



Life with a Willing Heart

Jayson Berray
Columnist

Appreciating — not just enduring — family

Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's represent many things. Chief among them is time with family.

And what can be said about family? There is an old adage that says, "You can't live with them and you can't live without them." Around this time of year, late-night talk shows poke fun at the notion that Thanksgiving and Christmas are the only times you have to suffer through being with your family and then the rest of the year you can go back to living your own life. To a degree, I suppose I understand that, but on the other hand I wonder if this is what we have been reduced to as a society. Have we come to believe that the very people who have given us life and who know us the best actually don't get us at all? Or is it simply the fact that all too often our own flesh and blood are the ones who fall victim to our incorrect assumptions?

I have been married twice. So that means that I have my own family, then I got to know another family, and now I am getting to know yet another. Through my experiences I have come to wonder why it is that we

want to get as far away as possible from the very people without whom we would not exist. Don't get me wrong, I understand that sometimes in life some of the most messed-up people you deal with are actually a part of your own family, but why is that? Are they really that way or have we unfairly assigned that identity to them simply because they are a part of our family and deep down we are not happy about something within ourselves? Why is it that our relatives are oftentimes the victims of our most vicious accusations with regard to the things we have come to struggle with as we enter into and experience adulthood? Perhaps I am naïve, but shouldn't a person's family members be the most revered individuals in his or her life, and is not this the case in many other cultures throughout the world?

I think I may have raised more questions here than I am actually equipped to answer, but one thing I have realized as I have gotten older is that it's OK to let questions hang in the air for a while for the sake of pondering what they mean. Are we most critical of the people in our families because they are the few people in the world who tell us the most about ourselves, oftentimes non-verbally? Is it fair that just because a person is a blood relative that he or she should be categorized as a person with whom as little contact as possible should be maintained? Or is it that they are the ones who are the most capable of revealing the insecurities that lie deep within us?

I have known a lot of people over the years, and many of them have or have had an avoidance-or-endurance attitude toward their close and extended family rather than what I would

consider an appropriate eagerness to be around them, especially during the holidays.

I supposed that one of the main lessons I have learned in my life is this: You don't get to choose your family, and your family doesn't get to choose you, but the rest is up to our free will. More of life than we realize comes down to our capacity to choose. Can you control the type of people your family members are? I think you know the answer to that. But can you control how you act and react to them? Yes.

What if we decided that the time has come to stop choosing to simply endure our family once or twice a year and actually took the step of appreciating them and enjoying them? Being newly married and getting to know a new group of people has taught me the worth of this choice, and while I still have a lot to learn, I am proud to have made the decision to start appreciating the folks who have been placed in my life, because I will always have much to learn from each of them.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Outlaws Together Bingo will feature a silent auction.

Outlaws Together hosts community bingo

Join the Outlaws for a fun, family-friendly evening out in Sisters Country.

Outlaws Together Bingo is scheduled for Monday, January 11. Doors open at 5 p.m. for dinner, and bingo starts at 6:30 p.m. at the Sisters High School Commons (1700 W. McKinney Butte Rd.).

The cost for 11 games is \$15 — including Bingo Blackout with the grand prize

of a 64 GB Apple iPad Mini 3. All proceeds benefit the Sisters High School Athletics Department. A \$2 community dinner sponsored by Sisters Park & Recreation District will be held prior to bingo. As always, the night will include a silent auction.

For more information on Outlaws Together events, contact Tim Roth at 541-549-4050 or tim.roth@sisters.k12.or.us.

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