

CYBERCOLUMN: Mowing & praying_duncan_62303

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By John Duncan

I am sitting here under the old oak tree, pondering the lazy days of summer and working up the energy to mow my yard. The desert monks coined a word for laziness, "acedia," which means listlessness. "Acedia" has Greek roots, meaning "an absence of care." Today I am listless, but the yard must be mowed.

The poet Langston Hughes once lamented, "Life for me ain't been no crystal stair." When it comes to my yard, the grass grows, the flowers fade and the yard must be mowed. My yard ain't no crystal stair. I guess I will jolt myself out of this listless state and start mowing.

When I mow, I pray. "Everything that one turns in the direction of God is prayer," Ignatius of Loyola commented. I mow the tall weeds, and I trim my grass, and I turn stuff in God's direction.□□

JOHN DUNCAN

I am mowing and praying—for the world; for the church, God's church; for kids on drugs; for soldiers in war; for families in grief; for a friend's son

whose choices have catapulted his life into a whirlpool of descending trouble. I am mowing and praying and recalling that Langston Hughes also said, "Descent is quick; to rise again is slow." I am praying for my friend's son to rise again in the power of the Almighty. I mow and pray. The lawn mower throws grass in the direction of the ground, and I toss words in God's direction. The sunshine falls. Prayer rises.

I am mowing and pushing-grimace, grunt, groan. I agreed to mow my neighbor's yard. His yard takes longer to mow and challenges my body. I push the mower uphill, around trees while ducking under limbs, back and forth in ankle-thick grass freshly watered by dripping drops of rain splashed into mother earth. Life ain't no crystal stair.

I am sweating and praying for my neighbor Bill, that his company will renew his job. Companies lay people off, the economy sags, and I am praying that God in his economy will allow Bill to keep his job. The grass shortens. Prayer lengthens my soul. Jesus hears.

I am praying and dreaming because every time I turn a corner in Bill's backyard, I see the lake and his jet ski. Think of me as no saint. Mowing Bill's yard also means I receive the privilege of using his jet ski.

The heat withers my body, blades of grass stick to my legs, dust flies in my face and I dream of zipping across the lake at break-neck speeds with the wind blowing through my thinning hair. Life ain't no crystal stair, but you cannot spend your whole life mowing the yard. A man needs jet-ski flair every once and awhile. I have a dream.

I am jet skiing and praying. Now I zip across the lake and pray. Karl Barth once noted, "To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world."

I zigzag across a crystal lake as the evening sun glistens off the water as if a mirror lay beneath my path. I watch for approaching watercraft and enjoy

the aura of God's creation. The heavens declare God's glory, not to mention the beauty of the lake. My hands tightly grip the handlebars on the jet ski, and my heart grips prayer.

I pray for an uprising against the disorder of the world—for grief amid pain in Israel where bus bombers create disorder; for soldiers in Iraq wincing in the chaos of ambushes and confusion; for peace in homes where Satan hurls missiles of disorder into homes; for joy to return to those who lost jobs as God in his economy provides new jobs and stable incomes again for struggling souls; for those climbing life's stairs and finding the uphill climb difficult like hiking Mount Everest.

Life ain't no crystal stair, but the yard must be mowed, jet skis need to come off the rack, and prayer needs to rise up against the disorder of the world.

Are you praying?

So now here I am, back under the old oak tree, drinking bottled water purified by mountain springs and praising my Lord the yard got mowed. Life ain't no crystal stair, but prayer makes life crystal clear! And Jesus hears.□

John Duncan is pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church in Granbury, Texas, and the writer of numerous articles in various journals and magazines.