

MONDAY DEVOTION - OCTOBER 2, 2023

I'm sitting in a hospital room with my mom as I write this. My vibrant, youthful, healthy 84-year-old mom took a tumble using the automatic "foot wave" feature of her car to open the back for groceries. In classic mom style, her first thought was finding a substitute to fill her volunteer position at the Stewardship dinner-- gotta love a church lady! We spent last night in the ER awaiting an open room and now she is finally, peacefully, asleep.

It's scary when someone we love gets hurt. Immediately, without warning, we're thrust into high alert mode. We stop whatever it is we're doing at that moment, hop in our car, and get our loved one to where they can receive help. Emergency rooms are bright lights, lots of movement and absorbing information that is not part of normal everyday conversation. We feel the need to listen with acuity to make sure we don't miss a thing. We listen to every word hoping that we'll be able to accurately pass on the information to our families, and to understand enough to be called upon to make decisions regarding care. It feels like listening to the mechanic diagnose your car, but with much, much higher stakes. And all throughout, my brother and I were trying to act like it was all "no biggie" so our mom wouldn't pick up on our concern, and start to panic.

A doctor walked in all masked up, looked at me, and said "Hey! I think you baptized my daughter." And all of a sudden we were connected, in our faith and in our lives. She scooted right up next to my mom and listened like she was the only patient she'd had all night. She was brilliant, funny, and had my mom laughing so hard that all our cares seemed to disappear. My mom felt seen, heard, and cared for. She went from panicked to hopeful. That human "connect" made all the difference to her, and to our, peace of mind.

Ultimately, that's what we're all looking for isn't it? To be seen, to be heard, to be cared for. When we feel invisible, unheard, and dismissed, it can lead to all sorts of other problems. At work, at home, and out in the world. Those feelings soon give way to mistrust, closed up hearts, anger, loneliness, fear, feelings of disconnect and misunderstanding.

Life is busy, Emergency Rooms are busier. I learned a big lesson from that great doctor last night. Taking the time to connect, to truly listen and care, makes all the difference. It doesn't take much to do so, it just takes having a heart and a willingness to follow God's command to love one another as God has loved us.

I leave you with a gospel challenge for the week: Who has God placed in your path this week? Will you hurry on by, or take the time to truly look and listen and care?

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'
-John 21:15-18

-Pastor Hammersten