

*Beware the black holes*

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*On September 8th the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) was finally turned on, and we weren't turned off - which is a good thing! The LHC is a seventeen mile long circular tunnel designed to smash together protons in a re-enactment of the Big Bang.*

*Originally to have been built outside Houston, the LHC moved to Switzerland when a combination of fears, financial and other concerns killed the US project in the mid-90s. The Europeans picked it up and ran with it. The real miracle of this project was not the bringing together of two protons, but the bringing together of eight thousand physicists from eighty-five different countries to build this enormous machine.*

*There is one tiny little glitch in all this good news and impressive scientific advancement. That is the nagging concern held by some researchers that this machine could cause the end of the world as we know it.*

*Those who predicted this doomsday scenario suggest that if physicists succeed in re-creating the "Big Bang," they might also create a black hole. This black hole, a sucking void of anti-matter, will simply slurp us in, cannibalizing our planet and possibly taking the entire galaxy with it.*

*The unfortunate truth is that black holes happen in our lives all the time. There are frequent collisions between opposing forces that can slam us down and suck out our soul if we let them.*

*It is one thing to experience this brokenness in the form of forces that ambush a large number of people like Hurricane Ike or the recent economic Wall Street crisis. But it is much worse when the black hole threatens to take us down personally, especially when it's in front of the eyes of friends and peers.*

*Come with me to a third grade classroom. Nine-year-old Johnny is sitting at his desk and all of a sudden, there is a warm feeling between his legs and the front of his pants are wet. Fear-struck, Johnny can't imagine how it could have happened.*

*When he looks up and sees the teacher approaching with a look in her eyes that says he has been discovered, Johnny believes his heart is going to stop. As the teacher walks toward him, classmate Susie is carrying a goldfish bowl filled with water at the same time. Susie trips in front of the teacher and inexplicably dumps the bowl of water in Johnny's lap.*

*Surprised but relieved, Johnny repeats over and over to himself, "Thank you, Lord! Thank you!"*

*Now, instead of being the object of ridicule, Johnny is the object of sympathy. The teacher rushes him downstairs and gives him gym shorts to put on. The sympathy is wonderful, but as life would have it, the ridicule that should have been his was transferred to*

*someone else - Susie. Susie tries to help, but they tell her, "You've done enough, you klutz!"*

*At the end of the day, as they are waiting for the bus, Johnny sees Susie and walks over to her. "You did that on purpose, didn't you?" Susie whispers back, "I had an 'accident' once, too."*

*"—we will walk with each other, we will walk side by side; and we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride; and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love."*

*When love and compassion is our mission, great things can happen. Black holes can't be created or sustained with the collision of love and compassion. People may not remember exactly what we say, and they may not remember everything we did, but they will always remember how we made them feel. And that can help seal up the black holes that try to form in their lives.*

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