

Challenged by Life...Powered by God

(Case Studies in Christian Challenges)

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This monthly series of case studies illustrate the challenges presented to us as Christians. Facing these common challenges is inevitable. How we respond to those challenges is what defines us as human beings and whether others observe and mimic or take notice and mock. It should be our desire as Christians to serve as that coveted example worth mimicking 100% of the time. See if this case study has presented similar decision points and challenges in your life. I would love to hear your reactions, thoughts and alternative approaches in the comments section below.

The Case of Handling Grief

Each of us at multiple times in our life has to face some type of personal grief. This could be a devastating injury, loss of a job, weather destroying a home or any number of things that cause stress in our lives. My personal experience recently is the loss of a loved one. In this case my Father In-Law. It does not matter what age of the deceased, location, expected or unexpected, there is still grief to be addressed.

Focus on the Blessing

Try not to focus on the negative aspect of the loss but on all of the positives that can be emphasized. Of course, you will have pain when you miss someone, attend an event they used to take you to, drive by the house where they live and know they are not there...that is all very natural. To minimize that pain, think about all of the blessings. In the case of my Father-In-Law he had 94 years on the earth, loved his children, accepted additions like me, lived close enough that we could share moments every week and passed away peacefully in his sleep without being attached to a machine in the impersonal setting of a hospital. All of these things we can be thankful for and are truly blessed.

Adjust to the New Normal

One thing that we all need to do in this time of grief is to begin to adjust to the "new normal." Life without a loved one is different. We don't actually get to see them but they can live on day to day with us through the memories and stories that they created while they were here. Don't be afraid to repeat those stories over and over so that you don't forget and that the generation behind us is aware. One of the classic stories of my Father-in-Law was when I was talking to him about the book I was reading about the hall of fame St. Louis Cardinals pitcher of the 1930's, Dizzy Dean. There was a complete chapter in the book about the day he struck out 17 Chicago Cubs in a game. He shared with me to my surprise that he was at the game. He was

visiting a relative who lived on the street car line in St. Louis. As a 9 year old boy, he hopped the street car (times have changed!) and saw 15 major league baseball games in 9 days including the St. Louis Cardinals and St. Louis Browns who shared the park and often played double headers. He shared some intricate details of the game that had happened over 80 years ago including the weather and some of Dizzy Dean's flamboyant "antics" on the mound. He often said that if the Cubs had won that day he might have ended up a Cub fan but since the Cardinals won, he was a Cardinal fan for life. I heard that story at least 100 times before his death and I promise it will not be the last time it is told!

Pass on the Blessing

Take every opportunity to pass on the blessings that your loved one has provided. Tell their stories, share the good traits and values they passed on and continue to perpetuate their influence while on earth, knowing that there is an afterlife meeting for all of us!

What are your thoughts?