

# ***REFLECTIONS***

September 24, 2006

**In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.**

*John 16:33*

## **A Condition or a Sentence**

A young man of college-age walked by us to retrieve the tray of hamburgers that his family had ordered. As he picked up the tray and walked back toward his table, I noticed something unusual. It was his hands that were different. Upon further study I could see that each hand had a thumb but only three fingers, and one of the fingers on each hand was disproportionately wide as if two of them were fused into one.

The young man had obviously been born with a physical deformity yet nothing about his behavior suggested any self consciousness and nothing about his demeanor indicated any mental anguish. He interacted with the environment just as every other person in the place. He seemed totally unaware of his condition or that he might be different from others about him.

On the other hand, I often find myself bothered by a mounting number of maladies that I'm treating with a growing number of medications—blood pressure, cholesterol, glaucoma, etc. My back is stiff when I rise from a chair and I have found a new pain in the palm of my left hand. Soon I will be able to personally attest to the adage that “old age ain't for sissies” and I want everyone else to know it!

Then I am reminded of a conversation with Dr. Dianne Komp a few years ago. At the time, Dr. Komp was a pediatric oncologist on the faculty of Yale Medical School. Because she worked in a field that dealt with terminal disease in children, I asked how she helped them cope with the emotional aspects of their illness. She said, “The children are an inspiration. They see their disease as a condition. Adults view it as a sentence.”

We all have to cope with life challenges. Sometimes we are born with them as the young man with the malformed fingers; sometimes they are acquired from some life changing events like an accident or a debilitating disease; and aging brings challenges all its own. We can't do much about the changing situations life brings, but we can choose how we accept them—as a condition or a sentence.

One views trouble as condemnation. The other takes heart in the state of being and becomes an inspiration to the world.

*You are the light of the world,*  
*Richard +*