

HUGGS

Heartfelt, Uplifting, Guest Stories

DEVOTIONS FROM OUR CHURCH FAMILY
FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Antiques and Invitations

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When customers come into my shop, after they browse around and we get to talking, I always invite them to church and give them literature about the church. One afternoon a man came in and I asked him if he would like to read the literature. He took it and appeared to be quite interested. Several years later he came back to my shop. He was so very happy to tell me that he had been baptized into Christ and was so thankful that I had taken an interest in him. Needless to say, I praised the Lord!

On another day, three ladies came into the store and I offered them the literature. They took it and thanked me. Years later, one of them came back and told me that she had become a Christian and had also converted her whole family. Again, I gave God the glory!

Even though I did it before, I am even more determined that no customer will leave my shop without the literature that I pick up at church. They will always get an invitation to church and a prayer for their soul.

—Linda Ray (deceased)

Did God Tell Him?

My grandparents lived close to the Christian college I was attending. Every spring the campus invited everyone to come and listen to a cappella groups from surrounding states. It was a huge event and my grandparents loved to go.

One weekend Grandpa invited me to *his* church to listen to a musical group. When we got there the band was set up and we were seated in the fourth row from the front. There were about 150 people in attendance. The music was so loud that we had to cover our ears. After the second song, Grandpa raised his hand and politely asked if they could sing without instruments. The big burly man replied, "Brother, the Lord told me you were going to ask that, and yes we can." The facial expression on the two backup singers told us that the Lord didn't tell *them*.

The singers huddled behind a single microphone and gazed into the audience as if it were 150,000 people instead of 150. They struggled to sing the song, trying to maintain harmony and rhythm. Halfway through the first chorus, the band gracefully picked up the beat and off they went singing to the familiar tempo of the band.

Though we never spoke of that night I saw the look of disappointment in Grandpa's eyes. But I took away from it a deeper understanding of (Ephesians 5:19)—"addressing one another in

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart." How easily we can depend on things and feel we can't worship God without them. All he wants is "plain and simple."

--Christine Riley

How to Have a Good Garden

There is an incident that stands out in my mind, that occurred when I was at my grandfather and grandmother's house. I believe I was in the seventh grade and was doing math homework, probably working on Algebra. Math never came easy to me, for whatever reason, but my Gran (grandfather) was a pretty good tutor. Like many kids, I probably wanted to go outside and play. So, after about thirty minutes, I was ready to quit studying.

My grandfather, in his wisdom, told me, "The best place to pray for a good garden is standing behind a hoe." He let that sink in a minute, before he told me that if I wanted God to help me to do well on my Algebra test, I probably should study a little harder in preparation for it.

I wish I could tell you that I made 100% on that test, but it is probably not true, and I honestly don't remember. What I do remember is the line he told me, and it applies to every part of life. Whatever you are trying to do, do all the necessary work; pray about it and leave it with God. This simple concept can be applied to your marriage, your children, your job, school and especially, to doing God's work. If you care about something enough to pray about it, it probably is going to require some work on your part. I believe God helps those who help themselves.

James 4:8: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."

--Dale Roberts

Bullying

Too often, we hear news reports concerning bullying. I think all of us have experienced personal attacks and will probably encounter them from time to time. How can Christians endure?

Was Christ bullied during his time on earth? How did he address it? What advice would he give us?

The Bible clearly states in Hebrews 4:15 that Jesus experienced our same problems: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

Did Jesus retaliate? No, the Bible says he was without sin. Did Jesus hide from his offenders? No, he continued to share the word of God.

The Bible tells us how Jesus endured trials and ridicule. Jesus promised us that through trust and

faith, we can have hope of an eternal life with him.

As parents, we need to talk openly with our children about how to survive bullying, how not to be a bully and whom to tell if they feel they are in harm's way. We need to really teach the "Golden Rule"-- "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them" (Matthew 7:12).

We need to encourage others to look for the best in a situation and know that God has things under control.

Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us that God is on the side of those who obey him: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not evil, to give you a future and a hope."

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God's Care

My best friend invited me to go with her to see her brother who lived in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. On the way back, we came through South Dakota and she said, "I think I can find Sacagawea's grave from what I've read. Do you think we should?" She had died in Kenel, SD and was buried in a cemetery near there. We both loved the story of Lewis and Clark, so we were very interested.

We kept driving and looking for a cemetery. I said to my friend, "Let's stop at the store, and I'll go in and ask." I went in the store, and asked the young lady at the checkout counter, "Are we near the cemetery where Sacagawea is buried?" She looked at me quizzically and said, "Who?" Another woman in the store realized the situation and said, "The cemetery is down that road on the left. There is a church near there where you can park."

We found the cemetery and walked on a narrow path with weeds waist-high on each side. The graves there were covered with trinkets and coins, but no one had cut the grass. When we found the tombstone with her name and dates, we were excited! Her son was buried next to her. She had died in 1812.

When we got back to the car, we sat for a minute and looked at each other. We commented there were probably plenty of snakes where we had been. We had been blessed that we saw and heard none, and really had not thought about it. We believed God had watched over us and we were thankful. "In everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

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