

Independent Living

When I was a teenager and even younger, I had no rules. The only one who actively looked over me was my youngest older brother. Bill instilled in me some do's and don'ts. He talked to me a lot about the choices I would have to make in life and the importance of an education. He knew it might be tough and he felt he had given up when he should have persevered. He had quit school on his 16th birthday as had my oldest brother. It wasn't that he was not smart but that he was self-conscious about the poverty we faced. Bill died at 17 on my 12th birthday of a Kidney Infection that turned into kidney failure and pneumonia before the advent of antibiotics and especially Penicillin. I was the first one in my family to graduate from High School and they all thought it was a fantasy that I would seek more education. After all a girl didn't need an education, just a husband. Somehow looking out for myself and making my own decisions was instilled in me at a young age whether through my brother or through reading (I read anything and everything), through teachers that I saw as role models starting in elementary school or because no one else ever gave me goals and so I developed my own. I know when faced with decisions I often would think about what Bill would say. I think this drove my mother nuts because I never sought her advice even though she loved to give it out but acted on my own. I also had mentors at church who helped me and listened to me and let me reach decisions that made me independent. Now I am much, much older and I find people telling me what they think I should do. I think I am smart enough and cognizant enough to run my own life. I listen because now I know that the people who are telling me these things love me and only want what is best for me, then I do what I want. I guess I haven't changed so much in 80 plus years. I have been thinking of giving up driving because I drove one day during rush hours and thought, "These people are crazy!" Dealing with people who are right on your bumper or those who are running lights is nerve racking, but I realize it is the norm and I need to avoid those times of the day when the crazies are out. I also do not drive at night unless absolutely necessary because the lights bother me especially when it's raining. I know I will pray for these decisions that I am faced with now just as I did when I was young. I will let God lead me and help me make up reasonable rules for myself. I know that God has given us different times in our lives, and we will with his help do what is best for ourselves and others during those times.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

Lord, we thank you for the gift of each day for this day and all the days you give us. Lord be with those who are hungry, may we feed them, be with those who are facing poverty and homelessness may we help them, be with those who mourn, may we comfort them, be with those who are facing illnesses, may they find help and kindness. Be with our church may it be your church and may we be the hands and feet of Jesus here in this place and in this time. Be with our Pastor bless his ministry and be with him and his family, be with our staff and leaders may they find your guidance and inspiration. We thank you for all things, the gift of your love, the gift of family both in the church and in those we love. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Grace Epperson