

Why do we listen to those we do – and why do we tune some people out? Julian Treasure suggests we listen to people who have “HAIL.” We tune out those who are negative, judgmental, complain constantly, make excuses, or who are dogmatic.¹

David had HAIL. Not the small ice balls that we sometimes get with bad weather. Rather, hail in the sense of “hail fellow, well met.” Someone who is welcoming and someone we want to be with. HAIL, the acronym, stands for:

Honesty

Authenticity - standing in your own truth

Integrity – being your word; and

Love – wishing someone well

David had HAIL. He was someone we wanted to be with because being with David made our day brighter, lighter and better. This is not to suggest that David was perfect – he could be stubborn. He could be aggravating when wanting to keep something most of us would have thrown away but he thought maybe- *just maybe*- he might find a use for that tiny scrap of whatever.

David was kind and thoughtful such as when he had bowls of water for the first Mia when he invited Jerilyn to watch him play ball and it was hot outside. David was someone who knew his own strength such as when he tapped one of his children on the sternum and told them to behave because he did not want to spank them because he knew it would hurt them. Wonder of wonders, the children listened- not out of fear but out of love and respect. They didn’t want to disappoint their Dad. David was the “go-to” man for flooring. Even a few weeks ago I heard of someone looking for help laying carpet that was told, “David Yerkes is the best.”

In a visit with David in the hospital before Christmas, we talked of this last journey, this last fight with leukemia. He knew it was the end even as the doctors and medical staff kept hoping and trying for a different outcome. David had fought the good fight and his race was beginning to end. In Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy, Paul also is nearing the end of his life. Paul writes to his follower, Timothy, passing along wisdom, guidance and hope. Paul urges Timothy to “proclaim the message, be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable, convince, rebuke and encourage with the utmost patience” (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul acknowledges that “the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:6-7). This was David’s experience as well.

David lived his faith in quiet and steadfast ways as well as some less quiet ways. He loved to be part of the choir. And it was a joy for us to watch him when the choir sang from the floor. You could see him move to the music and see how much enjoyment he got from lifting his voice to the Lord. David lived Psalm 98: “O sing to the Lord a new song! ... Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth, break forth into joyous song and sing praises.”

¹ http://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_how_to_speak_so_that_people_want_to_listen (Jan. 1, 2015).

David also loved to toll the bell, a symbol to those both inside and outside that something special was happening inside this building. A marker to begin or to end a service. A notice to the world that one of God's beloved children is being honored and remembered this day with tears and with gladness.

Funerals are bittersweet. We mourn the death of one dear to us. We face the unknown with trepidation- who will do all the things that the one who has died used to do? Who will we turn to that knows us and our hopes and dreams as well as David did? How will we go on without him? The answers to those questions will come slowly. Life will not be the same without David here.

The Book of Lamentations is a series of poems that attempt to put into words the chaos of the world and the need for hope in our God.² In Chapter 3, we read that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; the Lord is our portion and therefore we will hope in him (Lam. 3:22-24). We are also reminded that the Lord does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone.

It was not God's will that David had leukemia. Why he did is something we simply don't know other than we can say it was **not** because God willed it or because David was human. God is love and desires love and health for all of God's children. There are simply some things that we don't understand.

This Celebration of Life reminds us that we come from the Lord and we will return to the Lord. We are never alone and we are never without God's love. God's love and care is for David who has now died. God's love and care is also for us, the friends and family who loved David but will see him no more.

Just as God is always with us, so too our memories and love for David, and his for us, will always be with us. When this service is finished, the family invites you to Whitlock Hall for a time to visit, to share stories of David, and to be refreshed. Tell Jerilyn, Ryan, Aaron and Amy your best memories of David.

Perhaps it is of pranks played during high school or earlier years- never maliciously but for fun. A toilet put on a rooftop and how it took a couple of days for it to be noticed. Perhaps it is of basketball, baseball or golf. And especially that hole-in-one last year – what a special day that was for everyone! Perhaps it was seeing the love David had for his family and friends as evidenced also in the memory blanket you will see in Whitlock Hall. Thank God for green "Kermit" mums, green bow ties and green socks at Amy's wedding! How much fun David could have with simple things – fun and laughter that spilled over into our lives.

In the hospital in the very last days, we prayed together- family, friends and medical staff.

² "Lamentations" in The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 1167-1168.

I was deeply touched by the medical staff who joined in the time of prayer and who cried, as we cried, as the end of life approached. They, too, who knew David in ways many of us did not, found David someone who had HAIL. All of our lives were blessed by David. Whatever your memories are of David, please share them.

In the Gospel of John, we are reminded of the faith of Martha, sister to Lazarus. It is in her moment of grief at the death of her brother that Jesus tells us that he is the resurrection and the life (John 11:17, 21-27). Those that believe in him shall never die but rather will live and will live forever. Not life as we know it here on earth, but life eternal with God. We can rest in the assurance that one day we will be reunited with those whom we love who have gone ahead of us to that eternal life. One day we, too, shall see David and perhaps even shall play basketball or golf or share a meal with him. Who knows – God’s will for David and for us is love and that encompasses all those wonderful things.

Scholars have suggested that the first eight chapters of the Book of Romans may be considered Paul’s last will and testament.³ His hopes for those fledging Christians who were seeking to understand and to follow Jesus as the Christ. It is in Chapter Eight that we read that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Nothing in this world can take away from us the memories of David.

In those words, penned to remind us that life is not always laughter and fun, we can hold fast to the love of God for us amidst our trials and tribulations, amidst our grief and loss. David’s death does not mean that we love him less. We love him still just as God loves us. Remember David as one who had HAIL- whose honesty, authentic, integrity and love- made him someone we wanted to listen to and be with.

Shortly, we will send him off with “Alleluia’s” – a symbol and a sign that despite death, David lives on- with us in our hearts and our memories and with God and those whom he loved who have gone before him. **Amen.**

³ “The Letter of Paul to the Romans” Id, 242-243.

