

HUGGS

Heartfelt, Uplifting, Guest Stories

DEVOTIONS FROM OUR CHURCH FAMILY
DECEMBER 19, 2019

Life is a Marathon

I enjoy running but I have never run a marathon and have no plans to do so. I do, however, appreciate the self-discipline required to train for, and run in a marathon. While most of us will never run a marathon physically, we are expected to do so spiritually. Faithfulness to God requires many of the same qualities as running a marathon, especially strength and endurance.

Our Christian walk requires strength that is found in God. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (Ephesians 6:10). "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

We need to endure difficulties and set our minds to persevere. "...let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2). "... for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9).

Our prize at the end of our Christian walk will be greater than any marathon can offer. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

—Elisha Dougherty

God is Good!

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good..." (Psalm 136:1)

God is good. He made the earth and everything. He made all the people and even sent Jesus. He gave us our family and pets. We love them so much. He made me and I love myself.

God keeps us safe. He is the strongest and has the most powers. He can do anything. His powers don't go away when he uses them. They never run out. He's way better than Batman and Spiderman and the super-heroes. He's on my team. We will win anything (Romans 8:31).

God gives us everything we need. He gives us really good food and houses to live in. We love everything he gave us. He takes care of it all, but we still have to get stuff at Wal-Mart too.

God loves us. I love him too. We can hug him when we get to heaven. I will draw him a picture of all the people hugging him. He is happy when we are nice and when we share and use manners. He is sad when the bad people are mean and lie.

God made heaven and it's the best place in the whole world. It's the prettiest place you've ever seen. There will be the best toys and books, and Spiderman will probably be there. Only good people live there. There will be the best food, like carrots and desserts. God is everywhere, but he lives in heaven so we will live in his house. God *is* real, you know.

—Luke Dougherty

Faith of a Child

Something my six-year-old said a couple weeks ago has really stayed with me. Our family was riding in the car one day when my daughter, out of nowhere, stated that her mother was speeding the day before. I asked my daughter how she knew that. She explained where the speedometer line was, and yes, that certainly would have been speeding. My wife denied driving THAT fast, and the two were going back and forth when my daughter said so innocently, "I'll just ask God when I get to Heaven. He'll know the truth, and he'll know exactly how fast you were going."

This statement has stuck with me. Not only what she said--she was going to heaven--but the conviction with which she said it--she has no doubt about it. We should all have the same conviction and faith in God's promises. At age six, she doesn't have a full understanding of how to reach heaven, but she does know that God has made a place for his children. We read in John that Jesus has prepared a place for us. "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

We can learn a great deal from our children. "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mark 10:15).

--Ross Dougherty

Changing Lives, One at a Time

I am married to a retired schoolteacher. After teaching thirty years in the Marshall county school system, she would have taught one hundred to one hundred twenty students per year. That is over thirty-three hundred students that she had the opportunity to teach.

Sandy touched many lives during her tenure. I have been able to witness this firsthand on many occasions. Today, grown men and women approach her and give her a big hug and they often say, "Do you remember me?" Sometimes she remembers them and sometimes she doesn't. People change from high school to middle age.

Just recently, a very successful young man came up to her and hugged her and began to tell her how much influence she had had on him. He told her just how much he appreciated her and talked for at least ten minutes. I've seen this happen many times. Of course, I'm very proud of her. She was a caring and concerned teacher.

She counseled kids about many subjects that were not just about the class, but about life.

Isn't this what the church is in the business of doing? Jesus has given us the great commission to change lives, one at a time.

Remember what Jesus said when Mary and Joseph lost him at the age of twelve. "And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). The New King James version translates this verse: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

--Dennis Driver

A Father's Love

I was born just as the great depression was beginning. My grandmother, Daddy's mother, died when I was two. My mother died when I was only three and my younger sister was only three months old.

My daddy was twenty-five with two baby daughters to take care of. He was a farmer, and after grandmother died, granddaddy Davis came to live with us. Before they went to the field Daddy would fix me a lunch and a bottle for my baby sister. He told me if my sister began to cry to give her the bottle. Daddy would come back to the house to check on us from time to time during the day. He said that sometimes he would find us asleep on the bed and sometimes we would be asleep under the bed.

My grandmother on my mother's side offered to take me to raise, but she couldn't take my sister because she was not able to take care of a baby. Daddy said "No," he wasn't going to separate us.

When I was six, Daddy went to Michigan to work. My sister and I lived with Daddy's sister in Tennessee while he was away.

This may sound like an unhappy childhood, but it was not. I had enough to eat and clothes to wear. I had cousins to play with. We would walk on homemade stilts, ride horses, and climb trees to watch the birds.

My daddy died when he was only fifty-one. He always loved us and took care of us. I have a father in heaven who loves me and takes care of me every day (Philippians 4:19).

--Modean Driver