



LINKS PLAYERS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Links Players

A Thorn of Blessing

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials (James 1:2, NASB)

Golf—the sport of a lifetime. I could not have imagined, when I started playing this game three-quarters of a century ago, that I would continue to love what it represents.

And then add Jesus to the mix, along with eternal friends, and you begin to understand the value of this game. A case in point:

I recently received a note from a devotional reader I have never met. We are eternal brothers through Jesus, but we also discovered that we have much in common.

We have many mutual friends, and we both played golf at LSU. I played a few years earlier, but the Tiger bond is always there. His note revealed a beautiful story that connected us.

Jim is now a pastor in north Georgia, but he found Jesus in the dorm at LSU where we both lived. I missed Jesus during my time in college, but I now know He must have been there. I just wasn't looking.

Now, Jim's story. God has blessed his family with a daughter who has had Down syndrome for 32 years. After talking with Jim and learning more of their story, I now see this as a beautiful thorn of blessing—32 years of unconditional love.

This was part of his note to me:

“For some context, our oldest daughter, Abbie, lives with us. She is a precious, special-needs adult. She has Down syndrome. She's 32 years old. She has had many heart surgeries and other surgeries as well. She is a miracle. We were at Emory Hospital in Atlanta all day yesterday and received difficult news regarding her health prognosis for the days ahead. But she loves Jesus.”

“But she loves Jesus!” How awesome—and most important.

He went on to say, “And Abbie is a writer. Every week, she writes notes to people in our church who have prayer requests. She handwrites the notes and addresses them to all the people.”

I love that. I can only imagine the thrill of receiving one of those notes.

The devotional Jim responded to was “Where Are You Headed?” Both Jim and Abbie have already embraced the ultimate answer and know where they are headed forever. Oswald Chambers said,

“Death is God’s way of giving us life.” He is preparing that place for all of us who love Him. It is also God’s way of comforting us as we embrace the thorn down here.

Jim then reminded me of 3 John 4: “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”

Abbie walks in the truth.

Then, a month later, after another visit to Emory in Atlanta, I received this note from Jim:

“Then came the news that the doctors can do no more heart surgeries, and they are just making adjustments to keep her comfortable. Beyond that, we’re pursuing issues that will improve her quality of life. All in all, it seems to be a new normal. We’ll learn more as we move forward with her care team. Short of the Lord’s healing, we are just trusting Him and adjusting.”

“Trusting and adjusting.” Both qualities are sources of great blessing.

Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.” (John 13:7, NASB)

Hope! The Greek word for hope conveys assurance—a confident expectation. I think it also means experiencing the rich blessing of embracing the thorn during the winters of life, knowing that it will result in eternal roses.

Prayer: We remain grateful to a generous God who supplies more than we could ever imagine—even amid the thorns of life.

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