

Discernment With Curveballs



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Can you believe that school has started and autumn is almost here? Where did the summer go? With the harsh winter, late release from school (not until almost mid-June for our area), an extra rainy June and July and then having to start thinking about school resuming in August, it seems that we were somehow cheated out of a full-fledged summer. Would you agree?

Have your children or grandchildren started back to school or college? Is it a time of celebration with anticipation of more structure and less chaos? Or do you dread this season? When my kids head back I become a blubbing sentimental mess—amazed that their childhood has gone so fast, making the things other moms used to say to me when my kids were small seem very true—“enjoy every moment for they will be gone before you know it.”

This is the time of “before you know it” for me. My oldest son, Jake, now 26, hung up his Marine uniform after eight years of service and is now attending Columbia University in New York pursuing a political science degree. My second oldest, Jayden (mechanical engineering major) is in his sophomore year at Illinois Tech in Chicago. My youngest son, Jace (almost 17) should be a junior but threw a curveball at us this summer—so let’s come back to him. And my daughter, Briella, is a sophomore at Byron High School.

Have you ever had plans in your head in the way things are “supposed to go” and then, “BAM!”, an unexpected curveball comes flying at you? This is what happened to us recently.

Jace goes to Wyoming every summer to take care of his grandparents’ property (in exchange for grandma love, room, and excellent board) and work for his cousin Alex’s lawn care and landscaping business. In July, I received a text from him indicating that he would like to finish high school online and stay in Wyoming. If you are a parent, how would you have responded to this and what emotions would you be feeling? Truth be told, I was devastated. I felt like I had just been socked in the stomach, that I was losing my boy, and that he had chosen everyone there over his family here. I was completely unprepared for such a request. So I did what any normal mom would do. I cried—the ugly, heartbroken cry. And then I prayed and soon realized that as his parents, his dad and I had a say in what was to be.

We have a responsibility to guide Jace in the way he should go and not just in the way he wants to go. We have to weigh the pros and cons, evaluate every angle, have conversations and ask questions. We needed to hear and understand him and also give him the opportunity to respect and understand us. It has been a great time of learning, discovery, compromise, growth, and closeness in our relationship. Long story short—Jace is a junior who will earn his degree from an amazing online school and his schoolhouse is in our home.

I have learned in life that curveballs are opportunities for growth—both in how we respond to them and how we follow through on the swing. When you can’t control the balls that are thrown your way, do you succeed in how you respond to them? And then do you hit them well by using the tools you have, wise advice from others, your own discernment and common sense?

There have been times over the years of auto-shop ownership that I have been appalled at decisions people have made. Not in a way of being upset that a customer will not do preventative maintenance recommended for their vehicle—although I am passionate about it because I have seen the benefits and longevity it brings. Not in the way of being perturbed that a customer didn’t authorize a non-safety repair we recommend. I completely understand we all have different budgets, different priorities, and different perspectives. Certainly, it is the motorist’s decision to approve or disapprove a service based on all of these things.

But my jaw absolutely drops when someone makes a decision to not fix their vehicle when safety is at risk—either theirs, loved ones riding with them or others on the roadways. In Minnesota, this decision is solely up to the owner of the vehicle as opposed to many other states who require passing regular safety inspections.

How do you feel about this? Are you glad to not have restrictions or have your time consumed by getting a yearly safety

inspection and then getting hit with a curveball when you find that you’ll have to get something repaired in order to keep driving that vehicle? Or would you like our state to adopt a requirement like this so that everyone is held accountable to be safe on the roads?

If you are a responsible motorist, you may not know the depth and breadth of this problem that I see all too often—either not fixing a safety issue or only fixing part of the issue. The most glaring safety issues that are rejected by consumers are those associated with the suspension (including tires and alignments) and the braking system (with many components—not just pads and rotors as many think).

There are other innocent times when the motorists just may not know there is a problem—even something as small as a headlight or brake light being out. This is not a jaw-dropping moment in an urgent concern for safety, but it may be a light-bulb moment in seeing and being seen!

As we fall into autumn, let us play ball well. We may not be legally required to keep our vehicles safe, but let’s be good team players and do it anyway with regular safety inspections and awareness of what is needed in the future as well as timely repairs in what is needed now. Let us also be prepared for the curveballs in life—embrace the growth they offer, swing and follow through with love and passion that will bless others on your team as well as your opponents.