



Laura & Briella at the Washington National Monument

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Content

Jake,
Briella & Jeana
Downtown D.C.



Kyle (middle) & all of the guides in Chicago

New Law New Perspective

Written By
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Have you ever spent quality time dwelling in the past? The past of our country, the past of a loved one, the past of your family? Due to a few key events, I've lingered in all three of these—learning, grieving and smiling much in memories of what used to be.

It began at 3am on July 7 as my daughter, Briella, and I boarded a coach bus along with many of her classmates from Byron High School, several parents, and a few chaperones—a total of four buses and 190 people! We were Washington, D.C. bound but would be making stops along the way. I had anticipated the trip being great but never expected that a few special people would make it extraordinary. Nor did I realize the depth and breadth of how it would affect me on so many levels.

A few hours into our trip, Laura (special person No.1), a history teacher/tour guide, came onto our bus with energy, a contagious smile and an incredible passion for history. She took a bus full of tired teens and parents into the past as she brought history to life—complete with engaging stories, videos, dress-up clothing and a rule of no headphones or cell phones. Because of this, we were all fully present as she spoke of past heroes, presidents and wars. My daughter and I learned more in a week with Laura than either of us did in all of our past history classes combined.

As we all sang “On the Road Again” by Willie Nelson and “I’ve Been Everywhere” by Hank Snow, it would be a theme of our trip as we traveled through six states, making stops at the Shedd Aquarium, University of Notre Dame, Appalachian Mountains, Gettysburg, Monticello (Thomas Jefferson’s home), National Museum of the Marine Corps, U.S. Capital and memorials of Thomas Jefferson, FDR, Martin Luther King Jr., Korean War and Lincoln, Arlington National Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Iwo Jima Marine Memorial, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Mount Vernon (George Washington’s home), river cruise on the Potomac, Vietnam Wall, WWII Memorial, Holocaust Memorial Museum and various National Museums in DC.

Kyle Finney (special person No. 2), is a Byron history teacher and the organizer of the D.C. trip—this was his 17th year. Over time he has tweaked the schedule, stops and events for the best experience and meaning—even taking out the long lines of the Willis Tower in the past and replacing our time in Chicago with the Shedd Aquarium this year—a great and memorable addition!

But the experience I will remember most is the candlelight ceremony he led at the end of our evening monument walkin Gettysburg. When the first candle was lit, each person in attendance, in circular formation, had the opportunity to name a loved one who served in the military. The second candle represented current servicemen and women who were also named by many in the group. And the third stood for future military members. If you were part of such a ceremony, whom would you honor like this? Write their name on this paper—let’s take a moment to honor them. How about you? Are you a veteran or currently serving in our military? Then please write your name down. On behalf of our great country, thank you for your service!

That ceremony for me was an incredible time of reflection and honor—and maybe a little bit more as I spoke with tears in my eyes and a pit in my throat, “I’d like to honor my dad, Ronald James Stanley, who served in the Army and fought in the Vietnam war”. With his passing just weeks prior to this, it was a precious time of remembrance. I also got to honor my son, Jacob Daniel Babcock, currently serving in the U.S. Marines. What’s more, Jake (special person No. 3) worked it out in his schedule to meet up with us during our last day in D.C.! Taking in a museum and having lunch with him was such an incredible way to round out an amazing trip!

From D.C., Briella and I flew to Portland, Oregon for my dad’s memorial service. Dwelling in the past continued as we watched the photo/music presentation my step-sister, Ariann, put together of my dad’s life. Then, a week later, I spent even more time remembering the past as my family watched home movies together.

As I have lingered over so much of the past these last few weeks, I am a changed person—having a deeper knowledge of our past presidents, having an even greater respect for the many men and women who have fought for our country and our freedom, having a different insight into my father’s life and the ones he loved, and having a more grateful heart for the blessings of my past and present.

After seeing the effect of how each of us can impact other’s lives—in big and small ways- it’s also made me ponder my life in new ways. With the hardships I have endured and grown from and the blessings I have received, how can I use them to impact others in positive ways? How are you doing this in your life? What legacy are you leaving? Are you living your life in a way that is honorable?

Have you ever pondered these questions? I’ve thought a lot about death and legacies lately. I’ve wondered, if I were to die tomorrow, what legacy will I leave behind? Perhaps it might be shown by the obituary my family would write on my behalf. Have you ever wondered what yours might say? Are you living a life that is good and others focused? Is it pleasing to the Lord? Do you use your gifts and talents to bless others and allow the blessings you’ve been given flow through you to others? If someone else wrote your obituary today, would it align with what you hope it would say? Would it reflect goodness?

