



# **BARRY AND VANESSA'S 2021 QUIRKY CHRISTMAS LETTER**



**Scene: Barry and Vanessa at coffee table.**

BARRY: I can't think of anything to write in this year's quirky Christmas letter.

VANESSA: Neither can I. Every year I promise to make a list but I always forget.

BARRY: Well, I did begin thinking of ideas months ago but I'm still stuck.

VANESSA: That was clever. I suppose you could tell them about the Redeemer Baptist annual conference.

BARRY: That's not quirky.

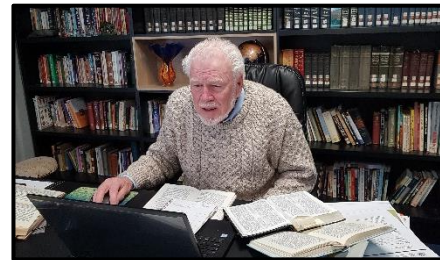
VANESSA: Well, it was this year—they had you as their speaker for the eighth time straight. If that's not quirky, I don't know what is. Don't they know anybody else?

BARRY: This year they didn't even *have* a conference.

VANESSA: Now you're just being hard to get on with.

BARRY: You shouldn't end a sentence with a preposition—let alone two of them.

VANESSA: Oh, for goodness' sake, what does it matter? Anyway, you lived and breathed the book of Revelation for months and did ten hours of video recording so they could have a virtual conference. Plus 50 pages of notes. And they loved it.



BARRY: It was hard work, I know that.

VANESSA: And Covid has made people ask lots of questions. *And* you are hoping other churches will also use the videos. *And* people are actually asking for them already. *And* you had some original and provocative things to say.

BARRY: Provocative? Me?

VANESSA: Well, you said there is no pre-tribulation rapture, that we are in the millennium now, that the mark of the beast is spiritual, that the battle of Armageddon is already won. Not provocative?

BARRY: Mm, OK. But that's still not quirky.

VANESSA: Well, what about you preaching on Ephesians for seven weeks at the Hills Family CRC church at Nairne while their pastor was away... Those poor people.

BARRY: Thank you very much. And anyway, you can't call that quirky. 'Hey everybody, how about this! Seven sermons in seven weeks!' As if no one's ever done that before.

VANESSA: Did the people like it?

BARRY: You'd better ask them. But Church people do tend to put up with anything. Nah, we need something more unusual, more sensational. What about your knee operation?

VANESSA: What's quirky about that?

BARRY: Well, your knee itself, for a start. It looked pretty quirky to me. It was bent sideways. And don't forget this was the second knee procedure. How many people have two new knees on the same leg?

VANESSA: Oh, wow, that *is* sensational.

BARRY: Well, it was for you. You can walk without a walker or a stick now. You're driving again. Your leg is free of pain.

VANESSA: Come on, be real. No one wants to read about all that. You know as well as I do that as soon as you tell people about a surgical procedure, all they want to do is tell you about theirs—with all the lurid details included.

BARRY: OK, we'll give that a miss. But there must be *something* we can report.



*Four generations: Becky, Barry, Joe, Jordan*

VANESSA: Well, we did get two great-grandchildren in the same week. Jordan and Zeke, one here and one in London. Great little kids. So exciting.

BARRY: Yeah, I think so, too. But most other people probably don't. Mm. let's see. Maybe we could write about Becky and Steve.

VANESSA: Go on.

BARRY: Well, we could explain how because of Covid19, Becky was running Sunrise Bethel Christian School from Adelaide for the last eighteen months. That was unusual.

VANESSA: Yes, especially since the school is in Port Moresby.

BARRY: And Steve was becoming frustrated that he couldn't get back to his work as Operations Manager. Still, I guess lots of other people have also had it tough.

VANESSA: True. But as far as we were concerned, it was great to have them home for a while. And I think they were really courageous to go back to PNG.



*Vanessa serving a farewell meal to Steve and Becky*

BARRY: I agree. Some people don't understand it at all. But when Jesus calls, you know you must go. And what a great welcome they had when they returned—banners, posters, songs... the lot.

VANESSA: But that's not quirky. That's the gospel. Anyway, back to our letter.

BARRY: We could talk about your garden.

VANESSA: Are you suggesting it's quirky?

BARRY: No, no. Not at all. It's—it's—Beautiful. Magnificent. Marvellous...





BARRY: Mm, well, um, hey, what about that woman who accused us of racism because we had golliwogs in our front room?

VANESSA: That wasn't quirky, that was nasty.

BARRY: Yes, I suppose it was. But I'd still like to tell her that our granddaughter is married to a handsome Nigerian and they have two beautiful little olive-skinned children,



*Halle and Zeke, in London*

VANESSA: Don't forget our other grandson Ollie. He also has beautiful bronze skin. Also, she had no idea that over the years we have had young people living in our home from Vietnam, India, South Africa...

BARRY: Germany.

VANESSA: Zambia, Fiji.

BARRY: And then there is Osei, in Ghana, who calls us Mama and Papa.

VANESSA: I wouldn't call that quirky—I think that's really nice.

