told me to thank you for everything. To thank you for your discipleship. To thank you for your help. To thank you for your life. To thank you for being the man you are, a man of God.

God wanted me to make sure that you are very aware that what you do, your life, and your being-- it changes the world. And it may be hard sometime, and you may have questions, and you may get frustrated--but God wanted me to tell you to that you make a difference in the world, and he loves you.

And I love you too. I hope that we can become friends. I feel like God would like that ;)

Talk to you soon.

Hunter Montgomery

Dr. Pope replied today:

Dear Hunter,

I have just read your email aloud to my wife. I had a difficult time because I had to stop periodically due to the fact I was weeping so hard. Hunter, there is no way you had any idea of what I have been going through for the past couple of weeks. I have preached for 44 years and pastored the same church for 33 years. Along with pastoring, I travel the country doing what Billy Graham did, in much smaller scale. The emphasis of my ministry has been in speaking to high school and college kids. Recently, I took a strong stand (as I always have) for

total abstinence. I placed it on Facebook, which went out (according to what I observed to over 15,000 people who read the post). I received a lot of "atta-boys." but I also received some of the most unkind, unchristian comments I have ever received. I wrote my article and spoke on this subject with a heart of love and compassion, not an ounce of vindictiveness. It was interpreted as being "legalistic," out of date and just a real "kill joy." You, better than the average guy, know the danger of even experimenting with drugs and/or alcohol.

Hunter, as I was traveling to Kentucky to preach again, even while sitting next to you, I was feeling like a dinosaur, a freak, an old fashioned preacher whose time has come and gone. For you to have been so spot on and to have said what you said, had to be none other than the voice of God. Thank you, Hunter, for being close enough to Jesus to hear the specific message I needed. I know I have rambled a bit too much, but now I find myself bereft of words. To say thank you is not sufficient. But as insufficient as it may seem, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

I love you, my dear young brother.

Yours In Christ's Dear Name,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in black ink and features a large, stylized initial "J" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.