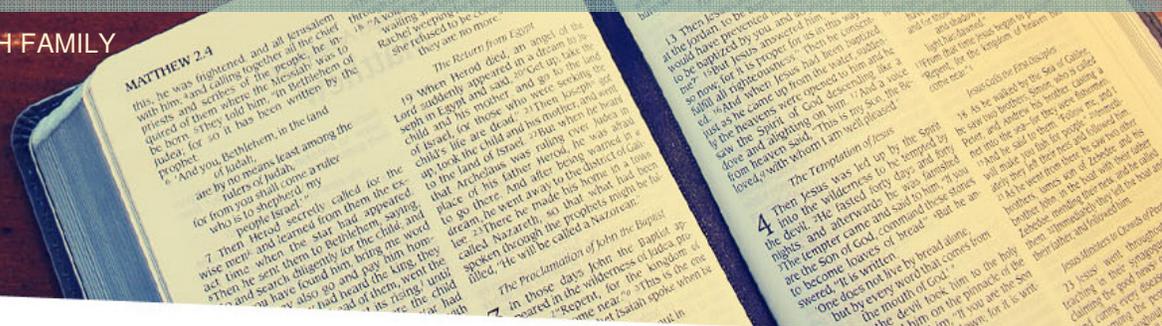


HUGGS

Heartfelt, Uplifting, Guest Stories

DEVOTIONS FROM OUR CHURCH FAMILY
JANUARY 30, 2020



My Friends and a Small Town

I grew up in a small town with my three sisters. We walked to school every day with our friends who lived in a house just behind ours. It was about two and half miles to school and you had time to talk and get to know a lot about your friends. This is how I became good friends to the Harris family.

A little later, I met a boy that lived down the road from us. His name was Woodrow Holland. We did a lot of playing together. We climbed trees, swinging on grape vines, acting like Tarzan. We did a lot of ice skating in the winter on Clear Pond. It would freeze and stay frozen for most of the winter.

We picked strawberries in the summer and made enough money to go the show (movie) and buy a bag of popcorn. We would walk back home, barefooted, on a gravel road in the dark.

When we were old enough, Woodrow and I received a letter from the County Court Clerk that invited us to "visit Uncle Sam" for a while. We stayed together all through basic training, and even went overseas together. We survived the war (World War II) and came home.

I began dating Ernestine Stafford and after two years we were married. We lived together in the small town of Calvert City for nearly 67 years (Ernestine died in 2018).

I love the Calvert City church of Christ and everyone in it! I still have friends all over this town. Life is made much easier to bear when you have good friends (Proverbs 17:17).

--Rudell Noles

Be a Barnabas!

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

We all need encouragement from time to time. We thrive on it; we grow from it and we mature and gain confidence because of it. It's a gift that we can give to our family and friends every day. A kind word, the touch of a hand, a hug from a friend, are all just what we need to make our day brighter.

I learned a great lesson one day from a friend about turning a negative into a positive response. A lady who was traveling with us had such a sad, hardened look on her face. So, my friend walked up and said, "You have the most beautiful smile!" She found that she had a beautiful smile to share and did so from that day forward. She viewed life in a different way, all because of a little encouragement.

Barnabas was an encourager to his friend Paul. The disciples were afraid of Paul after he was converted and when he tried to join them. Acts 9:27 says that Barnabas took him and opened the door for Paul to be accepted by them. Barnabas was a great source of encouragement and his name literally means "son of exhortation." Be happy in being a child of God and be a Barnabas!

--Marie Norsworthy

Deadlines

We have all had deadlines that we have had to meet from time to time, and we wonder if we will meet them. I have felt this way several times in the past month. I am the assistant director of a local school food service, and our state review will take place May 8th. This will be the first time since I have taken this position that our system has been reviewed. Getting prepared for this review has been very stressful, and at times overwhelming. I have put in some long hours in order to get my paperwork completed according to the state guidelines.

We all struggle with various types of deadlines, whether at work, school or home. We must remind ourselves that the results will be worth it if we just keep working hard. Sometimes it is hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel, but when it appears, it is very rewarding.

Galatians 6:9: "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." Paul's words in this verse give me comfort knowing that we all will grow weary. However, when we meet our deadlines on time, we will reap the benefits. Let us remember that we should keep working. When we grow weary, remember that we are human, and we all struggle with deadlines.

--Amy O'Bryan

Mercy

When acted upon, mercy is a sweet and beautiful thing. Not too long ago I was pulled over for speeding. I was driving 60 mph in a 45-mph zone. I saw flashing blue lights and I knew I was caught. I was scared. When I pulled over and the State Trooper walked up to my vehicle and gave me my ticket, I knew I was in serious trouble when I got home. Whenever we make mistakes, there will be repercussions.

When I got home, I immediately told my mom and dad. They were not too upset and showed me mercy, but that wasn't the end of it. I later had to go before a judge and have the fear put in me—he gave me community service and took my license for a couple weeks. I had to pay the consequences for my foolish mistake.

I was shown mercy: My parents being very understanding that things happen, and then the judge who could have given me a worse punishment, but who showed me mercy as well, by giving me the lesser punishment. When I think of mercy, the verse Romans 3:23 comes to mind: "All have fallen short of the glory of God." Even when we mess up, we have a father who is willing to forgive us no matter how severe the sin we have committed. We serve a very merciful God who understands us when we make mistakes and forgives us no matter how much we mess up.

--Cory O'Bryan

A Life-Changing Experience

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

There are many verses in the Bible that help us through difficult times in our lives. Philippians 4:13 is my favorite verse and is linked with a very hard time for me.

A few years ago, I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. As I sat in the waiting room, many different thoughts ran through my mind and I felt countless emotions. The doctor finally entered the room and said to me, "You have cancer." These three words began my battle.

Philippians 4:13 gives me the strength and courage to know that Christ is always there to enable me to endure anything. While I was going through my treatment there were different tests that I had to go through and one of them was radiation. For this test, I was quarantined for a whole week and I had to be away from my family. Even though I had much support from friends and loved ones during this time, it was one of the most difficult things that I had to endure throughout this whole experience.

After much reflection on my life, I realized that regardless of any trial we go through God is the One who is our strength and He strengthens us more than we can imagine.

We all have many different trials in our lives that make us feel very weak and alone at times. We need to remember even when we feel the most alone Jesus is always there.

--Randy O'Bryan

