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Encouragement for Today

“Worth Dying For”

Glynnis Whitwer, Senior Editor – “P31 Woman Magazine,” Proverbs 31 Speaker Team Member

Key Verse:

Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (NIV)

Devotion:

Last fall, my 14-year-old son Josh, emailed me an article he found on a website. It was about a Christian in China who was persecuted to the point of death for his faith. There wasn't any personal note from my son, just the article. I read it, was moved and didn't think much else about it.

Several months later, a magazine arrived in the mail addressed to Josh. It was from the organization Voice of the Martyrs. I remembered the emailed article and connected the dots. Obviously, this website interested my son.

When Josh came home from school, I showed him the magazine and asked, “Why are you interested in this?” I thought perhaps he'd discussed it at youth group or Young Life.

Without a pause, and with sincerity shining from his young face, he answered, “I've always wanted to be a martyr.”

My heart started to thud and my insides twisted. This was not what I expected to hear. My mind raced frantically, trying to make sense of his answer. Surely, I reasoned, he doesn't know what a martyr is. Hoping my assumption was true, I asked “Do you know what a martyr is?”

“Yes,” he replied, “someone who's willing to die for his faith. I want that kind of faith.”

After recovering from the shock of his answer, and battling the fear of a mother's heart, God revealed something to me about my son's desire to be a martyr. It's not that my son wants to die, but that he's found something worth dying for.

At 14, Josh looks around him and sees people pursuing things that are meaningless. He's watched friends search for happiness in popularity, music, drinking, being rebellious and disrespectful. Even his young mind can tell none of these things are worth dying for.

But many years ago, my son met Jesus. And when he did, Josh discovered something that mattered ... Someone worth dying for.

I believe God's eyes roam the earth looking for a child of His whose faith burns in her chest ... who loves Jesus Christ with such passion, that sacrifice for His sake is an honor. The first believers were trained to suffer for Christ's sake, while many today are trained to be happy and comfortable in their faith.

The call is loud and clear – Jesus is worth living and dying for. Jesus is worth living life to the fullest. Jesus is worth dying to self-centered desires. Jesus is worth living as if every day could be our last. Jesus is worth dying to a life that is all about us.

Jesus is worth it all. Josh got this right. Do we?

My Prayer for Today:

Heavenly Father, thank You for bringing meaning and worth to my life. You are worthy of all I can offer. Help me when I focus more on receiving things from You, rather than giving back to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Application Steps:

Identify on a scale of one to 10 (with 10 being the highest) your level of commitment to your faith. In prayer, seek God's direction on how to increase your level of commitment to Him.

Reflection Points:

Read today's key verse, Philippians 1:21. What do you think Paul means when he says, "to live is Christ"?

How does Paul's view of life differ from those who aren't passionate about their faith in Jesus?

What difference does your personal faith in Jesus make in your attitude toward suffering?

Why is earthly success an empty victory?

How would God define victory in your life?

Power Verses:

Matthew 16:24-25, "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.'" (NIV)

Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (NIV)

Ecclesiastes 2:11, "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun." (NIV)

Hebrew 10:5-7, "Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, O God.'" (NIV)

Additional Resources:

Radically Obedient, Radically Blessed, by Lysa TerKeurst
http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_radicallyObedient.htm

Becoming A Woman Who Listens to God, by Sharon Jay nes
http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_becomingAWoman.htm

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