

# The Mustard Grain

By BETTY PERRY



After the recent deaths of my mother and sister, I was in a fog, trying to move forward and survive each day. As I grieved their loss, it gave me great pause to think about my life. Trying to imagine my life without them was difficult.

As I thought about this, I began to reflect on my past and the little person I used to be. I have images of a little girl who was creative, confident, and happy. She had a sense of mattering, not knowing at the time that she was poor. She had great visions of things that she wanted to do, and she believed that she could do them. Her grandmother empowered her to believe so. She quoted a scripture from Matthew 17:20: "If you have the faith of a mustard grain ... nothing will be impossible for you." This little person also had teachers along the way who encouraged her to meet life's challenges and opened doors to opportunities. Most of all, she had her mother's personality and her love of people.

I remembered an event that happened to me before my mother died. I was headed home on Fall Creek Parkway when I was stopped by a funeral procession at Central Avenue and Fall Creek. After it was over, I crossed the intersection and a forceful thought came to me: "As far as it depends on you, be peaceful with

all men." A few minutes later, as I approached 30th Street and Fall Creek Parkway, I was stopped by another funeral procession. After it had passed and I crossed the intersection another thought came to me: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Several weeks after the death of my sister, I attended a family retreat in Michigan. There was a huge lake with quaint cottages along the shore. As I sat there, enveloped in the serenity of an evening dusk, I was overwhelmed by the majesty and the orderliness of nature.

Later, I retired to a room without television, radio, or telephone (including my cell). My cousin had left several magazines for me to read. Thumbing through one, I stopped on a page titled: "Lifting Up, Giving Back, Changing One Life at a Time," by Alexis A. Goring. The article focused on several individuals who felt the need to uplift their communities. Before telling the stories of these four people there was a quote from Booker T. Washington: "If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else."

As I reflected on my losses, I realized that my mother and my sister were still as much a part of me as that little person who once imagined a life that was yet to be. I have been able to see some of the things she imagined come true, and I continue to envision ways to contribute to the betterment of others. Just as I have received help along the way, I have also retained my mother's spirit of caring—her faith of the mustard grain.

Now, as I move forward, I know that I don't have to imagine life without my loved ones. They are part of me and part of everything I do.

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