



A Smile Made the Difference!

As my mom's dementia progressed and she lost interest in activities and relating with people I would cherish the times I could get a smile from her during my visits. Having a good connection with her, affirmed by that smile would make my day. We could still connect and have a relationship even as her dementia got worse. I dreaded the day that she might not recognize me or be able to give me that smile.

Then I think about God and my relationship with Him. I know Jesus died for my sins. I know my mom believed Jesus died for her sins. That is a faith we both have. My mom's smile confirmed the relationship she had with me. Does Jesus want the same in my relationship with Him? Does my smile back to Jesus mean as much to Jesus as my mom's smile meant to me? When I am burdened by the stress of caregiving, how can I give Jesus that smile?

When aids would come to help my mom, they would not get the smile that I received. It wasn't just anyone that got that smile. Her special smile was just for me. That smile was for one who was her child.

We have parents of children in our Christian Caregiver Support Group. Would the smile of their child mean as much to them as my mom's smile meant to me? The truth is that it probably means even more.

The smile is a sign of a close and loving relationship.

Birth certificates can be the evidence that defines such a relationship. A baptism certificate or confirmation certificate can be evidence of a Christian connection. But is it enough evidence to bring a smile to our face? Can a paper certificate or a picture of our baptism bring a smile to our loved one? No, the smile comes from more than a certificate. The smile is a sign of emotional, relational and verbal connection.

Did you ever think that just as I loved to see the smile on my moms face that Jesus loves to see that emotional, relational and verbal connection on our face? The smile that expresses our connection with Jesus.

Paul, in the book of Philippians, emphasizes strongly his encouragement for us to rejoice in the Lord. He repeats the word 'rejoice' twice. Paul's rejoicing is like smiling at Jesus. Paul knows that life can be hard as he reminds us not to be anxious about anything. Paul was an experienced sufferer. In 2 Corinthians 11:16 he reminds his readers he has been flogged five times, beaten with rods three times, once stoned, three times shipped wrecked, gone hungry, been without sleep, cold, naked, but he counts it all as sharing in the suffering of Christ. Paul could endure all this and still rejoice, plus encourage us to rejoice in our sufferings and the sufferings of our loved ones because he had seen the face of Jesus. Jesus brought joy to Paul. Paul had seen that great "smile" of Jesus. It is a relationship smile that Paul says goes beyond all understanding. It is a smile that brings peace to the soul.

Have you seen that smile from Jesus? Has it caused you to smile? Maybe it is a peace and joy that gives us strength for living because we know Jesus is with us.

My mom had a disease that made it harder and harder for her to relate. But when we connected, it was great and made my day. I hope that you are able to connect with Jesus, fix your eyes on Him and have a good connection. Perhaps then you will have something extra to share with your loved one because a renewed joy will fill your heart. May the joy of the Lord be your strength.