

By Jim Langham

There are certain times when I can still hear my parents' voices, even though they have been gone for many years, very special moments representing certain traits I continue to admire in them.

One of those times occurred at the conclusion of meal time at our house as I was growing up. As we got up and walked away from the table, my dad would always say, "Elnora, thank you for the wonderful meal." He was always grateful to people who had put forth an effort that translated into some gift to him. It is a trait that I have sought to carry on in our generational living.

But it wasn't only my dad who was thoughtful in saying "thank you." Anyone that did what was considered a favor or special deed for my mother received a beautiful, personally chosen thank you card for their efforts. Still, occasionally when I am sorting through things, I find a worn but beautiful thank you card from my mother. Just recently someone in my hometown told me that they will never forget my mother's thank you and encouragement cards. This past week, one fell out of some cards I was sorting through, complete with her special words and artistic hand writing.

Years ago, I was so touched by an article that appeared in a Fort Wayne newspaper that I clipped the article and saved it in a place not far from my reach.

The article describes how a chaplain at a city hospital returned to his office and discovered on his desk a beautiful ring with a note taped to it. The note stated, "I'm leaving this ring for the work of the Lord. It has a pretty good value so you can decide what to ask for it."

The note then explained to the chaplain that he was being given the ring and trusted with it because, "Jesus saved my little boy." It was signed, "A thankful mother."

The chaplain, who was stunned, said that in 25 years of ministry, he had never been given a donation in such a fashion. After having it appraised, he appropriately decided that the donation was going to be used to furnish the pediatric waiting room at the hospital.

As I read this article, my heart just melted. Sometimes I am concerned because it seems like the art of saying heartfelt “thank you” is less evident today than it was at one time. There seems to be more of a sense of entitlement focused from a sense of expectation rather than gratefulness for the sacrifice made in giving.

I tried to imagine what motivated this grateful mother and the feeling behind the gratefulness behind the apparent restoration of her child. I realized that she was a humble example of the one person (out of 10) in the Bible who returned to thank Jesus for His healing from leprosy.

Ironically, just minutes before I typed this column, I discovered a special “thank you” on Facebook. It involved a young man passing at an early age. A group of his class members sent a bouquet of flowers in his honor to the family.

Several days after the memorial service, his parents sent a very meaningful heartfelt note to one of the class members. It read:

“Dear Karen, thank you for the beautiful spray of yellow flowers that the CHS Alumni sent for Greg’s funeral. Greg thoroughly enjoyed his high school years ... his friends, sports, and student government were very important to him. Fondly....”

It’s one thing to say “thank you” when we are lavished with good things. It’s something else when it takes an effort to say “thank you” in an appropriate way during a time of pain.

As I read through this column, I could hear the voice of my parents and our children (who send beautiful cards) expressing thanks, as they were taught in generational examples. I realize that this type of “food” is even much more important than physical food. Lessons like this make me

want to look back at childhood examples and say, “Thank you for the great meal.”