

pray . fast . give .



Living Lent | Day 19

Being Present...for Others

“Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the LORD delivers them in times of trouble.

The LORD protects and preserves them— they are counted among the blessed in the land— he does not give them over to the desire of their foes.

The LORD sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness.”

Psalm 41: 1-3 NIV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

It was December of my junior year in college. I was excited to be coming home for Christmas; I would have three full weeks to enjoy my family, friends, and church family in our small town. I was looking forward to all the traditions of celebrating the birth of our Savior. For our family, a focal point of the Christmas season was our church. Each week leading up to Christmas, we would sing Christmas carols and light the Advent Wreath. We would enjoy the sparkling lights of the Christmas tree. I would hear my Mom, our church organist and pianist, spending hours practicing for the Christmas Cantata, offered as a pinnacle of worship the Sunday prior to Christmas Day. I looked forward to attending Sunday School with the friends I grew up with in the Church. We had learned the Bible together, rode the church bus to the skating rink together, and recited Psalm 23 together each Sunday, as our class was called the Shepard Class. This particular year, Ms. Margie arranged for us to take Christmas gifts and food to a family in need in our hometown. We all met up at the Church, bringing our gifts, and pausing to pray before driving to see this family.

As we pulled up to their house, I got a lump in my throat. Their home was an old wooden frame house in very poor condition. Before we could get out of our cars, the mother opened the front door to welcome us! The family and children were dressed in mismatched clothes, old shoes, but welcomed us into their home with such love and joy. We shared our gifts with them and shared the ultimate story of Love and Hope.

I didn't anticipate what would happen next.

You see, my Dad had been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis a few weeks prior. After weeks of mysterious numbness, inability to button his shirt or hold a coffee cup, the doctors shared this diagnosis. On this Christmas, my parents were miles away seeking treatment, while I was home with my younger sister and brother. It was the first and only Christmas I have ever spent without my parents. As we were sharing our gifts and talking with the family, I had shared this information about my Dad.

I will never forget what happened next. The memory is as clear as bell to me. As we started to leave, Ms. Margie asked the family if we could all hold hands, stand in a circle, and allow us to pray together. As we stood there in a circle, holding hands, I looked down to the wooden floor as I was beginning to close my eyes. The floor was in poor shape, with the December cold air seeping up through the cracks. I got another lump in my throat, wondering if these children were warm at night. There in that prayer circle, we all offered a prayer of love and thanksgiving for each other. And then it happened. One of the children asked if she could say a prayer; she offered a prayer for "Danna's Daddy." It overwhelmed me then, and overwhelms me now to think about it. The selfless prayer of a child, one who had so little, blessed me in a way that I couldn't have expected. Additionally, the support our family received that Christmas from our entire community remains one of the most meaningful memories of Christmas for me. The Christmas that Jesus revealed His Pure and Perfect Gift of Love through others.

May you be blessed as you give expecting nothing in return, as I did on this Christmas years ago. And may you also allow yourself to receive the love, gratitude, and yes, even prayers from those you serve.

Challenge to Prayer and the Exercise of the Privilege of Generosity

As you pray and sacrifice throughout this Lenten Journey, will you take this opportunity to pay forward in generosity a gift of at least \$1 per day throughout the 40 days for the Children of Morningstar? It is a privilege and a blessing to give as we all look forward to Easter and the Resurrection.

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Contributor

Danna Demos, Charlotte, North Carolina, is a “part-time” Resident of St. Simons Island, Georgia, spending time there on a regular occasion in her family vacation home. After five years as a Senior Vice President with Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Danna took the newly created position as Division Executive for the Southeast region Financial Advisor Development Program, that she describes as a “dream opportunity” to build and execute a vision from scratch. Spending more and more time in Glynn County has allowed Danna the “dream opportunity” to witness first-hand additional opportunities to the reflections of this devotional by offering generous gifts to the Children of Morningstar-expecting nothing and being brought to her knees by the simple prayer of a child who “saw others” many years ago, listening, offering a simple prayer, and being present...to others.

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