

Epilogue

Cast no stones.

I usually send a sneak preview of my newsletter to a few close friends and my siblings. I like to get their feedback before I publish it. I did that with this article, and one of my best good friends, Roy, reminded me that I am someone who does things that make people ask, *"Why in the world would someone do that???!"* Or at least I was, back in the day. Here's the story.

For the 19 years I lived with my parents, we only moved once. The house where I spent my first 12 years – located at 1238 West 1000 North – was a three-bedroom, one-and-a-half bath, 1,150-square-foot single-level home with an aluminum carport but no actual garage. During the 1970s, while my five siblings, my parents, and I lived in that house, Rose Park was a blue-collar, working-class suburb of Salt Lake City, Utah. It was a great neighborhood in which to grow up. There were numerous young families with many children. It was the picture-perfect suburban upbringing. Think Brady Bunch neighborhood.

We lived in the "10th North house" until I was 12 years old. Our one and only move was just about *exactly* two blocks north, to 1267 West 1200 North—the 12th North house. Our new house seemed like a mansion to us kids. It was a late 60's era home—similar to, but not as big as, the Brady Bunch home. Our house was a split-level five-bedroom, two-bathroom expanse totaling 1,700 square feet—still no garage, but a proper side driveway with a basketball standard.

The Larsons, the people who sold the house to my parents, ran an upscale preschool out of the home, which made it heaven for us kids. They had a custom-built swing set/play gym in the back corner of the yard. My brother Willy and I thought that it was awesome! Needless to say, we felt like we had finally arrived.

The first Sunday after we moved into the new LDS Ward, the 5th Ward, our family got dressed up and went to church. That's where I first met Roy. He was a year older. I was 12, and he was 13. Roy befriended me when I didn't know anyone at church. We became great friends and spent many days and nights hanging out, playing basketball and baseball, and walking around the neighborhood. Roy is still a dear friend of mine to this day.

Anyway, Roy reminded me of the time when I was 13, he was 14, and our other two friends in the neighborhood, Keith, 14, and Kyle, 15 (the Wilson brothers), were playing basketball over at Roy's house. We had been playing for about two hours when his mom called us in to join them for dinner. The four of us went down to Roy's room to wash up.

Let me tell you about Roy and his family. They were what I considered the wealthy family in the neighborhood. They had one of the nicest houses, if not the nicest house in the neighborhood – inside and out. A proper two-level, six-bedroom, three-bathroom home with a two-car garage and a three-lane wide driveway—which is why we always played basketball at Roy's house. Even though Roy had the nicest house, the fancy cars, the best shoes, and clothes, he always made me feel like an equal. I'll always love him for that.

We then went downstairs to Roy's room, which had an ensuite bathroom that he didn't have to share with his four sisters because he was the only boy. After leading us to said bathroom, he signals us to stop by turning around and putting up his hand. The three of us froze, and give Roy our full attention. Roy then proceeds to tell us, in the most serious, "no joking around guys" voice and demeanor, that under no circumstances are any of us to use the "nice towels" to dry our hands. He didn't go on and on about it, but the message was clear. The nice towels are for special occasions only, not for use by four sweaty, stinky teenage boys.

Since it was Roy's bathroom, he washed up first and, accordingly, used the proper towel. This towel was older – clearly worn – but still completely adequate for drying our hands after a hard-

fought game of basketball. He placed the towel we were supposed to use next to the sink, folded nicely. Kyle was next; he used the proper towel as instructed. Then, it was Keith's turn, and he also used the appropriate towel. Since I was the youngest, I, of course, went last. While Roy, Kyle, and Keith were washing up – and I was patiently waiting for my turn – we participated in our usual banter. Cracking jokes at each other's expense, making fun of each other's shortcomings, and generally being harsh to each other – as young boys do.

With all the banter going on, I got distracted and forgot Roy's instructions regarding authorized towel usage. I washed up, and unfortunately, as you'll soon see, I wasn't very good at scouring away all of the dirt from my hands.

Then it happened. I looked over and saw the nice towels. I thought, "Wow, these are nice towels! I wish we had towels like these at home." Again, utterly oblivious to the conditions Roy had set down earlier. In my distracted state, I grabbed a nice towel and proceeded to happily and with a tune in my head dry my "nearly" clean hands. The towels initially had a beautiful lemon-yellow color. They were plush and did an *excellent* job of drying my hands. However, when I finished up, the towel was an unsightly mess. I sheepishly walked back into Roy's room where he was lounging on his bed, with his feet crossed, heads clasped behind his head, continuing our usual banter with Keith and Kyle.

As I exited the bathroom, Roy looked past me, and his face instantly went beet red. I'm not entirely sure, but I believe steam started coming out of his ears as well. He jumped from the bed and looked at me with a look that can only be described as utter bewilderment mixed with outright fury. He then looked at the soiled towels, then back at me, then at the towels again. I thought he was going to spontaneously combust. Fortunately, he didn't. However, his disbelief and frustration were evident. Finally, his gaze rested on me. He couldn't hold back any longer. He looked me dead in the eye and yelled at the top of his lungs, "SAXTON! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? I TOLD YOU NOT TO USE THE GOOD TOWELS!!!"

I froze. It all came rushing back. Roy's clear, direct instructions. How Keith and Kyle had followed the instructions without issue, but I didn't. I felt horrible. Then I looked back at the nice towels and saw all the mangy handprints I had left behind, and I felt even worse. I stood there, trying my best not to cry in front of my older friends, who I dearly wanted for their approval. The best I could do was a faint, "I'm sorry."

Roy looked over at Keith and Kyle and said, "Why would someone do something like that? I told him not to use the good towels!!!" The only thing Keith and Kyle could do was shrug in disbelief. They didn't have anything to add. They followed the instructions, but I didn't.

I don't remember exactly what happened for the rest of the evening, but Roy eventually got over my dirtying his nice towels and forgave me. At least, I think he did because when we get together, we laugh about the "Good Towel Story."

Perhaps the moral of the story, and why Roy so kindly reminded me that I am also one of the people who have done something that flabbergasts others, is to help us remember to have empathy and understanding when we are faced with such situations. I like that. And I'm glad Roy reminded me. I plan on giving him a set of nice towels for Christmas this year. Thanks for reading.