

Redeeming the Time



ANDREA JOHNSON/Editor

One summer when all four of our children still lived at home, I realized I needed a drastic attitude adjustment. All of the kids were in baseball or softball that season. From the moment we arrived at the ball fields, I was already looking forward to getting home, to finishing homework, to plopping down in bed. I was always looking forward to the end of whatever we were doing, whether it was church, Bible clubs, lessons, or school programs. I'm sure the busyness of our schedule had something to do with it, but in reality, I was wishing away a precious time in our lives. At one point it hit me, "And these are probably the 'easy' years. Next come the teen years – and driving!"

Since returning from a weeklong trip to Haiti the end of July, I've been battling health issues — C-diff (a bacteria in the intestines) and unrelenting headaches, which at first left me mostly in bed, shades drawn, due to light sensitivity. Eventually, a lumbar puncture revealed my headaches were caused by extremely low cerebrospinal fluid, the fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. (My poor brain was not being cushioned properly!) Medication has helped me function long enough to work, but I still can't be in an upright position or on the computer for long time periods.

A second attempt four days ago at an epidural blood patch, a procedure in which they injected my own blood into my spine in hopes that a clot would form and plug the hole, didn't work. I was discouraged to say the least.

How can I redeem the time? Live intentionally? I have little control over my life. As I write this, I'm working on a Christmas play for our Sunday

school kids. I can't even be certain I'll make it through a practice. If I do, I will "pay for it" with a severe headache. My own kids, in fear of exacerbating the headaches, try not to visit us often. Yet they know I would rather "die" than not see my children and grandkids at all.

I think I'm finally relearning my earlier lesson. I value greatly each thing I get to do when I am "upright." I don't take for granted hearing the Sunday school kids giggle, seeing their "cherubic" faces when they remember their lines. Or cuddling with my grandkids, watching the "babies" learn new words, hearing my three-year-old grandson pray for me to get well. If I died tomorrow there is nothing different I would rather have done with those moments. I'm also learning what it means to "wait" on the Lord.

Still I think of ladies I met in Haiti with health challenges much worse than mine. Years ago our host pastor's "adopted" mama allowed him to start a church in her home. Sadly she recently broke a hip in a fall. Without access to real medical care, she lay in a great deal of pain on the hard ground in her hut. Our group was able to provide limited pain medication and a foam mattress, for which she was grateful. Still, her future looks grim. Another lady, a former children's church worker, suffers from unexplained, painful blisters over her entire body.

I don't know how they "redeem their time," but judging from their pasts, they will find a way. When they stand before God, He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Life, at its longest, is short. One day we will all stand before God. And we will answer for how we spent this most precious of resources.

Andrea
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