

HUGGS

Heartfelt, Uplifting, Guest Stories

DEVOTIONS FROM OUR CHURCH FAMILY
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Are You Driving with Your Eyes Closed?

I was very blessed to have the privilege to take my son to school every day. We would pray along the way to start our day, alternating each day who would pray. *"Pray without ceasing."* (1 Thessalonians 5:17) As a young child Aaron would say "You know its Monday, and if I start the rotation today, that means I have to pray three times this week!" This gave us a great opportunity to discuss what was going on in our lives and what we need to pray about that day. I was very blessed to see my son as he grew into a good Christian man. *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6).

One day, when it was my turn, we began to discuss what we needed to pray about as we pulled out of the driveway. I started to pray, and I heard Aaron exclaim, "Mom your eyes are closed!" Sure enough, I had closed my eyes to pray. I was so scared at the thought that I could have killed us both, that I began to pray again. How many times have I driven with my eyes closed? It made me think, who is really in control? If we drive through life with our eyes closed are we not in danger of a greater death- spiritual death? Christianity is more than going through the motions. *James 2:14 says*

"what good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?"

--Jonda Cox

Focus Our Aim

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5). As Christians, we are in a constant state of change, both physically and spiritually (1 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 4:7). The hard part is putting the past behind and beginning anew (Philippians 3:13, 14).

We should get *active*. Each of us has been blessed with unique talents (1 Corinthians 7:7). We are urged *"to stir up one another to love and good works"* (Hebrews 10:24), because *"what good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works"* (James 2:14). We should mature as *"the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love"* (Ephesians 4:16).

It should be our goal to be *included* in the Book of Life. God *"desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:4). We should take the opportunities that arise in our daily lives to help the lost (Luke 19:10) and help each

other progress on our path (1 Timothy 4:15), so when the Book of Life (Revelation 20:12) is read, our names will be included.

We should encourage and *motivate* each other so our "*hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love,*" (Colossians 2:2). We also be assured that "*everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*" (1 John 5:4).

--Ronnie Cox

A Lesson in Patience

One of my interests is playing golf. I have been fortunate to have grown up in an area that has produced a few PGA Tour players. During my high school and college days I was able to play competitive tournament rounds, as well as casual rounds of golf with some of those players.

I have also had the opportunity to caddy on the PGA Tour. The high level at which these men play is very impressive. I have often wondered what exactly separates these accomplished PGA professionals from the amateur and casual golfer. Obviously, they are gifted physically, with great athletic skills and hand-eye coordination. They have superior mental abilities and are able to keep their composure under pressure. They work hard at their golf game with disciplined practice and physical conditioning.

But the one thing that seems to be a key ingredient for these players is their ability to remain *patient* during a round of golf. They play the golf course, sticking with the game plan, and do not get ahead of themselves. They do not allow their attitude to get too high or too low, no matter how they are playing.

The Bible tells us to remain *patient* to the end, until our time here on earth is over. We are to stay the course and endure, knowing the Lord will reward the faithful. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, 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" (Hebrews 12:1)

--Kerry Creason.

A Noble Woman

Proverbs 31:10-31 is one of my favorite passages. Striving to live as a Christian can be challenging and discouraging. These verses are encouraging and motivating to me because the "noble woman" described there is the ultimate role model upon whom any woman in any era or culture can pattern her life. She is described by numerous admirable character traits and positive action words which all arise from her desire to live faithfully. These traits radiate strength and self-assurance, and indicate an aggressive approach to life.

Though her priorities are devoted to her house, she also commits herself and her

resources for the poor of her community. Her work ethic is strong and does not allow for laziness or idleness. She anticipates the future with great confidence, free from worry and anxiety because she has made provisions for it. She is a faithful, skillful, efficient businesswoman, and her works are praised by all whom her life touches.

Her disciplined, industrious lifestyle shows foresight, efficiency, and resourcefulness, and she demonstrates that a spiritual arrangement of life is the only way to reach one's full potential. Her lifestyle embodies the qualities that a Christian woman should strive for. Every virtuous attribute of character mentioned can be true of those with or without wealth and this woman, who has grown in character and spiritual maturity over time, depicts a cumulative picture of a life lived wisely. It is rewarded with wealth, a strong loving family and respect from all.

Every Christian woman should strive to replicate these virtuous qualities of the noble woman described in Proverbs 31:10-31.

--Debbie Croley

The Power of Prayer

In May of 1990, I was playing in a golf tournament and I had just walked off the green with a par. Headed to #4 tee box we heard and noticed a lot of commotion behind us. A friend of mine raced up on a golf cart yelling my name: "Pat you have to come with me now Debbie (my wife) is in trouble!" I started asking a thousand questions, but all he knew was a friend helping Debbie with a yard sale, had called the course and wanted me to come home immediately. I threw everything in my truck and headed home as fast as I could. When I arrived at home, I found Debbie having difficulty moving her right leg and arm and she was very light-headed. We immediately took off for the hospital.

This was the beginning of a very long and scary time in our lives; she had suffered a stroke at 35 years of age. The doctors here called Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville and described her symptoms. They knew what was wrong and advised us to get there as quickly as possible. She was transported by ambulance and I followed. She immediately was put in the most critical Neurological ICU. I was only allowed to see her for a very short time. The next 2 months were spent mostly at Vanderbilt and for the first time in my life I needed prayer more than ever. I am convinced that through prayer she was returned to me, and eventually overcame the effects of the strokes. Today she is fine, and you would never know by looking at her what she went through.

John 14:13-14 and Matthew 21:22 are good reminders of the awesome power of prayer and how truly believing and praying can accomplish great things. This event truly changed our lives.

--Pat Croley