BARRY: And all the others we have taken in who were what you might call social refugees—abused or maltreated or abandoned.

VANESSA: Yes, but isn't that what any Christian would do? And what's it all got to do with Christmas?

BARRY: Well, Jesus was a refugee—his parents had to flee from their homeland and were displaced for years. And then when they did return home, he was rejected by his own people.

VANESSA: Now you're talking. He sure was—they didn't just reject him. They executed him. But he still loved them—and he still loves us.

BARRY: So Christmas is a time to talk about refugees and disadvantaged people?

VANESSA: Yes, it is. And don't forget—he also rose again from the dead to give us everlasting life.

BARRY: Amen, preach it sister!

VANESSA: Don't be flippant.

BARRY: Sorry. I didn't mean to be. I agree with you. Really. What an extraordinary thing that Jesus should die and be resurrected for us... Wonderful! Mm... Look, we aren't getting anywhere. Why don't we just stop right now?

VANESSA: But we haven't even started yet. Basically, all we've decided is what *not* to say.

BARRY: What about your birthday, when half the family came and worked for hours sanding, painting, climbing ladders, cleaning gutters—

VANESSA: Nah. That wasn't quirky. That was special. And then there's Michael's wonderful work with the Schools Ministry Group.

BARRY: And don't forget Luke and Tash and their family locked down for months in Melbourne because of Covid.

VANESSA: And our granddaughter Tia getting married.

BARRY: Yeah, that was tough.

VANESSA: The wedding?

BARRY: No. The lockdown. Anyway, there were zillions of others in the same position.

VANESSA: Maybe we could talk about the hundreds of Spindles books we've packed and distributed this year.

BARRY: Exciting, but not quirky... Oh well, let's admit it. We might as well just drop the whole thing. Maybe we'll do better next year. Perhaps it's time we stopped writing Quirky Christmas letters altogether. We don't even know if anyone actually reads them.

VANESSA: Good question.



*Sleeves being prepared for seven-volume packs of Spindles books*

BARRY: Hang on! I just thought of one really quirky thing. Spindles is back!

VANESSA: Black? Spindles?

BARRY: Back, not black!

VANESSA: Oh, sorry. Why are you excited about that?

BARRY: I haven't written a Spindles story for decades.

VANESSA: Diddums. It's nearly 50 years since the first Spindles story was published and now here you are starting to write new ones, just

because you decided to be big-hearted Barry and give a set of Spindles books to St Mark's Lutheran school library.

BARRY: Yeah, that did turn out rather well.

VANESSA: And then you went and offered to talk to the school kids.

BARRY: Mm, true.

VANESSA: And they finished up giving you ideas for a new story and you came home really excited and got into it as soon as you could.

BARRY: Yes.

VANESSA: So...?

BARRY: So what?

VANESSA: Well, isn't that a bit quirky?

BARRY: Quirky? Fair go, it's literary genius.

VANESSA: So what are you going to write next—a Bible study on humility? Anyway, if by some miracle a few people do want to read this Spindles story, what's it called and where can they get hold of it?

BARRY: It's called *Spindles and the Dingoes* and anyone can download it from my website ([www.barrychant.com](http://www.barrychant.com)).

VANESSA: We aren't going to sell it?

BARRY: Nah. It's free. And they can download *The Spindles Fun Book* as well, if they like.

VANESSA: Wait on! What about those who don't know who Spindles is?

BARRY: Well, he's the hero in my children's books. Everyone knows that.

VANESSA: Is that all you can say? You need something exciting like: *These unique children's stories are amazing Aussie classics. They represent a rare and astonishing blend of Great Outback settings and powerful biblical themes. Fantastic reading for primary-aged kids.*



BARRY: All right, OK. Enough of that, although I suppose I could mention that some books have been translated into other languages and that there are tens of thousands of them in print—

VANESSA: We don't need the whole package.

BARRY: Well, you did ask.

VANESSA: And, anyway, you shouldn't use a letter like this to promote your stuff.

BARRY: Come on, you started it.

VANESSA: What if I did? But look, we still haven't come up with anything really quirky.

BARRY: OK. Why don't we just drop the idea this year?

VANESSA: Well, we don't have to call it a quirky letter.

BARRY: Of course we do—

VANESSA: Why? Give me one good reason we—

BARRY: Why do you need a reason? Work it out for—

VANESSA: Oh, oh, here we go again—

BARRY: I was just saying—

(Phone rings).

VANESSA: I'll get it.

BARRY: Well, it's not likely to be for me. It's your phone.

VANESSA: 'Hello, you're talking to Vanessa... Oh, sure. He's right here....' Darling, it is for you.

BARRY: Really? Oops. 'Good evening, this is Barry...'

VANESSA: Thank goodness for that. We're finished with that stupid letter at last. I just wish we could have thought of something really quirky to write about...



*Have a beautiful Christmas everyone. And if you are lonely or short on friends this year, just remember that Jesus knew what it was to be despised and rejected and he understands what it's like. This season is a great opportunity to spend some time with him. At church. Exploring nature. Taking a walk on the beach. Kneeling in prayer. It could even be a bit quirky. It will certainly be wonderful.*



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