

Family Joys Family Ministry Notes February 2009

Leaving off with Reverend Kohnke's January Family Ministry Notes, I submit this month's "Family Joys" by writing some of my own family and faith stories.

"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine,
You make me happy when skies are gray,
You'll never know Dears, how much I love you,
Please don't take my sunshine away."

In thinking of the above song, I'm immediately thrown back to the times years ago when I would take my nephews, Tyler and Zachary, to the Blank Park Zoo, the Des Moines Botanical Center, the Iowa State Fair, and other places that we wanted to explore. I would sing this to them on our journeys (safely driving of course!), many times hearing "Again, Denise, again!" Then: 3-10 years of age. Now: 28 and 24 years of age. Would I try to sing this to them in the future? You bet! (But probably not around their friends!) What I do now? I make sure that their seatbelts are fastened before they leave our driveway when they come to visit, and I make sure that I tell them that I love them when we're ending a phone call (and they do say it back).

One Christmas BZ (Before Zachary), Tyler helped me with decorating my tree and house and lastly with setting out the Nativity (on purpose). I put out the sheep, shepherds, camels, donkey, cow, angel, Wise Men, Mary and Joseph, but not Baby Jesus. Tyler insistently told me that I forgot Baby Jesus. "You can't forget Him!" I told him that Baby Jesus wasn't born yet and that I would add him on Christmas Day. He definitely reminded me to do that when that day came!

Before the age of two, Zachary was critically ill with a collapsed intestine, requiring three separate surgeries. When he took an unexpected downturn, he was baptized just prior to going into emergency surgery. I prayed for him and our family. He's fine now and has bragged over time about his big scar on his stomach (it was a "Show and Tell" feature once).

Tyler's and Zachary's birthdays are close to each other (in January and February) and for another adventure, they so wanted to see Amy Grant in concert as their birthday presents (at the time she had several secular Top 10 hits). Since I had purchased her newest album ahead of the concert we were able to sing, "Baby, Baby" together as we knew the words by heart. I told them at the time that I understood that she wrote this song when her youngest child was born and that I felt the same when they were born. They missed her song at the concert (as they both fell asleep just minutes before). We had a great time together.

For many years, I took them shopping for school clothes (before name brands were a peer/status symbol). One year Zachary pointed out the one thing that he didn't want me to buy anymore (they came in white, elastic banding at the waist).

When Zachary was in his junior year of high school and playing baseball, he had been accidentally hit in the eye by a pitch. While his parents were unable to attend this game due to their work schedules, their Grandpa Hines and I were there to quickly get him to the nearest hospital, which took only minutes. I prayed for calm and comfort for him and for his eyesight to return (it did).

When Tyler and Zachary graduated from high school, I gave them their senior pictures as my gift, accompanying them to their sittings. During each of their sittings, I wanted to have a picture taken with them too. With Tyler, we're lying on the floor, shoulder to shoulder; with Zachary, we're sitting back to back. When Tyler asked me when I graduated (20 years before him), he replied, "That's a LONG time ago!" We had a good laugh (as I agreed with him).

When we delivered Meals on Wheels this past Thanksgiving and Christmas Day (our seventh year as our own holiday tradition), I told them that I was truly blessed and proud of both of them.

While I may not have biological children of my own, as doting Aunt Denise I am blessed with children. Being a doting aunt or uncle or neighbor or godparent, you may just have some sunshine too!

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