

Seeing beyond the disability to great possibility

TIM HUMPHRIES, JR.
RETIRED MINISTER

People tell us that life is full of days and years, but what we remember are those specific moments. We remember our first kiss. We remember watching a sunset that was so spectacular we just kept looking at it. We remember holding our child for the first time. We remember our first time to drive a car.

We remember moments because moments shape and mold us for all the days we will live beyond each moment.

I remember one such moment early in my ninth-grade year at Harrison County High School. The speech teacher, Bruce Florence, pulled me out of class one day asking me to come with her to her classroom. I followed her down the hall. I followed her into her classroom. She offered me a seat, and I sat down.

All I knew about Bruce on that day was that she was a teacher. She mentioned to me that she had been playing Bridge recently with a few of my teachers and asked them to suggest students she could then invite to be part of the speech team. She was playing Bridge with Rita Price, Sally Kinney, and Phyllis Wyles. Bruce explained further that one of them had mentioned, "Tim Humphries," and the other two agreed.

Phyllis Wyles was my French teacher. My caregiver asked me today if I could still speak any French. I replied in French, "I am Tim Humphries" and then confessed that was all I can remember.

Sally Kinney was my English teacher. When my caregiver asked, "How did you do in English?" I replied, "You are the one writing down what I am saying."

Rita Price was my math teacher. I took her classes throughout high school, including calculus. Please don't mention this to my caregiver, but I noticed he did not ask me if I still knew any math. I guess he did not take Calculus.

Back to Bruce Florence and her classroom. She mentioned that she wanted me to join the speech team, specifically the extemporaneous team.

People could look at me walk to the podium and recognize that I was handicapped. I did not want to draw attention to myself. I wanted to stay in the background.

But Bruce continued making her pitch. She seemed to want me up front at the podium presenting my ideas. I did not understand that well. I had no interest in being up front speaking to people. I could not imagine myself in a debate. I wanted no part of extemporaneous speaking.

She told me about the possibilities to travel to competitions. If I did well, I could travel throughout Kentucky for various tournaments. Bruce told me about a regional event held in Gatlinburg every February. That hooked my attention.

Then she continued that if I did well at those levels, I could even travel to national competitions. I began to dream about being in Las Vegas, New York, Chicago, Kansas City, Miami, Dallas,

Seattle, and maybe even Los Angeles.

Just for the record I did qualify for the Nationals my senior year and got to travel across the state line all the way to Cincinnati, Ohio.

Bruce taught speech and the various media classes. I later took her speech classes, and today I enjoy telling people that Bruce Florence is one of my most favorite people on earth. Please let me tell you a little more.

Many years later, after ten years in the pastoral ministry, I had another conversation with Bruce. I shared with her about how she shaped me in preparation for God's calling on my life to serve as a pastor. Every detail of my ministry, I could trace the development back to Bruce Florence. I shared that with her, and I now share that with you ... but it doesn't stop there.

You see, not only did Bruce shape me for God's call on my life, I now understand what Bruce did that made her such a rare gem.

Most people I interact with draw attention to my Cerebral Palsy or now my Multiple Sclerosis. They focus on my disability.

Bruce did the exact opposite.

Instead of focusing on my disabilities and helping me "cope" with them, Bruce saw the abilities that I do have.

Somehow, she recognized my aptitude for math and realized I could sequence a logical thought from start to finish. I could point out the discrepancies in another person's logical sequence. With mathematical precision, I could extem-

poraneously prepare a message that could walk a person step by step to agree with my position.

Instead of pointing to what I did not possess, Bruce pointed to what I did possess, and she was determined to give her life in part to making sure I developed the skills I did possess. You see, there are three verses in the Bible that tell me this is exactly what happened. "I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD."

(Jeremiah 29:11) "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:14) "Before I formed you in your mother's womb I knew you. Before you were born I set you apart. I appointed you as a prophet." (Jeremiah 1:5)

God knew me before He made me in my mother's womb. God made me fearfully and wonderfully. And because God created me with His own hand, He knows the plans He has laid out for me.

My caregiver has a favorite quote from John Wesley, "Pray as if everything depends upon God. Work as if everything depends upon you. At the end of the day, you will be amazed at what you and God have done together."

Instead of looking around, depressed and discouraged at what I do not have, Bruce took these three foundational circumstances from God and helped me develop the life God designed me to live. And because of that, I will be grateful forever to Bruce Florence and to God for working together to develop me for my life's purpose.

A coffee kind of friend

BY NANCY KENNEDY
GRACE NOTES

One day last week, I ran into a woman from my church in Walmart.

She had "the look." As the mom of a teenager, her face said what her words couldn't: "What happened to my child — what happened to me? I used to be smart; I used to be competent, and now I can't do anything right. I even breathe wrong. Just ask my kid."

I hugged her and said, "Oh! It gets worse. But then it gets better!"

Since then, I've been thinking a lot about her and how I can actually be a friend to her in these next few years. Truthfully, I am woefully lacking in friendship skills.

Years ago, when I was having a particularly difficult time with one of my then-teenage daughters, I had a friend, an older woman, who kept my feet to the fire.

She knew of my tendency, my first instinct, to do nothing, to hide and just wish away any unpleasantness.

It's a skill I learned in

childhood to ignore things and hope they go away and call that "doing something."

But this friend would NOT let me do nothing. She forced me to do the hard things, to not be a weenie, to draw boundaries and not waver.

I hated her, but I loved her for it. She was a true friend who walked with me and helped me bear my burden. With her, I could fall apart and then gather courage.

Sometimes living with a teenager is like engaging in guerilla warfare, dodging sniper fire.

At least it feels like that sometimes.

I needed that older friend. Her tough love came from experience, not judgement.

But I also needed the friends who didn't have any advice because they were in the trenches with me.

Those friends let me know that I wasn't alone.

I love how C.S. Lewis explains friendship as "the moment when one person says to another, 'What! You, too? I thought I was the only one.'"

There's something so

SEE COFFEE/PAGE B7



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The City of Cynthiana is accepting sealed bids for a building and lot located at 139 East Pike Street, Cynthiana, Kentucky. The PVA parcel number is #103-1021-012-00-000. The purchaser will receive a Special Warranty deed. Closing to occur within 45 days from bid acceptance. All closing costs to be paid in the customary manner. Purchaser will pay all 2026 property taxes. Sealed bids to be submitted to the City Clerk at 141 East Pike Street, Cynthiana, Kentucky 41031 to be received no later than 1:00 p.m. on

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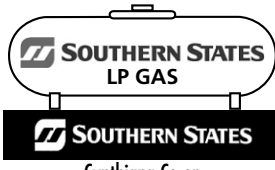
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