Coronavirus Social Distancing Daily Devotion #39

Keep Your Eye on the Big Picture

**Philippians 3:14 (NASB) *“****I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

Many years ago I had a Sunday School teacher who would quote this verse every Sunday. Guy Burnette was a wonderful man. So full of love and life. I remember him often when life is challenging. He will forever be etched in my memory as someone who helped me keep my eye on the bigger picture of life, so I won’t get bogged down in the details and frustrations of my day.

In fact, his message is so prominent in my mind that when our oldest son was in Ranger school, I would send that message to him. Ranger school is a very intense training that the Army puts a select group of solders through that entails three segments. There is the patrolling phase, the mountain phase and the swamp phase. Each of those phases is three weeks of rigorous training in various tactical maneuvers and education on how to be an elite solder. The biggest challenge, in my opinion, is that there is little sleep and very little food. As you know, those two things are critical to sustaining life.

I remember well how our son would talk about how hard it was to stay focused on his purpose for being there. Day upon day of trials and struggles would cause him to think about quitting. But to quit would mean he would forever regret the fact that if he just hung in there, he would get what he really wanted. As his father I wanted to encourage him to keep going, but I didn’t know what to do. We had little contact, only through letters. This was a helpless feeling.

The one thing that kept coming to mind was this verse. It was as if the Lord was reminding me so I could share it with him. So, in my letters, I began to share the statement with him, “Just keep your eye on the big picture”. I wasn’t sure it would help when all he wanted was rest and food. But when it was all over, he shared with me that he wrote that phrase on the underside of the brim of his hat. So every time he took off his hat, he would see it. He said it was that statement that help him most through the whole ordeal.

In these troubling days we can all get lost in the moment. It is so easy to get frustrated with each other and how uncertain everything seems. With the demands of family and everyone being stuck at home and job furloughs, etc. It is easy to get lost in the minutia of the day. While on the one hand it is good to focus on the day because the long-term can be overwhelming and draining. But don’t forget to keep your eye on the big picture.

Amid his struggles the Apostle Paul reminded the church in Philippi to keep pressing on toward the goal. What is the goal? To be Christlike and to enjoy all the benefits of knowing you belong to the God of all things and He has a plan to bring you to be with Him. It was this prize that Paul longed for and the prize that enabled him to endure his struggles. He also knew that he would not obtain the prize if he quit. If he turned to his flesh and followed the easy road, he would not receive his prize.

But none of that deterred him. He knew this life is temporary, just a passing blip on the radar. So, in the midst of his life-threatening events and challenges - of being hated by the people for whom he came to share the truth of salvation - he pressed on.

Dear ones, keep your eye on the big picture. The frustrations and all the things and people who discourage you are not to be compared to the glories that wait for us. Figuratively, etch on the undersides of your eyelids the message of God, “Press on”. When you find yourselves wanting to quit, in the most challenging moments, whether dealing with sickness or frustrations with people or keeping up with everyone in the house and the piles of laundry or even times of loneliness, keep your eye on the prize. When you cross the finish line, it will all be worth the struggles.