

Making memories on an evening walk

Bedtime is still an hour away, and our little boy is restless.

“Why don’t we go for a walk?” I say.

He runs to get his bicycle, but darkness is falling, and I want to keep him close to me. We decide to bring his baseball bat instead.

As the light fades from the sky, he leads the conversation, talking about what we see.

“There’s the moon,” he says. “It looks like a hundred LEDs.” And so it does.

We see rabbits hopping through the grass, porch lights coming on and fireflies rising toward the sky. We hear the hum of traffic nearby, the music of cicadas singing in the trees, and our voices rising and falling.

With his bat on his shoulder, our little boy is thinking – and talking – about the future. He wants to be a fisherman or a baseball player. He’s not sure which one, but they both sound good. How will he ever decide what to do?

“One day you will know,” I say. “Keep doing what you love to do and what you do well, and then one day you’ll figure out what God wants you to do. And maybe God will want you to do a few different things.”

Still, he’s worried about having to give up one of his passions for another. So we talk about how baseball players can fish, and fisherman can play baseball, and how if he chooses to do something else entirely, he can also play baseball and fish in his free time. He listens. He might believe me. He’s young enough that he still believes I have a little wisdom to share.

“If you become a professional baseball player one day, I’ll come and watch you play,” I say. “Maybe you can even get me a free ticket to your game.”

"But maybe you'll be in heaven then," he said. "You might die of old age."

Death is very real to our children in a way that it wasn't for me as a child. Our sons are 7 and 9, and already they know loss in a way I didn't at their ages. They know that death comes for everyone, and they know what happens when people die.

"If I am in heaven," I tell him, "I'll have a front-row seat, and I won't even need a ticket to your game."

"How?" he wants to know.

So we talk about heaven, and how the people we love are never far away. I tell him how I talk to my grandmother and other people I love who have died. I remind him that we speak to his little cousin **Georgie** in heaven sometimes, and he agrees that we tell Georgie we love and miss him and that we hope he's getting lots of hugs from Jesus.

We know he is.

Our little boy swings his bat as he walks, taking in the nature around us, imagining a future ahead of him and thinking of heaven and earth. They're big thoughts, but no thought is too large for this little boy.

Even though it seems to be getting darker every minute, our son sprints ahead of me. I trail along behind. As a mother of two growing children, I'm getting used to following along behind. I want them to be cautious and hang back and stay young just a little while longer. But they see a wide open world ahead of them, without a danger in sight. They want to run free.

Soon, though, he comes jogging back to check on me.

"Making memories is important," he says, "because you can take your memories with you when you go to heaven, right?"

"Of course you can," I say. "Is this one of those memories you will take with you one day a long time from now?"

"No," he says, and he's off again, running toward our home.

It might not be an important memory for him, but I'm storing it away as one of mine.