

YOUTH SUNDAY WITNESS

by

Marie Chatfield

8:30 a.m. February 28, 2010

(Second Sunday of Lent)



ST. PAUL'S

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

5501 Main Street

Houston, Texas 77004-6917

713-528-0527

www.stpaulshouston.org

Lectionary Texts:

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; and Luke 13:31-35

You might not be able to tell just by looking at me, but I'm a bit of a country girl. From the time I was about seven, I've been blessed to have the opportunity of spending every summer with my grandparents on our ranch in the Texas Hill Country. From the end of May to the beginning of August, I can be found running around our property and nearby Garner State Park, where my grandparents first met and we still camp with all our friends every year. The time I've spent with my grandparents makes up some of my most valuable memories.

During my years at the ranch, my grandparents have taught me so much. My grandmother taught me how to bake homemade pies and bread, make pickles, can green beans, dry clothes on a clothesline, wash dishes in a sink, and survive a Texas summer in an ancient ranch house without air conditioning. My grandfather taught me how to ride a horse, drive a truck or tractor, feed cows, dust cows with 7-Dust, give cows shots, stack up square bales of hay in a barn, and do just about anything with a bumper-pull horse trailer. While all of these lessons are wonderful, the most important thing my grandparents taught me was how to be a Christian.

My grandparents were always early risers. Every morning, around five or six o'clock, they would wake up and put on some coffee, then sit at the kitchen table and read their devotions. They took turns reading, then they would pray. But be warned – this was no ordinary prayer – this was George and Diane's marathon prayer. My grandmother kept "the list," a piece of green paper with over 100 constantly updated names that they prayed for individually. They prayed the Five Finger Prayer. First, your thumbs – pray for those closest to you. Second, your index finger – pray for those who teach and heal. Next, your tallest finger – pray for those who lead. Then, your weakest finger – pray for the sick and broken. Last of all, your smallest finger – pray for yourself.

Listening to my grandparents pray for so many people by name before they asked God for anything for themselves humbled me. How many times had I started

out a prayer with “God, help me...” And here, my grandparents were focusing on others first. They showed me how to be a better Christian through their actions.

Whenever I hear the words “they’ll know we are Christians by our love,” I think of my grandparents. They truly showed love to everyone they met and never shied away from doing a good deed or helping out a stranger. They were hard workers, dependable and willing volunteers. Watching my grandparents donate countless hours of time to local non-profits, I witnessed first-hand evangelism. My grandparents truly took the church with them everywhere they went. They quietly did God’s work in the community, never seeking accolades or praise. They knew that their true reward awaited them in heaven.

The amazing faith and trust my grandparents had in the Lord inspires me. Seven years ago, my grandfather was diagnosed with a rare blood disease known as myelo fibrosis. For some reason, his bones stopped making blood. The disease was incurable, but my grandfather could live as long as he received regular blood transfusions. Throughout the diagnosis and treatment, my grandparents and their extended community of faith prayed. My grandparents never wavered in their faith. They did not grow angry with God, even when the doctors said that my grandfather only had two years to live. They merely trusted that the Lord would do what was best, and in His own time.

My grandfather lived past the initial two year mark, and, miraculously, his bones began to produce blood on their own again. His doctors were astounded. They didn’t know how he could go into an apparent remission, but my grandfather knew. He told them, “I had a lot of people praying for me.”

Unfortunately, the miracle was not to last. Two years ago, my grandfather stopped making blood. Back on the blood transfusions, his quality of life began to deteriorate. At the end of the summer, crippled by excruciating, constant pain, my grandfather was hospitalized. His myelo fibrosis had developed into leukemia.

By October, we knew the end was near. My grandfather, once the strongest man I ever knew, was bed-ridden, unable to keep food in his system, and too weak to move. My grandmother did everything for him, to the point of exhausting herself. I

remember the last time I visited his hospital room, when I spoon-fed my grandfather ice cubes and told him one last time how much I loved him. That Saturday, four days before my 17th birthday, my grandfather's spirit peacefully slipped away at 9:00 in the morning. The Lord finally called his beloved servant home.

When my sister and I got the call from my grandmother, my mother was out shopping for the birthday present my grandparents were to give me – this Bible. It was going to be one of the most special gifts they had ever given me, and it meant so much to all of us. And though my grandfather died before he could give it to me in person, my grandmother and I agreed that the Bible should be signed from both of them, to me.

This Bible is the last gift my grandparents gave me together, and it is my treasured possession because it so much more than bound pages. This Bible is a reminder of the love my grandparents and I shared, and still do. It is a comfort and a source of inspiration. This Bible represents to me all the treasures my grandparents have stored up in Heaven, and all the treasures I will store up if I follow in their footsteps.

In my Bible, the bookmark stays permanently on page 2051, on which can be found this verse: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). This scripture was used at my grandfather's memorial service, and it describes him and my grandmother perfectly. Whenever I miss him especially much, I recite this verse to myself, and it strengthens me. It reminds me of the wonderful relationships my grandfather and my grandmother had with God, the kind of relationship I can have if I just open my heart and do His will, like my grandparents did. And perhaps, one day, God will welcome me into Heaven with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant," as He greeted my grandfather and as He will surely greet my grandmother when she joins my grandfather. My grandparents will always be my biggest heroes, because of the love and faith they shared with me. I can only thank the Lord for allowing me so much time with my two guardian angels.