

The Loss of a Big Brother

This Sunday Pastor Don's sermon was on "Are you listening for it?" It was listening for the voice of God calling us. I was thinking about my devotional and what I would write about this week. As usual Pastor Don's sermon spoke to me. My brother Bill was a pivotal and great influence in my life. On my 12th birthday our family was awakened by a pounding at the door about midnight. It woke us all up and we realized it was a telegram. It was from the hospital in Balboa, Panama where my brother Bill was stationed. Bill had joined the Army at the age of 17 the previous year. He had had a furlough in April, and it was now June. I had missed him terribly. He was my support, the one I took my troubles to, the one who talked to me and encouraged me in school, the one I went to talk to about anything and everything. The telegram was from the doctors at an Army Hospital in Panama. It said that Bill was in critical condition. It urged my parents to seek a doctor that could explain what was happening. The next night there was another telegram. Bill had died. At first, I did not believe it and felt certain there was a mistake. Surely the one person I could depend on; the one person that loved me unconditionally could not be gone from my life. It took a few weeks for the glass covered casket to arrive and it was indeed my brother. My heart broke. I could not understand a God who would take that sweet, gentle soul. I prayed that I would die because I could not imagine a life without Bill. From then on, my nightly prayers were to be joined in death with Bill. In a few months I awakened one night and was very ill. I thought I was finally dying, and I went back to sleep comforted that I would join my brother. In the morning, I woke up and began to cry because I was still alive. Then I heard a voice, and it seemed to be Bill speaking to me and the voice told me that God wanted me to live. I called out to my mother and told her I was sick. The doctor came to the house and examined me, I had polio. I went on to recover with minimal damage and these days it takes a very old doctor to recognize the post-polio symptoms I still have. I was depressed for a long time and went from a straight A student to C's and D's and barely passing. I mourned for that big brother for a long time. I barely got through 7th and 8th grades but in 9th grade I began to pull myself up and by 11th grade I was again an A student, but I still missed Bill in my life. I missed him in the big things like graduations and marriage and babies and it saddened me because these were things he would never have. But God has a plan, and I know I will see that big brother again one day and meanwhile he lives in my heart.

Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear for I am with you do not be dismayed for I am your God; I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Lord, we thank you for the special people you put in our lives that love and support us. Please Lord be with those in our midst who grieve and those who are ill. Be with those going on the Mission trip to Africa, and those who contribute so much to make us a better church. A church that cares for people in need, the hungry, the poor, those that mourn, those who are suffering from the fires in the west, and those who have lost their homes from tornados and storms. May we remember always who we are as children of an awesome God. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson