

A Christmas Blessing

Speaking of family outings, we found a fun place weekends ago in Fort Wayne Indiana – it's an indoor ice skating place, and they have THREE ice rinks! But we didn't have time to try ice skating; our family was more interested in the bouncy castles. At \$5 / head from 1-4pm, it wasn't a bad deal. The only problem was that they had the bouncy castles in the ice arena area, and it was freezing in there! The kids were ok, but we weren't able to stay as long as we wanted, plus they were all frozen by the time we left. If they had just noted their arrangement on their website, we could have dressed for the occasion, but that's ok, it was still fun. After that, we had a delicious dinner at Golden Corral – YUM!

But something strange happened there – I was waiting for a man to finish at the buffet, and he apologized for taking so long (he wasn't) and then handed me a "Christmas blessing" on a folded up piece of paper. He was vague in the details; just mentioning 'Christmas Blessing', so I opened up the paper, and it was a copy of a newspaper article about the man's family – mainly his elderly mother. Looking at the picture in the article told me that the man who gave it to me was Raymond, whom you'll read about below. Although the article was from 1996, he mentioned that he was with his mother that day at the restaurant – she is doing well here in 2010, 14 years later! I find the family's story inspirational, and I thought I'd help the man spread his family's touching story – the story featuring his mother's boundless faith and he and his father finding Christ. Below is a copy of the article he gave me; I hope you find it inspirational reading on this very special holiday. Merry Christmas!

'She taught us by what she did'

Thanksgiving this year had a special glow for Arlene Berger, 74, and her family.

They gathered for the holiday meal in the new house the Flushing Township resident, severely brain-damaged in a 1994 traffic accident, shares with one of her sons, his wife, and two children.

Her house was built with funds from her accident settlement and her family is determined life will be as meaningful as possible for the woman left with physical as well as mental impairment.

Her progress has been awesome, as has been the help she's received from others, according to two of her five children.

Raymond, 47, the eldest of her four sons, and David, 32, the youngest, this week recounted details of their mother's accident and her life of righteousness.

With 15 years separating them, they hold different views of how their mother's faith affected them.

"I used to mock her; my other brothers did," Raymond said of his youth in Flint.

David said, "She was the most giving person, many of us thought to a fault. I remember a couple of times she didn't know how she was going to pay her bills, and when I asked her about how she had spent her money, she had given some to this person, some to that one."

Raymond concurred, "We thought she was being used. We told her there ain't no God and to quit giving everything away. But we weren't thinking like she was."

Their Bible-reading Baptist mother was living up to the passage: "Give, and it shall be given to you." (Luke 6:38)

"Now she's on the receiving end." said David. "Because of the way she was before the accident, people want to do for her."

Church members are showing up to care for her to a degree the family never could have imagined.

"She gave everything away her whole life, and now her kids all want her to have an enjoyable life," David said.

It was not just her older sons who derided her faith.

Raymond, a Flint truck plant employee, recalls his late father chasing ministers away from the door.

"He had been anti-religious. He worked and he drank. I didn't really know him until I was old enough to drink, old enough to go to the bars," Raymond said.

In 1981, their father had a massive heart attack. His wife's church prayed for him, and he survived to embrace salvation.

He lived the last two years of his life a Christian.

Raymond said he also has been saved, and has seen the difference faith has made in his life."That was a miracle," he said. "I never thought I'd see my dad in a church. I never thought I'd see myself in a church."

David, on the other hand, attended John R. Rice Baptist Academy in Davison and went on to graduate from a bible college. He teaches at Bridgeport Baptist Academy during the day and works at Delphi Saginaw Steering Systems at night.

He was the assistant pastor at Landmark Baptist Church, where his mother was headed Feb.24, 1994, when her car was hit in the driver's side by a Jeep Cherokee whose driver had run a red light, he said. He was notified that his mother had been taken to Hurley Medical Center, where she was in critical condition.

She underwent two emergency surgeries in short order.

A CAT scan showed 11 brain hemorrhages and blood on her brain stem, he said.

"She was in a coma the whole time," David said. "After three

months, the doctors told us she might not ever come out of it because of her age and the length of time since the accident."

Her children were told of the probability that she would never be able to walk, talk, or feed herself.

"Well, you ain't God," Raymond told them.

After three-and-a-half months at Hurley, she was moved to Riverbend Nursing Center in Grand Blanc, where she stunned David by allowing nurses to walk her in "baby steps" the first day.

She progressed out of the coma. Raymond remembered first noticing her fingers tapping to the inspirational music tapes her family supplied.

Raymond and David recall the times she responded with an "I love you, too" to each of them.

Arlene Berger received three months of therapy at Riverbend before transferring to McLaren Regional Medical Center to build skills she would need for living at home.

His brothers and sister back David up in caring for their mother, who lost her left eye and use of her left hand in the accident and now has an erratically functioning mind with an IQ of 90.

"A lot of people live for themselves, don't do for their kids. And then the kids don't do for them," David said. "She taught us by what she did."

Merry Christmas!

Merry Christmas! Happy holidays! Happy New Year!

Whatever you are celebrating this year, here's to hoping that it is safe, fun, and happy!



Merry Christmas from our family to yours!

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us"

about.”

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

– Luke 2:8-20 NIV

Merry Christmas!

I haven't really felt up to blogging lately (one of those major life change things – NOT one of the good ones and NOT something I'm going to discuss on a blog right now), but I couldn't let the holidays go by without sending good wishes to everyone (anyone?) who still reads my on-hiatus blog. Bear with me, I'll probably be back soon. Here's to hoping 2010 is better than 2009!

Have a very merry Christmas and a Wonderful New Year!

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:14

Merry Christmas!



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We hope this Christmas Blogcard finds you and yours happy, safe, and healthy. We want to thank all of you who thought of our family this year and sent us the wonderful Christmas cards. I was going to send out Christmas e-cards with pictures of the kids this year, but somehow time got away from me (somehow? I have 4 kids!) and wouldn't you know it – it's already Christmas and we never even got our family Christmas picture taken! So I gathered the kids, put them in front of the Christmas tree, and viola! Our family's 2008 version of Christmas cards, and this is the fastest way to make sure we sent our Christmas wishes before the holiday is over.

As for our family, 2008 was busy but great. The kids are doing wonderfully! Taylor just turned 9 and really likes 3rd grade. She loves to read and is a very talented artist.

Sammie is 4 and in preschool. She is learning to write her name and loves Barbies. Disney is 2 and still very sweet.

She loves to play with baby dolls and play-doh. Baby Christopher has learned to jump in his bouncy seat, and he loves to use his hands, especially to grab his toes. God Bless everyone and we wish you and your family a truly happy holiday season, as well as the rest of the year, of course! We are so lucky to have such wonderful friends and family! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Love,

Chris, Lisa, Taylor, Sammie, Disney, and Christopher