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40 Days to San Diego - "Generations"

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INTRODUCTION - We just finished a 40-day challenge, preparing our hearts and minds for our time together in San Diego this coming February, where we’ll continue to reflect on the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. But we have another 40 days until we meet together in February, so we wanted to start the year off with a second 40 day challenge, this one focusing on what we’ve learned from other generations.

As I thought about those that have influenced me the most, there are two people that stick out in my mind; two that walked this life for much longer than I who have incredible life stories and a love for Jesus that impacted me in ways I’m still learning about. I’d like to introduce you to the first one as we begin the next 40 days.

REFLECTION - She liked her toast like she liked her coffee, black. I never knew why until I took some time, in my teens, to learn more about her story.

Her name was Numa, and she never had it easy growing up. Born in the hills of the Appalachians in West Virginia, she married a coal miner named James who she was madly in love with and together the two would make the best with what little they had. Over the next five years, she gave birth to three children in the living room of a small shack, and raised the children while her husband was at work for 10-12-hour days. He’d come home covered in black dust from the mines, while she was often covered in flour from baking and...
chasing the kids around the house.

Sadly, 10 years into their marriage, James was in a mining accident and lost the use of his legs. This forced Numa to have to get a job in order to put food on the table because the monthly checks from the Coal Miner’s Association just weren’t enough to pay the bills. She literally walked two miles to work and back every day. About five years after the accident, James died from black lung because his body wasn’t strong enough to fight off the disease. Numa would never remarry; her love and devotion to James and her children wouldn’t allow for it.

It was in the shadow of this courageous woman from the south that I would be cared for, for she was my Grandmother (we called her Gram).

- Gram taught me how to love others with undying devotion (she died at the age of 85 and loved James to the very end) and with no strings attached (if I ever needed help, she was there no matter what I had done).
- She taught me manners; like standing up when someone older than you walks into a room so that they can have your seat, and eating the food you put on your plate, and asking to speak, and respecting your elders.
- She taught me how to treat women with love and respect, as she would often stay up at night to greet me after a date to drill me with questions, “Did you open her door? Take off her coat? Pull out her chair? Walk on the traffic side of the sidewalk (I remember questioning that one until she told me that I would be protecting the girl from oncoming traffic should anything happen…gruesome to think about but a good idea nevertheless)?
- She taught me faithfulness, loving me and holding on to me through my parents’ divorce and moving to the other side of the country, away from her family, so she could continue to keep watch over my brothers and me.

When I look back over the course of my life and think about where Jesus showed up, my Grandmother’s face looks back at me time and time again.

We have so much to learn from those that have walked before us, which is why I love listening to their stories and even worshipping with a multi-generational crowd like what we enjoy at the One project gatherings. If we would take the time to listen to one another, we just might gain some valuable wisdom in a culture that has lots of knowledge, but little idea of what to do with it. As Solomon wrote:

*My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice, and watching over the way of his saints.* *(Proverbs 2:1-8, ESV)*
Recalibrate

Here are a couple of questions to consider through your day:

1. Think of someone who taught you something about the Way of Jesus by how they lived their life and the role they played in yours. How could you take a moment today to honor them or thank them for making that kind of difference in your life?
2. Are you living your life in an intentional way today to be a picture of Jesus to someone else? If so, how? If not, what could you change today to get involved in someone else’s life to show them Jesus?

Send your thoughts, comments to Paddy McCoy.