

REFLECTIONS

June 25, 2006

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Renewals

The cemetery was as hot and dusty as I expected it to be. I wanted to visit Millie's grave since I had not been at her funeral service to honor her life. While we were there we also located Mike's resting place. I had not been to his grave in 48 years. Mike was a close friend whose life was suddenly taken only a few short weeks after we graduated from high school. The painful memories recalled the shock we were in, the fragility of life we stunningly realized, and the harshness of life we experienced ourselves as we lowered his casket into his grave. Gratefully though time has been kind. It has graciously dimmed the memories, and softened the pain.

But I did not go to my hometown in dusty northwest Texas to visit the cemetery and relive old pains. The occasion for my visit was the all-school reunion and the renewal with high school classmates and other friends from my roots. Our class has always felt a closeness, so every renewal begins as if we had seen each other only yesterday. We catch up on what has happened since we last met and we relive again the fun, the mischief, the pretty girls from other towns, and the jokes we played on our old teachers who really weren't as old as we thought they were then. The time together was uplifting and as we parted, our relationships were revitalized and our bonds strengthened.

As I reflected on those days with my friends, I also remembered and relived other important times in my life. One of those was church camp. I remembered my first year at camp and how close I felt to God and how inspiring it was as I joined many of the other campers in accepting Jesus Christ as my Savior. I never wanted to lose the closeness I felt to God that night. But time has dimmed that memory too, and softened the impact that those days had on my life.

I'm grateful that God allows time to dim our memories, and soften our pain as a way to heal our brokenness. But time dims and softens good memories too. That is why renewals are so important. Renewals rekindle our memories and revitalize our feelings.

Prayer is our renewal with God. Prayer is uplifting and through prayer our relationship is revitalized and our bond strengthened. When we pray continually, we discover that God is always there; and we find peace and joy no matter the circumstances.

"You are the light of the world."

Richard +

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Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at richard@reflectingthesavior.org.