

Introduction

Kind, smart and wise would be some of the words used to describe Mr. Henry Austin. He was downright fun to be around. He rarely complained and always found a way to find something amusing in life experiences.

He could be serious and he could be funny. Whatever the circumstance, he loved life. In spite of many hardships, he found a way to keep smiling and enjoying life to the fullest.

Mr. Austin had a spirit about him, and that spirit knew no boundaries. He was comfortable talking with anyone from children to senior adults. And everyone loved him for it.

Mr. Austin enjoyed wood working. He would see something and determine that he could make it himself. Before long he would do exactly that. In our church we have a beautiful conference table he made from old church pews.

Henry Austin also enjoyed working crossword puzzles. His daughter Gail says he would call her and his first words over the phone would be, “I need a word.” As much as he liked crossword puzzles, I’m told he wasn’t exactly a pro at them. In other words, he wasn’t a walking dictionary.

But there was one word Mr. Henry Austin knew quite well. In fact, not only did he know the meaning of the word, it could be fairly said he redefined the word. That word is “family”.

1. Henry Austin loved his immediate family

I have been told of how Mr. Austin tended to the needs of his wife before she passed away. He spoke often of her and talked about the experiences they shared together.

He loved his entire family including grandchildren and great grandchildren. Even today, his love reaches deep into the hearts of everyone in his family.

But during the time I knew Mr. Austin, he most often spoke about his daughters. He loved them dearly and he treasured every moment he had with them.

In recent weeks, I watched as his two daughters took such tender care of him. To my knowledge, neither is a trained nurse, but they cared for his every need as his body became weaker with each passing day.

I know this must have been hard for Mr. Austin; perhaps thinking he was a burden to his daughters. But I also know it must have been a tremendous blessing to him to see his daughters demonstrating such love back to him.

2. Henry Austin loved his extended family

When I said Mr. Austin redefined the meaning of the word family, I was speaking of his generosity and love for everyone. Mr. Austin had a heart for helping others.

Some might say his generosity stemmed from the fact that he was born in the great depression. Others might say Mr. Austin was simply a nice guy.

But I believe Henry Austin was being Christ-like. Mr. Austin loved the Lord Jesus Christ and he desired to show the love of Christ with everyone he met.

In the few short days since his passing, numerous people have come to his daughters to share their experiences. They have told stories of how Mr. Austin helped them or a family member.

Henry Austin’s love knew no boundaries. He was always eager to help anyone he could. Mr. Austin loved life but the thing he loved the most about life was people.

3. Henry Austin loved his church family

Mr. Austin was a faithful member of Barnwell Baptist Church. If his health permitted and he wasn't out of town, you could count on him being in attendance.

He was dearly loved by everyone in the church. Wednesday nights will not be the same without the tall slender figure of Mr. Henry Austin slowly walking to and from his seat.

Mr. Austin was a deacon in our church. His wisdom and experience was so valued that when he spoke the room became quiet to insure no one missed what he had to say.

As a church member, Henry Austin was not a spectator. He didn't wait for someone to ask him to do something. He recognized people who had needs and he offered to help in any way he could. He had a quiet ministry of helping others and never expected recognition or accolades.

We are all remembered for the things we love the most during our time on earth. It's the things that are the object of our passion; the things that consume our attention that we will be remembered for. I suppose its best said this way, "The love of our life becomes the legacy of our life."

God's Word speaks of this. Jesus said, ²¹*"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* Luke 12:34 NIV

Henry Austin's treasure was in the right places; his love for God and his love for others.

Conclusion

Mr. Austin traveled the world over in his lifetime. He has been to Germany, China, Japan, England, Iceland, Rome, Scotland, Moscow, Berlin and the list goes on.

I'm told the highlight of his travels was a trip to New York where he was able to take a VIP tour of the set for "All My Children."

Yes, I am speaking of the soap opera "All My Children." Mr. Austin never missed an episode of "All My Children."

When I caught wind of his soap opera addiction, I attempted to tease him about it. I got nowhere. He looked at me as if I crazy and said, "Yep, I never miss it." He left me wondering if I was really missing out on something.

I'm told he always wanted to go to the Holy Land but was never able to work it out given the problems in that area of the world.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going."

⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:1-6 NIV

Well, today Henry Grady Austin is in the real Holy Land. He is in the place his Savior prepared for him. Henry Austin walks today with his son, wife and other loved ones. Most importantly he walks with our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have said all of the things I wanted to say about Mr. Henry Austin. And I have said the things I believe the family would have me say about Mr. Austin.

Now let me say to you what I believe Henry Austin would have me say to you.

Trust in Christ as your Savior and join me one day in the Holy Land.

Graveside

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. ³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. ⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever Psalm 23 KJV

This is where our faith must be strong. At death, there is no room for wavering faith. Just as Henry Austin had unwavering faith, so must you. God's Word says:

Paul writes; ⁵⁵ *O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?"... ⁵⁷but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1Corinthians 15:55, 57 NIV*

- There is no soul here today
- Only a worn out body
- There is no ending here today.
- Like Paul, Henry Austin says, Oh death, where is your victory? Oh death, where is your sting?
- For those in Christ, death can hiss but death cannot harm.
- Mr. Austin says to you today, Behold I die, and yet I live!

Prayer:

Oh God if it were not for your grace, if it were not for your amazing love through Christ Jesus, we would be a pitiful people. We would have no ability to deal with our losses. Death would be our enemy to fear every waking moment. But in your wisdom, in your love, you provided victory for your children through your son Jesus Christ. Plant that understanding in the hearts of all here today. Thank you for your grace through Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the life of Henry Austin and his inspiration upon us. Enjoy his presence in eternity.

Amen.

Bobby R. Tucker
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