



**June 23, 2025**

## **Spreading God's Love**

My mother, Marie Webster, recently passed away after living a full life in her 101 years of dwelling on God's green earth. As I was preparing the program for her Celebration of Life Service, I contemplated including the classic love scripture, 1st Corinthians 13. Yet this personification of love passage creates such a high bar for loving, that it seems at times almost unattainable to "achieve." Then, I began to read 1st Corinthians 14:1-4:

*"It is love that you should strive for. Set your hearts on spiritual gifts, especially the gift of proclaiming God's message. The one who speaks in strange tongues does not speak to others, but to God, because no one understands him. He is speaking secret truths by the power of the Spirit. But the one who proclaims God's message speaks to people and gives them help, encouragement and comfort. The one who only speaks in strange tongues helps only himself but the one who proclaims God's message helps the whole church."*

This description of love seemed to be a better fit for my mother. To proclaim God's message is to share God's love with others. She attended nursing school, upon graduation from high school, and enlisted in the Army in 1945 to serve as an Army nurse in the Philippines during WWII. As she cared for the sick and injured as a surgical nurse in charge of a 27-bed ward, I believe she was sharing God's love with others. As a youth group leader, a cub scout and girl scout leader, and as a campus minister's wife, sharing Thanksgiving dinners with foreign students attending Indiana University, I believe she was sharing God's love with others. In her retirement years, she believed in the healing power of humor, and performed comedy skits for birthdays, baby showers, and other occasions, and even performed as a clown. Making people laugh was a gift she freely gave to others.

I flew up from my winter home in Gainesville, Florida to Bloomington, Indiana in February to visit my mother. Having eaten dinner with her at the nursing home, I was pushing her back to her apartment. Although confined to a wheelchair, she could propel herself by shuffling her feet. She spotted an elderly resident clinging onto the hallway handrail, crying incessantly. I found myself without a wheelchair to push as Mom shuffled over to this distressed woman. Gently placing her hand on the weeping woman's shoulder, Mom pleaded, "Now honey, tell me what's wrong." Startled the woman said nothing, but abruptly stopped crying, stood up tall, and resumed her walk to the dining hall. Although Mom had told me that she wished she didn't know why she was still alive at 101, she clearly was still capable of sharing God's love with those in need of encouragement and comfort.

I believe she continued to share God's love with others until and perhaps after her death. I awoke unusually early the morning Mom died. Normally, I am awakened by the sound of an alarm clock or my wife telling me that it's time to get up. I sat up in bed for a few minutes, but felt so refreshed as though a heavy burden had been lifted from me. When I finally got up, it was 6:23 a.m. Later that morning, my sister called, who had been staying with Mom under Hospice Care, to let me know Mom had died at 6:20 a.m.! I believe I felt her presence and her love for me as she transitioned from a physical being to a spiritual being.

Take a look around this week and seek out the opportunities God has set before you to share God's love, hope, and encouragement with family members, friends, or even complete strangers. Let's keep spreading God's love to His people.

~Written by Tom Webster

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