

postcards

By Charles S. Stuart

Do postcards work? Yes—if you send them! Is there a downside to sending a handwritten card to someone? I haven't heard of one. Is there a possible upside? Yes...oh yes!

What's the cost for sending a handwritten postcard? Pennies, less than five minutes—and the commitment to do it.

But—do they really work? Let me tell you a story.

When our son, John, was in high school he made some decisions that kept him at odds with his Dad. For many weeks I clung to the faith that our love would win in the end. One of the compounding things was my travel schedule.

Being out of town frequently meant I wasn't around with and for John many days. And by then I had learned that travel is lonely hotel rooms, strangers, the stress of airplanes and taxis, and being away from home, family and friends.

That's why I began the habit of mailing handwritten postcards to several friends and my family from the cities where I traveled. Nothing fancy—just the postcards you can buy in the gift shop.

And that's how in each city I was able to spend an hour thinking about family and friends—as I wrote their card. It gave me a time to connect—to feel "at home." I admit—I did this for a selfish reason—to keep me in touch with home.

When John went to California for school I changed his address and kept on mailing the cards.

One day, when I stopped by John's apartment to visit—OK, OK—I made a special trip to see him—something happened that I never would have predicted.

After our greeting of handshakes and hugs, John asked if he could bring me something to drink—he'd become a fine host. I asked for a glass of water and he went around the corner into the kitchen to pour it.

Then, as my eyes scanned the living room, I saw on the wall a single shelf covered with the items a 19-year old would have in his apartment. A few school books, some CDs, an old trophy, the Atlanta Braves autographed baseball from his MeeMaw—and along the back of the shelf, all 10 feet of it, were leaning postcards. Dozens of them. From all over the country. I picked up one—from Fenway Park—and was looking at it when John came into the room.

I turned, holding up the card, and asked, "John, you've kept the cards?"

He looked at me with that teenager "No, duh, Dad" look and said, "Of course I did" and handed me the glass. I blinked back the tears, turned and put the card back.

It never dawned on me that all those cards, sent for years to a teenage boy who was constantly trying our patience, would be kept, treasured and displayed as his connection to home.

Do postcards work? There's not a doubt in my mind. Ask John!



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