**Medical Column – November 2014**

**Taken – For Granted**

Some things make a lasting impression.

A few years ago, our minister posed a question to the congregation during one of his sermons. He asked, should we find ourselves with the limitation of possessing only two books of the Bible, what two books would they be? I was sitting in the choir loft and started thinking. Murmurs filled the sanctuary as we struggled with this perplexing question. From around me I heard whispered “John”, “the Psalms”, “Romans”, “Matthew”. I think “Isiah” was uttered by one of our older choir members, but I don’t think I heard “Obadiah”.

Our minister allowed the murmurs to finally die down, each of us apparently settled on our choices. Mine were *John* and *Romans.* Comfortable with our decisions, apparently too much so, we were immediately humbled by his next question.

“Okay, since in your opinion those two books are indispensable, when was the last time you read them?”

Silence. And then fidgeting.

The point was made and driven home. We pay passing homage to what should be some of the most important things in our lives, but passing only. Our lives are so full of other things, other distractions, other diversions, and we quickly lose sight of what’s important, though it stands right in front of us. Sometimes pleading for our attention.

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Paul Stelling closed the front door and shuffled into the den. He was exhausted, having just flown in from Atlanta.

“Hey honey. Glad you’re home.” His wife Francis hurried over to him and grabbed his scuffed leather briefcase. “Sit down and relax. Dinner will be ready in about thirty minutes. And Camille has something to share with you.”

Camille was their seventeen-year-old daughter, a junior at the local high school and a star volleyball player.

Paul collapsed in the over-stuffed leather easy-chair, leaned back, and closed his eyes.

“Busy trip?” Francis dropped the briefcase by the door and sat down opposite him on the matching leather sofa.

Paul Stelling was the regional V.P. of sales for a large medical supply company. His position required ever-increasingly frequent trips to cities up and down the eastern seaboard, and he was spending more and more time away from home.

“New people, new products coming on line,” he huffed. “And they expect me to sort things out and keep it all straight.”

Francis sighed and stared at her husband.

“Well, you’re home now, and you can take it easy, at least for a few days.”

The front door burst open and Camille bounced into the room.

“Daddy, you’re home!”

The teenager rushed over to her father, leaned over the chair and gave him a big hug. She was a slender, athletic five-feet-ten-inches, yet possessive of a disarming grace and self-confidence.

“Whoa honey,” her startled father responded. His eyes were wide-open now and he gently patted her shoulder.

“It’s just that I’ve been waiting to tell you about—” She glanced at her mother, hurtled the coffee table, and plopped down beside Francis on the sofa.

“Tell me what?” Paul straightened his rumpled tie and sat forward in the chair.

“Momma told you we won the conference championship Friday night, didn’t she?”

Paul’s eyes darted to Francis and back to his daughter. He hesitated, but Camille didn’t notice. “Yes, of course she did. I’m sorry I couldn’t be there, but with business and all…”

“And you know she was named the MVP of the tournament.” Francis nodded at Paul, her eyes wide.

“Yeah, sure. MVP,” he mumbled. “That was great, Camille. We’re so proud of you.”

She was bouncing on the sofa, her grin brightening the entire room.

“And there’s this, Daddy.”

Camille held out a letter so her father could see the sprawling orange tiger-paw. “It’s from Clemson. Some of their scouts were at the tournament and they want to offer me a scholarship to play volleyball there when I graduate. What do you think of that?”

“That’s…it’s… Wow, that’s wonderful Camille. Congratulations. You’ve been working so hard at this, and now it’s paying off.”

She stared at the envelope and shook her head. “They didn’t say so, but I think the way I play next weekend at the state championships will have a lot to do with what they offer me. You’ll be able to go, won’t you? It’s going to be in Columbia?”

Her eyes met his, and he looked away.

“Next weekend…That’s when we have a national meeting in Chicago. It starts on Thursday and doesn’t end until Monday. It’s…I just can’t miss it.”

Camille slumped on the sofa, a deflated doll, and her smile faded. She stared at the floor.

“Is there any way…” Francis implored.

Paul shook his head.

After a strained, silent dinner, Camille left the house to meet one of her friends at the county library. They both had a project due in a couple of weeks and needed to get some work done.

At 10:17—Francis will never forget the time—a knock on the front door startled them.

Standing on the porch were two police officers, their faces pale, expressionless.

“Mr. and Mrs. Stelling—we need to talk with you about what’s happened to your daughter, Camille.”

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The approaching holidays will be a good time for us to reflect on what should be most important to each of us—our relationships with other people. While the questions our minister asked were significant regarding our spiritual lives, they are also appropriate for the important *people* in our lives. Who are those people, those who mean the most to you? When was the last time you told them that? When was the last time you clearly and openly expressed your love?

Don’t wait for the knock on the door.