

What I Know to be True

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This past week has been a very thought provoking one for me. First of all, there was the series finale of my favorite television show—LOST. At the end of the final episode, the main characters have died and find themselves reunited with their loved ones in a church, ready to go on to the next phase, which we assume to be eternal life. I personally believe in a resurrection and an afterlife with my loved ones so the ending resonated with me. One of the things that really hit home with me was that we often wait until someone is gone to truly appreciate them. We can also fall into the trap of not appreciating the little blessings in our own lives as well until perhaps it's too late.

Another event that really made me think about life and death was that a dear friend lost her husband this past week. She and many others who loved him are looking forward to seeing him in the next life, but life goes on for my friend ... and for the rest of us. All of this has made me realize how each day is truly a precious gift from God and how I want to appreciate my own life and my loved ones before they're gone. More and more each day I'm recognizing what is truly important in life. They say that when someone is on their deathbed, what they want most is to see their loved ones. It's all about loving and being loved.

I was inspired to come up with a list of things I have found to be true in my life—perhaps they will ring true for you as well:

- ♥ **There is beauty all around us — just open your eyes!** Whether you're inside your house or out in God's creation, make a point of looking around you—both up close and personal and at a distance. Too often we can get trapped inside our head and not look at the beauty in our home, in the sky, all around us. Listen to the birds chirping, your children's laugh, your spouse's voice, and your own breath. Take it all in ... and treasure it.
- ♥ **Forgiveness helps you more than the other person.** Any time I have come to the place where I have been able to forgive someone who has hurt me I have felt such a sense of freedom. When you forgive someone, your burden is lifted. Only God can give ultimate forgiveness to us, but we can forgive each other for our weaknesses ... we ALL have them and need forgiveness!
- ♥ **God doesn't make mistakes.** That includes when you lost your job or even when someone dies. God is in control, and He really does know best. Any trial in my life — and I've had plenty of them — has only made me stronger. Tough times also enable us to be more empathetic to others who are going through similar trials. Don't forget — one of things that God didn't make a mistake at was making you who you are. You are precious in His sight, and He really does love you, whether you want to accept it or not.
- ♥ **It's ALL about love.** Love is everything in life. Anything that will give you lasting happiness involves love. We are called to love God and to love each other ... and that includes your enemies. It's often not easy to love others but, like forgiveness, it will be good for you. As the saying goes, "Love makes the world go around" — it really does!

- ♥ **There is always someone less fortunate than you.** Whenever we start whining about the little problems in our life, it's good to refocus ourselves and think about others less fortunate than us. It won't take you long to think of someone. There is always someone hungrier than you are, or sicker than you are, or who is more sad than you are. Reach out to them and help them. Then, keep going, and help someone else. Before you know it, you will feel better about your own woes.
- ♥ **Be childlike with wonder, not childish.** Remember what it was like to be a little kid and be amazed at so many things? As we get older, we sometimes can become jaded to how truly incredible God made the world in which we live. Next time you look up into the sky on a clear night and look up at the stars, really try to imagine how many stars you can see, knowing there are many, many more you can't see. Don't be childish—be childlike!
- ♥ **God wants a personal relationship with us.** The God in whom I trust is the almighty maker of the universe, the one who made the stars. He is all powerful and magnificent. Yet, I truly believe that He desires a relationship with me. Just like the humans He created, He desires love from me ... and you. He wants us to seek His presence by being in constant communication with Him. Have you talked with God lately?
- ♥ **Shine your light through the way you live.** Any of us who are Christians know that we are told we are to let our light shine to those around us, with the end result hopefully being that God will be glorified. When Christians think of shining their light, they often think of proclaiming the gospel. That is not the only way a person can shine his or her light, though. I personally think the best way to shine our light is through the way we live. Hopefully love is at the center of our lives, and we are spreading that love to those around us.
- ♥ **Jesus showed us the way.** Jesus is the ultimate example of the way we should live. If we are loving, kind, giving, helpful, merciful, and compassionate, we are doing what we can to follow the example of God's son, Jesus. Follow him in this life on the path to everlasting life. He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).
- ♥ **He who has the most toys doesn't win – it's not about the "stuff."** When someone is on their deathbed, they're not thinking about their "stuff" (well, I hope not anyway!). Over a lifetime we can accumulate SO much. What happens when we need to move into assisted living or a nursing home? Someone has to go through all of that stuff and determine what should be thrown away, given away, sold or kept. Why not start now before you get to that stage? Get rid of the stuff — it's people that are important, not things.
- ♥ **Surround yourself with positive people.** Speaking of people, it's best to surround yourself as much as possible with those who are positive, rather than negative. Negative people often do their best to drag a person down to their level. If you're not miserable, once you've heard their woes, you'll be feeling much worse than you did once you started talking with them. If you're around positive, upbeat people, you will feel more positive yourself and will probably even have more energy. As the song goes, "accentuate the positive!"

- ♥ **Be compassionate on those who are negative – they need love!** You cannot completely avoid being around negative people, at least every once in awhile. If you are around a negative person, have compassion on that person. Just imagine what it must be like to be down and/or worried all the time. Hopefully some of your positivity will bring them up, but if it doesn't, don't lose heart. It's not your responsibility to change them—just have compassion on them.
- ♥ **People can change, but you can't change them.** How many times have we heard this in theory and yet we keep trying to change others? You can't change anyone — that includes your spouse, your children, your friends, your boss, your co-workers, or anyone else. It is best to learn to accept people for who they are—"faults" and all. A person is who he or she is at that given moment. They may change tomorrow, but not today. We wouldn't want anyone to try to change us, would we? Then why do we try to change others? Just love them.
- ♥ **Death is part of life.** I know that's often hard to accept. It's natural for us to want to live forever — it's also natural for us to want our loved ones to stay with us forever. No matter how much we try to prolong our lives through better nutrition, exercise, etc., we are dying every day. It's just part of life. Our loved ones are dying too—ALL of them. If you, like me, have a hope of resurrection, we know this life is not the end. Death is like sleep, and our loved ones are simply waiting to be woken up by our Lord. Rest in Him—it's going to be OK.
- ♥ **There is a rainbow on the other side of the storm.** No matter how hard your life may be right now, it will get better. "Better" may not be the same as it was before, but it will be good. When you see the storm clearing, look up to the heavens—a rainbow will appear. Appreciate it when it comes and keep it fresh in your mind.
- ♥ **It's ALL good.** This is my husband's and my favorite saying. We even have a sign with those words on it over our fireplace where we can always see it. Everything in life is good, even those things that right now may seem "bad." We learn and grow from everything that happens in our life. The events and people that God bring into our life make us who we are, and who we are is loved by God. Acknowledge the love that God has given to you by being loving to others. You will be loved in return. Live, laugh, love — it's ALL good!