

Good Without God

By: Amanda Gullede

Rebel flags, crosses, a church on every corner and county road signs that read, "Go to church or the Devil will get you," seem to be staring back as my little boys press their noses to the truck glass. It is a hundred degrees outside and the mockingbirds sing while the smell of barbeque and magnolia trees linger. If you haven't guessed by now; I live in Alabama.

Alabama, the Bible Belt, is also our Home Sweet Home. My husband, two boys, and I have an honest, open relationship about the many mysteries of existence. We don't believe in an ever watchful, all powerful Deity or an ever burning place of punishment. Instead, we have lots of discussions about the best choices. Every day I am inspired by the natural goodness that radiates from within my children. When my boys have their lemonade stand, they choose to give their profits to fight children's cancer; when we discuss stealing, they look at me like I am crazy and ask me to think how I would feel if someone took my belongings.

Before school I inhale the aroma of freshly brewed coffee as the smell of bacon wafts throughout the house. My pajama clad sons are watching the science channel and cutting trash bags to make play clothes. They explain that it will help save money and I shouldn't worry so much about what they look like. I admit I am a bit of a fashion lover. My heart swells with pride and I fight back a tear as my husband refills my coffee and kisses us each on the head before leaving for work.

My eldest son turns every light in the house off to save energy and demands we use as little water as possible while brushing our teeth. He uses a candle in his bedroom instead of a light bulb. I tend to throw things away, but am quickly humbled when my children gasp and rescue the item. Chastising my carelessness, they proceed to remind me of the children and families in need.

Three cousins and two neighborhood friends were not allowed to play with my children because we do not attend church or accept Jesus Christ as our savior. Unbeknownst to me, my children approached both families and convinced the parents that it would be ok and that religion would never be mentioned. My eldest son promised to tutor one child and to teach another to play chess.

Last night, in the truck and from the backseat, my little one began to talk of how short a mosquito's life was. His brother then reminded us all how lucky we were to be humans. I looked back and then glanced at my smiling husband and said, "I am so very lucky to get to spend my life with you three." Two boys exclaimed in unison, "Group Hug!!" There at a red light... in a truck in Southern Alabama a freethinking family embraced. Good without God? You betcha.