

HUGS

Heartfelt, Uplifting, Guest Stories

DEVOTIONS FROM OUR CHURCH FAMILY
JANUARY 2, 2020



Reverse Psychology

Around 2000, we moved in with my mom while we were building our home. The girls were 9, 7, and 3. As most kids do from time to time, they would complain when it was time to get ready for church. This usually occurred at night because they didn't want to stop what they were doing.

So, I came up with a great idea. I told them to come downstairs because I had something to tell them. They lined up on the stairs and I said, "Hey, I have wonderful news—you're going to love it!" They all smiled and said, "What?" I said, "Well, you all know how you don't like to get ready for church? And I don't like to have to keep telling you? Well, I've come up with a solution! We aren't going to church anymore.

Their faces dropped and their eyes filled with tears. I, still smiling said, "What's wrong? I thought you would be happy. You can play all you want, and I don't have to keep nagging you . . . It's going to be great! Aren't you excited?" By this time, they were sobbing, and Abbey yelled "WE'RE ALL GOING TO HELL!!!"

Of course, I told them different.

Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

--Joy Farris

Trusting and Faith in God

As we go through life each from childhood to adult, we will have tribulations. I have had several. I've not just learned from them; my faith has grown stronger as well. When I lost my parents when young, I still needed their guidance. It helped me to understand a lot of the meaning of life and to be a good parent to my children. When I had an accident that almost cost me my life and all I came out with was a seat belt rash, I knew God was watching over me and protecting me. He still has something in store for me. Since then I've had a second child. I feel my biggest hurdle has been a divorce with custody issues. I do a lot of praying and talking with God. Three and a half years later, God sent me a wonderful husband I'll spend the rest of my life with. He is there for me and my children. People you love and trust can help you. My husband, my eldest son, friends and my wonderful church families have gotten me through a lot of troublesome times; but turning to God, having faith and trusting in him, are necessary. Sometimes you must be patient and wait on God. He knows when the time is right. He is so amazing! God will see you through. "And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you" (Psalm 9:10).

--Shanda Gautney

"Amazing Grace" . . . How Sad the Sound?

I always thought the song, "Amazing Grace" was so sad. It seems like it has been sung at every funeral there has ever been. So, I have associated it with sad moments. My cousin sang it at our Paw Paw's funeral. It really got to me that day and it has moved me to sadness ever since then. It got to the point that I could no longer sit in church while the congregation sang it. This went on for years, with no end in sight.

Then at my brother-in-law's funeral, of all places, I changed. I knew the song would be used and I wanted to be there for my wife. I took a closer look at the words of the song. The first verse is anything but sad. God extends saving grace, to even me. The second verse is also so uplifting—God's covered my past sins the moment I obeyed the gospel. Verse five tells of the assurance of a home in heaven with God waiting for me. Verse six gives me added hope that heaven and all its glory will be for ever and ever.

When I hear this song, I still think of loved ones who have gone on ahead of me—but not so much in a sad way. I am happy for them, that they are reaping their reward. Of course, I will miss them, but I think making sure I live faithfully life until death and receive my crown of life (Revelation 2:10) is most important. "Amazing Grace" really does make such a sweet sound.

--Stan Gautney

"Where Two or Three Have Gathered in My Name"

When my daughter, Heather was seven years old, she contracted encephalitis (a swelling of the lining of the brain and often fatal). She had become ill during an August weekend of 1986, and progressively got worse. Heather became lethargic, glassy eyed and unresponsive. After a visit to our family doctor, we drove her to the nearest ambulance shelter in order to get her to the closest hospital. It was there she began having seizures in my arms. At that moment our preacher, Steve Baker drove by, saw us and pulled in. He immediately began to pray for Heather and us.

It was at Western Baptist that Dr. Cecil informed us how serious her condition was. He told us that Heather could die. We were devastated and frightened. It was decided she should be transferred to Vanderbilt Children's Hospital in Nashville. We were met at Vanderbilt by a team of doctors led by Meg Rush. In 1986, not a lot was known about the brain function, and a lot of the medical procedures were trial and error. It was an agonizing, frightening day to day crisis for us, as our daughter fell into a coma.

At home, as word spread of Heather's condition, prayers were being offered all over the community. We did not know at that time a community prayer service was being held on Friday for Heather at 5:00p.m. We continued our bedside vigil all week and at 5:30 Heather woke out of her coma. I have since taken comfort in the verses from "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it shall be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matthew 18:19, 20)

--Greg Greene

God Loves Me!

As we get older, we begin to think about what we have in store for us when we die. We might believe that we are pretty good, moral people as compared to Jack the Ripper, Bonnie & Clyde, or, Jessie James—but, how have we lived toward God?

We do know that God gave his only begotten son (John 3:16) for our sins, so that if we believe in him and repent of our sins and confess our sins and are baptized into him, we will be saved. We also know that God is a merciful God and hears our prayers. That should be comforting to us, just to know that he hears us. The Bible verse which is of most comfort to me is the 23rd Psalm. God is our comforting shepherd, leading us to green pastures and still waters. He is always there to comfort us and protect us. If we walk through the valley of death, we will feel no evil because he will always be there to comfort us.

To think about heaven is awe-inspiring. The Bible tells us it is a beautiful place—something we cannot fully imagine. There will be no pain or suffering and no evil people. We will be there with people like Paul, Mary, the apostles, Abraham, and David. Most of all, Jesus our savior will be there. Won't it be wonderful? There will be no sadness, no cancer, no terrible diseases, and no burdens of any kind. There will be only happiness. Yes . . . God loves even me – Wow!

--Betty Hall

