

HUGS

Heartfelt, Uplifting, Guest Stories

DEVOTIONS FROM OUR CHURCH FAMILY
FEBRUARY 20, 2020

Consistent Prayer

I was raised in the church. My mother and father were Christians. My father worked for the railroad. He was injured on the job and we had to move to Hardin, KY. Jewell Norman (a preacher) lived right across street from us. His daughter was same age as me.

I had two pairs of shoes ("every day" and "Sunday"). Dad painted my shoes red and my best friend wanted her shoes painted too.

Prayer and church were ways of life. I started dating Louis ("Sandy") Sanderson, who did not attend church. I prayed for Louis constantly (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Married young and during World War II, I never stopped attending worship. Within two weeks past the births of my children, I would be back in church. My aunt took care of Nancy when Susan was born. They took Nancy out to eat, but she would not eat. When they inquired as to why, she said she could not eat until they had prayed—so they did!

Sandy worked a lot with Lake Riley, who was a preacher. Sandy asked questions and I kept praying.

Lance Cordle began visiting and building a relationship with Sandy. After several years, he encouraged Sandy to become a Christian and gave him time to think about it. A few days later, we called Lance while he was visiting family in Alabama and he came home early for the baptism. Because of Sandy's health, my grandson, Jeff Pierce and Kevin Terry helped him.

Sandy was eighty-three years old when he was baptized. I had never quit praying for him to obey the gospel.

--Mary Jane Sanderson (deceased)

An Appointment Facing Us All

Not wanting to be confined indoors, I majored in Recreation & Park Administration in college. My first job happened to be as Recreation Director at the Kentucky State Penitentiary. What I thought was going to be a short stay turned into a thirty-year career. Ironically, one can't be more "confined" than in a maximum-security prison. God's plan and our plan do not always coincide, but we know that through his wisdom (Matthew 6:8), he always knows best.

In my 25th year, I found myself as warden and in year 28, I was faced with carrying out an execution—one duty I thought I would escape. Capital punishment has, is and always will be a controversial subject and as a Christian, one which I too struggled with. I did know, however that God would allow me to lean on him for guidance and direction through prayer (1 John 5:14-15). Secondly, I knew God would provide for my needs through the process (Phil.4:19). The execution did take place, and if such a thing can be described as smooth, the process was completed without problem. I firmly believe that God was standing with me throughout that process (Joshua 1:9).

Hebrews (9:27) tells us "...it is appointed for man to die once..." Unlike the condemned inmate, most will not know the exact day and time. Like him however all of us have sin in our lives, (Romans 3:23).

My prayer is whatever problem or challenge you face today that you lean on God for guidance and that you examine your own life to ensure your relationship with Christ is where it should be if this were your last day on earth.

--Tom Simpson

The Faith of Noah

The faith of Noah goes beyond just listening to God. We are told in (Genesis 6-9) the story of Noah and how he built the ark according to God's instructions. God told Noah he was the only righteous man in the world, which was full of corrupt people.

God gave Noah complete instructions on how to build an ark that would keep them safe from the flood he was going to use to destroy the earth and all corrupt people. While building the ark Noah preached to the people about the upcoming flood and that they must change their evil ways. It took Noah many years to build the ark and he was not able to convince anyone that there would be a flood. You see, the people had never experienced rain before, so they thought Noah was crazy. Despite the people not believing, Noah finished building the ark and filed the animals on board as he prepared for the flood.

Another way Noah demonstrated his faith in God was by knowing God would keep him safe from animals that might harm him. Can you imagine getting on a huge ship full of wild and potentially harmful animals? As the flooding progressed, and the land slowly vanished from sight, Noah must have been afraid. I know I would have been. But Noah's faith kept him strong for one year and ten days until he was able to walk out on dry land again. As I grow older, I hope to have faith like Noah and learn to trust God to help me through trials and temptations.

--Brynn Smith

A Promise Kept

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Never was this passage clearer to me than, when over several years as a young adult, I saw how God had done exactly that in my life.

I had a difficult time deciding on a course of study. I choose Engineering. In my senior year, I married my dream girl (in December of 1966). I graduated that spring and took a job with IBM. Within fourteen months, two bad things happened to me. First, I realized I wasn't happy with Engineering, and second I was being drafted. I was able to get accepted into the Air Force Officer Training School. I left my wife at her mother's and started the long drive to San Antonio, Texas. It

rained all the way. The inside of my car was more wet than the outside because I cried most of the trip! It was so hard to leave Mary—I cried out to God, "Why have you done this to me?"

After OTS, I was sent to Robbins Air force Base. There I met a dentist who changed my life. He was a Christian and I loved spending time with him, even chair-side-assisting him when off duty. Knowing I was unhappy with engineering he convinced me to go back to dental school and I did.

Some forty years later, I have loved my job; I have been able to help those in need, and I believe I know why God allowed that hard time.

--Gary Smith

Prayer

I feel that I have had my share of medical problems over my seventy-plus years. I am also thankful and feel I have had many prayers offered on my behalf during these years. Matthew 21:22 states, "And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

To date, I have had over thirty kidney stones. Family genes contributed to my heart and vascular issues. I am a cancer survivor and have had multiple surgeries to repair various parts of my body. It seems that, as we age, we have to repair or replace parts often. I thank God every day for giving me another day with my family. "Give thanks in all circumstances" (1Thessalonians 5:18). In addition to those hospital stays, I have also had numerous rounds of infections with my vascular issues. Pneumonia seems to like me, too. "And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick" (James 5:15).

Not only did this affect me physically but my health issues also caused me to have to find a new job. After I healed, I had to go back to school to retrain. As an older college student, this was a trying experience for me. I completed an associate degree, only to find out there were no jobs for me. Again, prayer was the answer, as I was able to receive some benefits to help provide for my family.

I hope I can be the right example by helping others who are going through similar circumstances. (1 Corinthians 10:11): "Now these things happened to them as an example."

--Joe Smith

