

In Memory of My Mom, Rose G. Brown (Sept. 25, 1922-Nov. 18, 2016)

My precious mom left this world this morning, suddenly and without suffering, although in declining health in recent months. She was 94 years old. I could not imagine a more loving, affirming, unselfish and giving mother, and I am profoundly grateful to God for the years we had together.

I last saw her on Tuesday morning when I stopped by the nursing home to have her sign some legal documents, little knowing that would be the last time I saw her in this world. As she woke up from a deep sleep, I talked with her and kissed her hand—that tiny, skinny hand. I'm so glad now for that last act of affection.

May I be so bold as to encourage each of you to be sure your loved ones know how much you love and appreciate them, especially as we enter this holiday season? And may I encourage you to do your best to reconcile with those from whom you are estranged? Life is too short and relationships too precious to allow for anything to separate us.

My dad died of a heart attack at the age of 63 in 1977, less than two years after Nancy and I were married and just a few months after our first child was born, so my mom was alone in the decades after that. But she never complained, never asked for anything and always took joy in her kids. And she was one proud mom.

When her caregivers would meet me, they would say, "So you're Dr. Brown! We can't wait to listen to you on the radio."

They really thought I was someone special because my mom spoke of me in such glowing terms. As Nancy often reminded me with a

smile, I could do no wrong in her eyes.

About 20 years ago, a ministry work I was involved in came under attack from the local newspaper after previously publishing dozens of glowing reports about our work. (In the years that followed the brief season of attack, they returned to their positive stance.)

One of the lead reporters tried to dig up dirt wherever he could, to the point of manufacturing it, even calling family members to try to discover discrepancies in our stories.

The newspaper actually quoted the mother of one of my dearest friends and co-ministry leaders as if her story contradicted her son's.

When I finally called my mom to alert her that she might be getting a call from this fellow, she said, "Oh yes, he called, and then we had a nice talk."

When I asked her about their conversation, she said, "I told him you were always very smart, that you had a problem in your teen years, but then you worked yourself through graduate school, and I was very proud of you."

I asked her, "Did he ask you anything specific about my drug use as a teenager?", thinking he might have tried to say I was exaggerating my story of heavy drug use from the ages of 14-16 since that was part of my personal testimony.

She replied, "Oh yes, I told him you were shooting heroin and we were very concerned, but then you were converted to Christ"—remember, this was my Jewish mother speaking—"and you changed overnight."

When the newspaper article came out, the report was mild, and the reporter didn't quote a word my mom said. It was all too positive.

But this had been her pattern for years.

When I was about 18 years old, I came home from high school one day to see a female Jehovah's Witness leaving my house.

We began to talk, and after a period of months, she renounced her erroneous beliefs.

When I asked her, "What happened when you spoke to my mom that day?" she replied, "She said to me, 'I'm not very religious, but wait for my son to come home. He'll convert you. He converts everybody!'"

I truly believe that one reason I have been so confident in life has been the loving affirmation of my mom and dad, and the best way I can honor my mother is to tell the truth about her on the day of her departure. She did what mothers can uniquely do, giving themselves for the well-being and nurture of their children. I am eternally indebted to her.

She was born in Leeds, England, and her mom died when she was a little girl, with her dad abandoning the family. She was then sent over to the States to be raised by other relatives, but I never once heard her say how hard her life had been, and I don't recall her maligning the father who abandoned her. Perhaps there's a lesson in this for all of us.

Her sarcasm and sense of humor were also with her to the end, and I remember her comment when waking up from anesthesia just a few months back after a medical procedure. She could barely talk and was groggy, but we were standing by the bedside telling her how well she did. One of us said, "You look great!" to which she replied, "Easy for you to say!"

Mom, I miss you dearly and deeply, but I look forward to seeing you again soon. By receiving me with all your heart, you have also received the God I serve and love.