



REFLECTIONS

August 26, 2012 from the Archives of January 16, 2005

**In the same way, let your light shine before men,
that they may see your good deeds and praise
your Father in heaven.**

Matthew 5:16

A Shining Light

He didn't know how he was going to touch my life that day, but I remember it as yesterday. His name was Richard, the same as mine, and he spoke of spending the day with his dying grandmother. "We told stories to each other, we laughed, we cried, and we hugged each other," he said. My face must have expressed surprise at the openness with which they were facing death because he leaned forward on his elbow and passionately replied, "You need to tell people how you feel about them while they're *alive*! Too often you see someone in the cemetery talking to the ground and it's too late then." He paused for a moment as if to reflect on his own words, then repeated them softly, "You need to tell them how you feel while they are *alive*." And he held on to that last word as only a Mississippi man could, and its weight and passion still ring in my ears today.

Since that day, I have told his story to others; but more importantly, I embraced his profound encouragement into my own life. I was so heartened by Richard's story that I made sure to tell my dad how much I loved him each time I saw him. Even with the suddenness of his death I knew that Daddy knew how I felt, and I knew how he felt too. Our relationship was complete; no words left unspoken, no feelings unexpressed. So when that final day had come, I grieved my loss, but felt at peace that nothing was left undone.

My times with Mom were attended much the same as she lived out her final days, and with the same sense of completion. I miss them dearly today; but I live with nothing left undone.

Richard was a shining light to me that day, and I praise God for the example he set. Because he shared his story with me, I was better able to say goodbye to those so very dear. Yet, he had no idea how he was touching my life back then.

He *certainly* didn't know how he might also be touching yours.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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