

Not Many people have lived to see their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. To live to be 103 years old is a blessing and a miracle. She knew that. That is why she has always given thanks to God each morning she rises. “Thank You for putting my name on the Wake-Up List.” Has been the first words out of her mouth since her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. Today, it means even more.

She realized that her days on earth would soon be coming to an end. She was not fearful, anxious, or unsure. She was ready. Ready to see all of her family members who had gone before her. Ready to leave this old world with all of its hatred, discontent, selfishness, and angry behind. She was ready.

As she laid there in bed, she began to think back over her life. She imagined her “homegoing” and what would be said about her. She imagined her tombstone and what it would say. She saw the inscription date “1955-2028”. She saw the year she was born and the year she died. Then her focus fell on the dash, that insignificant line that most people overlooked. Did folks even recognize what that line represented? She began to consider the dash. Afterall, the dash wasn’t just any line. It represented her life and all that she had done. Did anyone ever think about that?

She considered the dash. She reminisced about her childhood, playing with her siblings and friends in the backyard. She thought about her high school days, her “militant” times. She smiled as she pictured in her mind the huge Afro, bell-bottom pants, tie-dyed shirt, clogs, and her fist pumpig the air in protest against the government and its treatment of the disadvantaged. Black folk. She had a glimmer in her eye as she remembered her wedding day and the births of all four of her children. She became misty-eyed as she relived the birth of her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. What joy they brought her!

But then she really considered the dash. How had she lived her life? Was she the person she thought she was? Was she kind? Generous? Forgiving? Loving? What was her life really like? Her brow furrowed as she gave serious thought to her life and how she had lived it. Had she “lived a life that was

pleasing to God”? In her mind, she began to replay the movie of her life, but this time she focused on her character. What was her life really like?

Generosity was never an issue. She would give you the shirt off her back if you needed it. If necessary, she would go make another one for you just so you could have what you needed. How many times did she go without so her seed could have what they needed? It was never a half-hearted gesture either. She gave willingly so that others might have. She chuckled, realizing that’s what Jesus did, give for the benefit of others.

Loyalty. She remembered when her friend got in trouble and had to stand before the judge. Her friend had only stolen that money to keep a roof over her family’s head and food on their table. She really intended to pay back the money as soon as she could because she knew the money was not hers to spend. But she was desperate. Her friend was a pillar of society. So many people looked up to her. But when the truth came out, society turned their backs on her. The woman smiled as she remembered the look on her friend’s face when she showed up with dinner and no judgement. Yes, what her friend had done was wrong and illegal. Yes, she called her out on it. But no, she would not walk away. She was a friend, and a true friend is there through thick and thin the good and the bad. No one understood how she could continue the friendship. She again realized that was what Jesus did. He forgave Peter and moved forward. If Jesus could forgive Peter’s betrayal, who was she to condemn?

The woman pressed her memory more. Now, she was always time challenged, She would be late or get there “by the skin of a chicken’s tooth,” but if she said she would be there, she would be there. She was dependable. She was reliable. You could count on her. Again, she saw herself mimicking Jesus. He always showed up when He said He would, and He kept every promise He ever made.

Unlike her oldest sister, the woman was not a crier. Her sister would cry over Hallmark commercials! But the woman had compassion. She was even told that she was an empath. She could feel the pain that others felt. That caused her to move in very unique directions. Because she could feel their

pain, she also knew what was needed to ease their pain. Her compassion and empathy were viewed as weaknesses by many but she saw it as a calling. Doesn't the Bible talk about how the people the pain of the people and even performed miracles to alleviate that pain?

And how many times did she do things that no one understood because, as she said, Jesus told her or led her to do it? She was obedient to the point that many sometimes thought that her mental faculties were not always there. She would say that others did not need to understand because it was a commitment to Jesus, and He approved. The conversations she would have with Jesus sometimes! Wow! You would have to be there to understand it.

So as the woman reflected on the dash of her life, she realized she had lived a pretty good life. Her dash was not just a line between two years. Her dash was a lifetime of joy, peace, loyalty, compassion, obedience, and strength. Her dash held the accomplishments and disappointments of her life. Her dash was the untold strength she had as she endured the pains of life. Her dash was a reminder of all that she was and all that she did. Her dash spoke volumes, and she was content with what that dash represented. Her dash was the life she lived, not a time of sitting on the sidelines watching and never participating. When she considered the dash, she knew she had lived a life that was pleasing to God and all that were connected to her.