

extra fingers

Newsletter number 14 • December 22, 2011

[VISIT THE WEBSITE CLICK HERE](#)



iPod Nano
1st generation
circa 1800s



iPod Touch
1st generation
circa 2007

Haven't we always had iPods?

DAD: "Are you glad you're born in this century, Issy?"

ISABELLA, through a yawn: "Uh-ha."

DAD: "Rather than in other centuries? What if you were born in the 1800s? Do you think it would be fun? There was no TV, no radio, there wasn't even any electricity. Electricity was just invented at the end of that century."

ISABELLA: "I'd just use my iPod."

DAD, laughing: "No. The iPod wasn't invented."

ISABELLA, holding up her iPod: "What! This?"

DAD: "Yeah. In the 1800s!"

ISABELLA: "Well, an iPod Nano then."

Just a piece of air

AMELIE, concerning pain: "Falling off a cliff is more hurting than falling off your bike."

DAD: "Is it?"

AMELIE: "Hmm-hmm. And god can't help you either because he's just a piece of air."

I'd go to hospital

AMELIE: "There are red backs and there's such a thing as a white back. Miss Cox said they were both dangerous and you could die or go to hospital. (Short pause) I'd go to hospital."

Making history

ISABELLA: "When we die we're going to be in history for years."

It'll be a stupid book for sure

ISABELLA, regarding Christmas presents: "Anything too flat and bendy is bad. It'll be a stupid book for sure."

I don't know any poor people

DAD: "Why do you think Santa does all this giving of presents at Christmas time?"

AMELIE: "Because he's nice, that's why."

DAD: "Yeah."

AMELIE: "He's nice. That's all."

DAD: "But how would he be able to do it? How could he carry that many presents?"

AMELIE: "Well . . . he has a sleigh."

DAD: "Yeah, but a sleigh can only fit so many in. There are billions of children in the world, aren't there?"

AMELIE: "I know. How do you think he fits them in his sack?"

DAD: "And he does it all on the night before Christmas."

AMELIE: "I know. But some people don't get presents."

DAD: "Really? Who?"

AMELIE: "Because Santa. He goes to England, he goes to France, he goes to Melbourne, he goes to Africa, lots of places."

DAD: "Does he?"

AMELIE: "Italy, Sydney, Australia."

DAD: "Well, who doesn't get a present?"

AMELIE: "Um, the people who are poor in Africa. But the people who are rich in Africa get presents. I don't know why. Oh, the people who are poor don't have a Christmas tree. That's right. And they don't have any sacks. But, are there rich people in Africa?"

DAD: "There are some rich people in Africa, yeah. Nowhere near as many rich people as we have in this country though."

AMELIE: "We've got so many."

DAD: "Yeah."

AMELIE: "Everyone's rich. There are only some people who are poor."

DAD: "Who are poor in this country?"

AMELIE: "I don't know. I know no one that's poor. No one."

Right and wrong

ISABELLA, after she and I had just finished watching Anne Frank The Whole Story: "Alright, Dad, what was the question you had?"

DAD: "My question was: Is it wrong to tell a lie?"

ISABELLA, sighing and rolling her eyes: "Oh no, here we go again!"

DAD: "Just answer the question."

ISABELLA, curtly: "Sometimes."

DAD: "Sometimes it's wrong?"

ISABELLA: "Yes."

DAD: "So that means sometimes it's right to tell a lie."

ISABELLA: "Yes."

DAD: "Oh! When is it right to tell a lie?"

ISABELLA: "To save your life . . . maybe . . . or, maybe when it's a surprise."

DAD: "What would you say if the Germans came and knocked on the door of where the Franks were hiding? What would you say if you were the person who was involved in hiding them there and giving them food and you answered the door if they said, 'Do you have any Jews staying with you?' Would you lie or—"

ISABELLA: "Yes."

DAD: ". . . would you tell the truth?"

