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How to drive yourself crazy

What's the number one way to lose your religion? The ladies? The liquor? The greed? The hatred of your fellow man? Sloth? Gluttony? It's none of the above. The number one way that my mettle is tested, making me backslide every time, can be summed up in three little words. Some. Assembly. Required.

First off, whoever came up with those three words obviously never assembled anything in their lives. There is no such thing as "some" assembly required. It generally ends up being a tangled web of confusing and often conflicting directions that make no sense – even if you hold them upside down.

I was reminded of the mental anguish of some assembly required this past week when I decided to buy my youngest son Henry a basketball goal. I'm a jock so when my 12-year-old said he wanted to shoot some hoops, I was all in. There's no better feeling than slapping away your

much smaller son's jump shot as a father. You dads know what I mean. They'll be bigger and faster than us soon enough.

We actually used to have a basketball goal in our driveway before it met a double harrowing fate. It was first toppled and its backboard busted by high winds and then its teetering remains were knocked over by my oldest son's truck as he backed out of the driveway.

"It was broken anyway," Jack defended when I called him on his hit and run that left the goal a metal scrap heap which is still hidden inside our hedge line, yet to be taken to the dump more than a year later.

Having assembled three goals in my life, I should have recalled the anguish I felt while putting the others together. I'm not a man who utters many bad words

on a normal basis. However, I find those words spew forth like water from a stream when I'm trying to make heads or tails of written directions. The anger is overwhelming as I give up on the directions and try to understand the drawings. Yes, you know the ones. They look like a blindfolded third-grader drew them with a number-two pencil (my apologies to third graders since you are better than that). I mean, come on, they paid someone to illustrate these directions. They are little more than stickmen drawings which make no more sense than the directions they are trying to translate.

So, as I've always done, I scrapped the directions and began using logic. Yeah. That worked like a charm. Two hours later and it suddenly hits me – I've assembled it backwards. It was at that point

that I think I invented some new off-color words, using them in combinations most people could not even imagine. Yes, I will need to go forward at church this Sunday.

As I sat there, seething and wanting get five minutes alone with whoever drew the directions, I thumbed to the back page of the voluminous booklet hoping to find a number to call to yell at someone. There, right in plain sight, were QR codes to watch the assembly on YouTube. "YOU PUT THEM ON THE BACK PAGE!" I screamed, tearing the directions apart, getting a cut from a staple during my mania.

Lesson learned. When it says "some assembly required", don't go by the directions because they will just drive you insane and have the neighbors thinking you're a nut. Instead, find some kid demonstrating how to put it together on YouTube.

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THAT NEW GUY
by Duane Sherrill

Uncle Sam Day

In 1989 Congress designated September 13 as "Uncle Sam Day" in America, the birth date of Samuel Wilson, who supplied meat to soldiers in the War of 1812. He sent barrels of meat stamped "U.S.", and soldiers began to refer to him as "Uncle Sam". Eventually, images of "Uncle Sam" were developed and used on posters to solicit enlistment in the U. S. Army. Probably the most famous of these posters began with the message, "I Want You" for the U. S. Army.

From the very beginning of time, going all the way back to the Garden of Eden, the Almighty God of the Universe created mankind to worship Him and be a part of the family of God. Ever since the disobedience of the first human couple, Adam and Eve, God has proclaimed to every member of the human race, "I Want You" to become a member of the kingdom of God, a soldier in the army of God.

Once sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, eventually God "saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." So God told a man named Noah, "I Want You" to build an ark to spare the lives of you and your family from a flood that will destroy the earth.

Later, God called a Abram, whose name He lat-

er changed to Abraham, to leave his homeland and go to a new land. God told him, "I Want You" to become the father of many nations in this new land, which I will give to your future descendants. Abraham did not know where he was going, but he trusted God to lead him there.

Later still, God called Moses to lead millions of Hebrew slaves out of the land of Egypt to the same land that He had promised to the descendants of Abraham. He told Moses, "I Want You" to lead these people to a place which is now called "The Promised Land", and after some persuasion Moses agreed to do so.

God eventually gave Moses the Ten Commandments, and asked Moses to speak on His behalf to give a message to the people, who are now called the people of Israel. God's message to them said, "I Want You" to be my people and to obey my commandments, and I will be your God.

Today God has a message for the entire world that says, "I Want You" to believe on the name of my Son Jesus, to invite Him to live in your hearts, and to live faithfully for Him.

Larry R. Steffee is pastor of the Center Hill Brethren In Christ Church on Miller Road in Smithville. Everyone is welcome to attend. For information, you may email lrsteffeetn@yahoo.com.



WORDS FROM ABOVE
by Larry R. Steffee

LETTERS TO THE
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'Classic' or old?

Why is a 20-year-old car a beater, but a 40-year-old car a classic? It's the same car. The car hasn't changed at all -- the only thing that changed is its age.

When I was in high school, I drove an embarrassingly old car. I was ashamed to be seen in it, except by my friends who didn't have cars at all, who thought it was wonderful. Today, it would win a blue ribbon at any classic car show.

New cars used to look significantly different each year. You could spot the difference between a '64 Chevy and a '65 Chevy from blocks away. Today, it's hard to find my SUV in the mall parking lot because all SUVs look similar.

Going from junkers to classics happens not just to cars, but to almost everything: houses, restaurants, music, clothes, politics and even some religious services. Plenty of things go from hot and trendy to old-fashioned overnight. There was a time when people WANTED Formica counters in their kitchens. Now everyone wants granite. What will they want in a year or two? Terra cotta? Butcher-block? It might be Formica again.

The mall that was packed 20 years ago is now a ghost town. Soon it will become a medical center full of different kinds of specialists and clinics. Once it opens, you'll find it just as hard to find a parking space as you did when it had a Montgomery Ward on one end and a Brentano's at the other.

Flip through an old copy of

Life magazine or the Saturday Evening Post, and it's easy to tell what year it was published -- from the advertising, not so much from the stories. The then-new cars look old now, the "doctors recommend" cigarette ads are laughable (unless someone you know died from them), and the underwear and deodorant ads delicately avoid actually mentioning the products they're selling. This was back when Victoria actually had a secret. Not anymore. Today's underwear ads would have been called pornography then. Underwear really hasn't changed too much, it's just come out of the drawer.

I want to have my junky old house remodeled, but do I really want the latest stuff that's featured in all the big box home improvement stores? Or should I get fixtures and appliances that have no style at all?

I'd like to avoid the trends altogether, but it might be impossible. There's an old saying: A fish doesn't know it's wet. We know it's wet, because we're seeing a much bigger picture than the fish. It's the same with trends. For all I know, being anti-trendy might be the biggest trend of all right now, and in 10 years I won't be able to sell my house because it looks "so 2018."

My friend Bruce says, "The best thing to do is nothing -- just wait 40 years, and live in a classic."

Easy for him to say. He doesn't have to use my horrible '80s bathroom.

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VILLAGE IDIOT
by Jim Mullen