

Family Struggle

by Casey Barnett Hill

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

—1 Corinthians 13:13



oney. Fame. Popularity. These have all been , greatly idealized by our American society. . However, there are more important values that hold us together, not only as a country, but even more as families. These ties are faith, hope and love. Members of my family—specifically my father’s older brother, his wife and his daughter—have brilliantly embodied these.

Ten years ago, these three were the ideal American family. The mother was a schoolteacher. The father owned his own business. The daughter was a rising young athlete. Life was nearly perfect. Little did they know what the next few years would bring.

My aunt began to have trouble with her eyes, seeing spots and having migraine headaches. After going to an optometrist for a year, she decided to get a second opinion. This was when our lives and world began to crumble. At the age of thirty-six, my aunt was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. She immediately began treatment, including surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. It was so severe that a few times doctors gave her only hours to live. However, we as a family, and especially my aunt, never lost faith. Amazingly, she is still alive today, surviving as a testament to the power of her faith in God. She never lost this faith, even when the treatments left her partially paralyzed and bedridden.

Unfortunately, this was not the only test we would endure. Shortly after my aunt became ill, my uncle lost his business, leaving his family with no income and mounting medical bills. However, their faith pushed them on. They eventually recovered, with my uncle getting a good job.

Things began to look up. They found a caring nurse through hospice to help with my aunt. My cousin graduated from high school, is

completing training to be a radiology technician and is engaged. The hope and faith they shared through the bad times looked as if it was paying off. But there was one more hurdle.

On September 13, 2001, as most Americans were reeling from the attacks of September 11, my uncle and his family endured yet another personal tragedy. With only my bedridden aunt and her nurse at home, their clothes dryer burst into flames. In minutes much of the house became engulfed. It was all the nurse could do to drag my aunt out of the house.

Through this tragedy, as with all the others, thanks were given—not for the loss of the house or my aunt's disease, but for life. Thanks were given to God that lives weren't lost. Thanks were given for another day to cherish and love each other. What kept them going? Take every single second as if it were your last. Hold the people close whom you love. Keep faith and hope in your heart, because without them, we cannot dream. Money, health, fame and material possessions can all be taken away in the blink of an eye. As long as we have faith, hope and love in our hearts, we are still wonderfully alive. These three remain. . .



Photo by Lindsey Dennis