ISABELLA: "Lie."

DAD: "That's the best example I know of of why it's not always right to be truthful."

ISABELLA: "You would have said, 'Oh, here we are. Here's Anne Frank; you can just go and kill her?'"

DAD: "No! That's what I mean. It's not always right to be truthful. Sometimes it's right to tell a lie."

ISABELLA: "Exactly. That's what I just told you. So why are you telling me what I just told you?"

DAD: "Well, the reason why I'm saying this is . . . a lot of people think . . ."

ISABELLA: "Daddy. Lying is an instinct to humans. They can't help lying. People do it every day and nearly every minute. They just go . . . say someone [in Isabella's case a child in her year at school] says, 'Have you been to France? Have you been to Italy?' I might say, 'Yes'. One day this person said, 'Oh, is your Nona from Italy?' I thought, 'I'm going to get you away' so I said, 'Yes'. Now go away. I just did it to get her away. Sometimes it just happens. Next thing you know you're lying. You don't even know what you're saying. Sometimes you might make up this story and it's so interesting that you just keep lying. You say, 'Oh, my sister fell out of a tree and then she broke her arm and then she went to the doctors and then she went in an ambulance . . . you just keep going and lying and lying and lying because it gets more fun each time. And then people go, 'Really!' And you get loads of attention. [In a low voice] I don't know why. Jesus never lied apparently."

DAD: "Who's that?"

ISABELLA: "Jesus. But if he loved Hitler he would want to kill Anne Frank. And then if he loves Anne Frank . . . so he's not going to be able to make everyone happy. Because you can't make Anne Frank happy, and Hitler. Because Hitler wants to kill Anne Frank and Anne Frank probably wants Hitler to die."

DAD, with little to say because Isabella had summed it up perfectly: "That's right. You can't please everybody."

ISABELLA: "And how could he not have lied? Did God lie?"

DAD, deciding not to answer the question directly: "In The Bible they have The Ten Commandments, don't they?"

ISABELLA: "What does that mean?"

DAD: "There's a thing called The Ten Commandments. Moses was given The Ten Commandments. Haven't you heard about that?"

ISABELLA: “No.”

Dad: “Oh. Well, in it there’s something like ‘thou shalt not steal’.”

ISABELLA, interrupting: “Oh, thou this thou that, it’s so weird in The Bible!”

DAD: “Yep. Now, but if you were a Jew, and you needed food because you were starving to death, surely it’d be okay to steal the food then. Wouldn’t it?”

ISABELLA, expressing incredulity: “Of course!”

DAD: “So to say, ‘thou shalt not steal’ ever is stupid. Isn’t it?”

ISABELLA: “Whatever God says is pretty dumb! I must say, some of the things he says are not good. They’re not good to trust. Because he freaks some people out sometimes. Apparently he sends angels. Wouldn’t that just freak you out? You’re sleeping alone and then you feel this tap tap . . . ‘Hi. I’m an angel.’ You’d be really really freaked out. Wouldn’t you? If an angel just came up to you randomly.”

DAD: “It’d be very startling, wouldn’t it?”

ISABELLA: “Of course! Just tap tap. ‘Hi. I’m an angel.’ But they’re very sweet things, angels. But how do we know they’re true? Because no one can ever get a picture of them and say this is true.”

DAD: “That’s right.”

ISABELLA: “You can just add in an angel.”

DAD: “Yeah.”

ISABELLA: “You need to have the whole world watching you, which is impossible.”

DAD: “That is impossible, yeah.”

ISABELLA: “Because the whole world can’t see you.”

DAD: “Well, you need some proof like a video of it or—”

ISABELLA: “No, videos can’t prove it’s true because remember the Loch Ness Monster?”

DAD: “They can fake it, I know. But if you got experts in—”

ISABELLA: “If you got in quite a lot of people, and they all saw it, then . . .”

