

HUGS

Heartfelt, Uplifting, Guest Stories

DEVOTIONS FROM OUR CHURCH FAMILY
NOVEMBER 21, 2019



A Dead Church

A few months back I saw an advertisement where a church was giving away their pews and other furniture and “closing their doors.” For some reason, the article made me stop and think: “When did they know they were dead?” At what point did they, as a group, come to a decision that they could no longer function as a congregation?

Was it when they constantly had more attendees over the age of fifty than those under that age? Was it when the preacher quit caring about what he preached? Was it when the singing was so bad that no one could bear to participate, or even listen anymore? Was it when the community ignored them?

We may not be able to answer the above questions, but we can do some self-examination (2 Corinthians 13:5). We can, individually, ask ourselves serious questions. Am I coming to worship as an enthusiastic attender or as a passive spectator? Am I interested in growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)? Am I encouraging other Christians and help them grow spiritually as well? Am I seeking to lead other to Christ (Matthew 28:19-20)?

The penetrating gaze of Jesus fell upon the individuals of the seven churches of Asia as they were about to enter an intense period of persecution.

As he examined the church at Sardis, he moved John to write, “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead” (Revelation 3:1b).

What would he say to you, and to the congregation of which you are a part?

--Lance Cordle

Look to the Skies

I marvel at this great, big, beautiful world that our Father created but two things in particular cause me to stand still and know that there is a God: rainbows and the moon. Neither a rainbow nor the moon can talk but when they appear in the sky their presence speaks volumes. They echo the words of Psalm 46:10, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

When I look up to the sky after a storm and see a big, colorful rainbow I stop in my tracks and stand in awe. I see the beauty of the rainbow and get goose bumps as I remember my God. I remember the promise he made to Noah and his family and to us. I remember that God is faithful and true, and he keeps his promises of good to those who are faithful and true to him.

When I look up to the night sky and see the moon shining, I stand in awe and know there is a God. Seeing the moon in whatever phase it is in fascinates

me. All have their special beauty. The very fact that there are different phases due to the moon's orbit of the earth testifies there is a God in heaven. I especially am amazed by the full moon. Have you ever seen a full moon shining brightly over the ocean or even over our beautiful Kentucky Lake?

As Christians we believe and know there is a God. The world often laughs in our face because we believe. When the days are long and hard, look to the skies, be still, and know there is a God.

--Laura Cordle

Slow to Anger

Living a Christian life is never easy and that is an understatement. One of the large difficulties we face is controlling our emotions. Anger is one of the more prominent emotions. It is evident with the amount of scripture devoted to the subject that God understands that this is a trial we face daily. Knowing this God doesn't simply tell us not to be angry but tells us how to control this powerful emotion and the reasons for doing so. "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1: 19-20). Having anger in our hearts hinders us from doing God's will as his children. Acts of kindness, humility, and love are lost when we are consumed by anger.

Most of the time our grievances are petty and superficial. However, I know that it is typically these petty problems that will consume hours, if not days, of our thoughts. I have noticed as I grow older many things that once would enrage me in my youth do not bother me as much now. I see no use in letting meaningless things occupy my time. The book of Proverbs speaks of the dangers of anger and refers to those that allow anger to consume them as "fools" (Proverbs 14:17, 14:29, 19:11, 29:11). Most importantly anger gives an opening for the devil (Ephesians 4:26-27). While it is easy to allow our emotions to control us, God knows that if we try exercising caution and lean upon him, we can overcome this and lead a righteous life.

--Casey Counce

Built on a Rock

One of the most important moments of my life came about when I received an admonishment from my father. His words struck home even more deeply because he was nearing the end of his life. In summation he said, "Get your life and your actions in order. Your responsibilities are many and the time is now to realize the urgency."

The most immediate thought from me at the time was that his concern was not for himself, but for me. I thought his instructions were made for me and for my well-being (as they were) but as I grow older, I can see it had a more profound

meaning.

I believe he was intent on building a strong foundation. He knew the foundation that was laid must be true, for the burden it would bear would be great. I believe this was the same lesson that was presented by Jesus: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24).

The father wants his offspring to continue to build on that strong rock. The parallels that it presents are too important to ignore. My earthly father and Heavenly Father are in tune. They both want their children to grow and build on their commitment. I appreciate the sacrifices made for me and I want to pass the benefits forward as I now more fully feel the urgency.

Is it a coincidence that I must strive to not disappoint my earthly father and my Heavenly Father? I don't think so.

They both know I need help.

--Kenneth Counce (deceased)

I Know He Does!

Being diagnosed with a seizure disorder in 2006, I know a burden has been placed on my husband. The episodes can occur at any place or any time with no warning. With that in mind, *I know he loves me.*

Love is a gift. His love is always shown whenever I am in need of help during an episode. He has tenderness to let me know things are going to be okay and he is there with me. He is not only demonstrating his love and concern, but he is telling me as well.

The Bible says, "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

He doesn't know how high a pedestal he is on in my eyes. He is the one that has to endure the embarrassment of these episodes when we are in public. Most of the episodes occur during worship services and help is readily available. After the excitement has died down then the questions start, "Can I get you anything? Are you feeling better?" That is love shining like a coat of armor! "However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). And I do!

--Vickie Counce

(This was written in tribute to Vickie's late husband, Kenneth, a few months before he was diagnosed with a brain tumor.)

