

The Martin and Gracia Burnham Foundation

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Reflections



May 27th marks the 20th Anniversary of our being kidnapped by the Abu Sayyaf. In this letter, I thought you might like to hear from my children: Jeff, Mindy and Zach. They are among those who have "suffered for the sake of the Gospel". I hope their stories will encourage you as they have encouraged me.

Gracia

Twenty years ago I was a pre-teen who cared about little else than friends and climbing trees. I still played make believe and had just started my own garden.

It feels enormously complicated to try and sum up my life since my parents were taken hostage in the Philippines and we were uprooted and our lives turned upside down. It's like I'm digging up fossils as I try and explain it. I think the thing I most want to tell people is how faithful God has been to me these past 20 years.

I was at a women's event recently where the speaker talked about the loss of her dad when she was young and how it felt like she was robbed of him. Every major life event felt less special without him and at every celebration there is still heartache thinking he should be there. As I look back on these last 20 years without my dad I can honestly say I don't feel that way. I miss him so much, yes, but I feel like there has been such a huge comfort given to me and a joy that has continued to keep me going forward and not looking back. I never have felt robbed of his presence or the lack of him at any major event. I am sure he is where he should be.

I think I can contribute some of that peace to the fact that my dad truly lived his life well. He excelled in many things. He was a great friend, he enjoyed his family, he cared about the things we as kids were interested in, he took us on vacation and he prioritized his time with us. I'm sure I'm seeing him through an 11-year-old's eyes but I'm positive not even most 11-year-olds can have such amazing memories of their dad. He truly worked hard at loving his family and the memories I have of him are very dear because of it. He always walked in the house and greeted me with a song. On his way home from work he always tossed his leftover coffee into the bushes. He worked so hard to learn the guitar and I only remember him mastering one song. But I re-

member his effort to get it right.

I have so many amazing memories that I can't help but think somehow he knew he had to work harder because his time would be shorter. I'm so grateful that when a new life event happens I can have such a confident peace and there is no thought of anger or loss. My feelings remind me of that verse, Isaiah 26:3 "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you." Trusting God has become a practice in my life and I see the fruit of it.

There is no explanation to how I feel other than my continued trust that this is God's plan and I feel His presence every time I start to miss my dad. I'm so grateful for the memories Dad gave us and the legacy he built. I pray that my own family will see the fruit of his effort as we live our lives and build our own legacy. Thank you for your faithful prayers for me and my family. I am confident God has used them to build my faith and perseverance.

Mindy



Left to
right:

Daphne

Andy

Felix

Mindy

Lottie

Reflections (cont.)

Twenty years ago seems like such a long time but I still remember the day like it was yesterday. I knew what the news was. This was a death sentence for my parents. Yes, sometimes hostages were rescued or escaped but I knew it was unlikely. I knew I would never see my parents again. Even with that knowledge, I don't think I grasped the situation in all its fullness. I certainly didn't know the scope of what was happening and I could not have grasped how good God was going to be.

The death sentence that had been placed on my parents' heads was removed for one of them. I got to grow up with my mother; and not just any mother but a mother who wasn't bitter about the lot God had handed her. I got to see God's hand work directly in the lives of those men who, by all accounts, I should have hated but couldn't, by God's grace. I got to see how God was able to use my family's story to encourage so many other families who were struggling with a hardship.

Some people would say I was lucky. Others would say the exact opposite. But all I can think is that I was

blessed by a faithful God who was willing to show me that the pruning He was doing in my life, the plucking, the pulling, the cutting, was producing fruit which would have an eternal value.

I can only say thank you to all those who prayed for us during that time and continue to do so. It is only by God's grace that I have grown into the man I am today—striving to be more like Jesus and telling my story about the goodness of an all-powerful God who used our family to bring about His kingdom.

Zach



Mallory
Zach

There was a song we used to sing when I was a kid growing up in the Philippines. "Jehovah Jireh, my provider, his grace is sufficient for me". I can't say I fully grasped the depth of truth in that incredibly simple, yet powerful, song before I was faced with the events my family went through in 2001. With the initial trauma of my parents kidnapping, and the culmination of losing my dad at such a young age, I had a lot of pain to sort through in my heart. But the beauty of our God is that His grace can match the emptiness we feel in our hearts. He has promised to provide for our needs, even when we don't necessarily even know what those needs are! I've seen God pour out His grace, provision, and love into my life and the life of my family over the past few decades in ways I never could have imag-

ined. What a blessing to have the opportunity to bear witness to what God can do in and through our lives despite the circumstances we walk through! His grace is sufficient for me.

Jeff

(Back row L to R)

Tristan

Jeff

Sarah

(Front row L to R)

Noah

(holding Bun Bun)

Kaitlyn

Vanessa



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