DAD: “But some people claim, when they’re involved in a group, when a lot of people in a group start saying they’re seeing something . . . it can affect others and they can start saying they’re seeing it as well. They get, sort of, hooked on the group. And the way the group is thinking. Do you know what I mean?”

ISABELLA: “Yep.”

DAD: “So, even that can’t always be trusted. There’s also, in The Ten Commandments, ‘thou shalt not commit murder’. ‘Thou shalt not kill’, I should say.”

ISABELLA: “Um, so if someone’s out to kill you, you shouldn’t kill them?”

DAD: “Exactly!”

ISABELLA: “If you’re in real danger, there’s this man and you’re doing nothing wrong and he’s about to kill you . . .”

DAD: “Mmm. But let’s say that it didn’t mean self-defence. You’re now allowed to kill in self-defence, okay? But that’s it. You aren’t allowed to kill when it isn’t self-defence. What would you do if somebody is in absolute agony? They’re really sick and they’re crying out and they’re going to die anyway but by you killing them you would be ending their suffering. What would you do then?”

ISABELLA: “I did that to a bumblebee. It was crawling on its back so I went and squashed it because I thought it was best.”

DAD: “Yeah.”

ISABELLA: "It was very very sick. All its legs weren't moving, he couldn't fly, he was on his back and he couldn't get up and I was trying to help him but then I just realised it was better to squash him."

DAD: "Yeah."

ISABELLA: "Then he'd just be dead straight away."

DAD: "Yeah. See, in The Bible, it says 'thou shalt not kill' no matter what and you can't go around making your own mind up when you can and when you can't. So, when you get a situation like that, it means a person suffers longer than they should. Or a bumblebee in the case you were talking about."

ISABELLA: "But, um, in the case of Jesus, that shouldn't be for him because he can fix people apparently. Well, if you're blind, then he'll make you see."

DAD: "Yeah."

ISABELLA: "So, if you're in agony, he can put you out of agony. Hopefully."

DAD: "Yeah, well, he should be able to do that, shouldn't he?"

ISABELLA: "So that's why he wrote those Ten Commandments. They were for him."

I'm not sure what she meant there. Possibly Isabella thinks The Ten Commandments were written by Jesus to stop people killing each other in case he wanted to fix someone.

POSTSCRIPT

ISABELLA, after she'd found out the Nazis killed all the Jews, not just the adults: "But all the children would be crying! Didn't the Nazis have children too?"

I had no easy answer for her because it has to be one of the most difficult things for anyone to understand. How could so many Germans be so willing to kill children when they themselves had children? One of the

most deplorable and murderous Nazis was Reinhard Heydrich. He not only had four children but also loved to play the violin. An almost unfathomable propensity when you consider the carnage he was responsible for. All I could say to Isabella was how important it is to make sure people with maniacal and fanatical tendencies are kept away from power. I told her that Hitler only came to power because Germany had been humiliated after World War One and they were desperate to elect (and it must be remembered Hitler was democratically elected) someone who they thought would be able to make them feel proud again. In other words, many Germans overlooked Hitler's rantings about the Jews being vermin because he promised so much and the Jews were only a minority. Many people, including many western countries who thought Hitler was useful in preventing the spread of communism, clearly underestimated him. I told Isabella Hitler had complete power by 1934 and that meant he could do whatever he liked.

Avoiding boredom

AMELIE, the other night, as she was rolling around on the lounge room floor: "Yeah, well, I'm much more bored than you are, Issy. I'm so bored that I have to keep rolling around on the ground just so I keep myself from getting more bored."

In this weather?

ISABELLA, yesterday, as it rained heavily and the fire brigade went rushing past: "A fire brigade! In this weather! Why would they bother? It'll [the fire] be going out straight away."

LAST WORD

They always do that

HOLLY, watching an international 1500m men's track race: "It goes in order of skin tone. See? At the finish, it starts off with black and then ends up white. They [running races on TV] always do that."