Let’s go a bit deeper. Is the life you are living outwardly the same life you are living inwardly? I’ve pondered this perspective recently as well, wondering, if I were to die tomorrow, do the hidden things in my life reflect who I am to others externally? If my friends or family were to take a look at my hidden places—from physical things in my closet or drawers to the digital life of my cell phone and other personal devices—would it reveal a different me than I would like? Would they be thrilled with what they find—leaving an even greater legacy showing that I practiced what I preached and lived honorably? Or would they be devastated by what is hidden? Have you ever considered any of this?

If you are healthy and live your life fairly safely, the odds are pretty low that you’ll die tomorrow. So maybe these are not things

you’ve ever pondered. But what about the way other people’s choices might increase your chances of a shortened life? What if someone chooses to drive unsafely, either by not keeping the safety systems of their vehicle in good health or by not obeying the traffic laws designed for everyone’s safety?

Do you stay up to date with laws to make sure you are being a responsible motorist, and do you understand the severity of what can happen if you aren’t? In a split second, you can greatly affect your life, the life of the people traveling with you, and/or others on the roadways. That’s a pretty big negative impact and a pretty devastating legacy. Can you imagine how you might feel if you caused the death of another human because of your irresponsible choices?

Oftentimes, laws need to be created to deter us from making bad decisions. Today, a new law has gone into effect: the Hands-Free Law. Have you heard about it yet? Many people I have spoken to have not, so perhaps as I weave it into this article, more people will be aware and hopefully many more will understand the negative results of not adhering to it (which are far more than an expensive ticket).

Cell phone use and other distractions are responsible for one-fourth of crashes and one-fifth of fatalities there are people who were not planning on dying—either using their cell phone or victims of somebody else using a cell phone. It has been proven that this number is significantly decreased in the states that have adopted a hands-free law—now including Minnesota!

Jennifer Schleck, Southeast Minnesota TZD (Toward Zero Deaths) coordinator, is passionate about safe driving and has passed along the following helpful information about this law.

The Hands-Free Law allows drivers over 18 to:

- Use the phone while driving, but only in hands-free mode.
- Text – but only in hands-free or voice-activated mode.
- Use the phone as a GPS – but only in hands-free or voice-activated mode.
- Listen to music or podcast – but only in hands-free or voice-activated mode.
- Use the phone hand-held or hands-free in case of emergency ONLY IF there is an immediate threat to life and safety.

Here are some DOs and DON’Ts to remember:

- DO use your phone in hands-free, one-touch or voice-activated mode for calls, texts, navigation, music, and podcasts.

- DON’T compose or read texts or emails; make video calls, play games, look at videos or anything else that requires to hold your cell phone.

- DON’T type or scroll while driving or part of traffic – that includes when you’re at a stoplight or stop sign.

- DO take steps now to make sure you know how to adapt your device and your vehicle to hands-free use.

Need to adapt your phone to be hands-free compatible? Here’s what to do:

- Pair your device with your vehicle’s Bluetooth system.
- Use an AUX cable to connect your device’s earphone jack to your vehicle’s AUX jack or use a tape player
- Purchase a holder that clips to the dash, vent or cup holder
- Use a single earbud (using both earbuds is illegal).

For more information about the Hands-Free Law visit HandsFreeMN.org.

What might you glean from what I’ve shared with you during my time of dwelling in the past and pondering legacies? How might you think of things differently or make changes in your life so that the legacy you leave behind might roll into many future generations? Will you practice what you preach and allow your hidden places to be a true reflection of who you are? What might you need to clean up or delete out of your life to make this happen? If who you are now is not who you’d like to be, will you consider learning to become the person you want to be? Will you use your gifts and talents to honor God? Will you allow the blessings you have been given to flow through you to others? Will you do your part to keep the roadways safe—by keeping a healthy car and abiding by the rules of the road so that you are not the reason for the death of another?

I encourage each of you to consider dwelling in the past for a while—it will be a time of tears, laughter, learning, reflection, and growth. It is in those moments, as you take time to slow down and ponder, that you will learn the answer to the questions I’ve asked here and to really be truthful with yourself. Likely it will give you a new perspective and make you a better spouse, parent, friend, grandparent, person. And in the end, you will leave a legacy to be proud of.

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