

Opinion

Ordinary Days By Lauren Denton One Good Thing



Denton

As I write this, we're headed into the holiday season, and everywhere I turn, people are having conversations that start with, "So what are you doing about seeing family this holiday?" We're all scrambling, trying to make smart decisions about how to see extended family members and still keep everyone safe and healthy. As you read this in late December or early January, we'll be sliding into a new year, unsure of what the next twelve months (or heck, even the next four weeks!) will hold. I've always written this column knowing that by the time it comes out in the paper and online, things could be different, but never so much as in 2020, where huge-scale life changes could happen in the span of a few days.

This morning before school, my husband Matt asked our daughters, "What's one good thing you're looking forward to today?" For one, it was no math test and a promised longer recess. For the other, it was lunch from the lunchroom and knowing she was coming home to a sweet-smelling dog (because "washing stinky dog" was on Mama's to-do list for the day). Simple things, but good things, and a way to remind them to keep their focus on the good instead of the bad.

For most of the year, we've had conversations revolving around how COVID-19 has changed our lives for the worse. It's hard not to, right? Here we are, almost a solid year after it all started, and we continue to come up against things that aren't happening like they're supposed to, events that have to be canceled, people we can't gather with as we planned, or formerly routine activities that are still on hold. Lately though, in our family we've been making a point to talk about the ways the coronavirus has brought good into our lives. On some days, I admit it's a struggle to come up with any good things whatsoever, but other days, the good comes a little quicker.

Way up on the list of good things that have come out of coronavirus is getting to know our neighbors better. Our girls have bonded with our next door neighbors over the fact that both households added a dog during the strange coronavirus spring. Almost a year later, we still get a kick out of seeing Kate and Sela standing on chairs at the edge of the yard chatting about the dogs and life over the top of the fence. And up at the top of our street, a group of moms has been getting together weekly for some driveway conversations and outside playtime for the kids. It started back in early summer, and it quickly

became a lifeline, a way for us all to bond over school drama, virus fears, and occasionally a glass of wine or margarita. Lifted spirits for everyone.

Another good thing my oldest daughter Kate mentioned is the library. It's no secret that we're a library- and book-loving family, and the inability to even walk into the library for so many months was hard for all of us.

We love to read, we love those librarians, and over the years, we've developed friendships with people we only see at the library, so the absence of that part of our lives was a big hole. The library is back open now, on a very limited scale, and Saturdays have become library day for the girls. Kate pointed out that the coronavirus has made us appreciate the library—the books, the people, the ability to lose yourself in stacks of stories—even more than we already did.

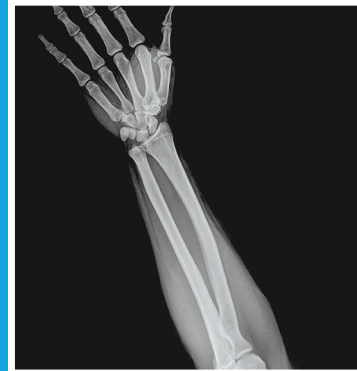
I think that's going to be one major outcome of all this—a greater appreciation for things and people we took for granted before. Our school teachers and staff. Healthcare workers. The people standing behind the cash registers at every essential service that makes our lives work. The ability to walk into a gym to exercise without fear of getting sick. Sitting in church and looking around at people (and their full faces) as they look to Jesus for peace and comfort during trying times. And the day (hopefully not far off) when we can pick up where we left off last spring—inviting friends and family into our homes to share a meal; holding loved ones close, regardless of age or health; loving on new babies we haven't been able to meet yet; hugging and squeezing instead of fist bumping and air hugs.

In a time of feeling like everything is out of control and nothing is sure, focusing on the good—really clinging to it—may be the only way we get through all this and out the other side in one piece.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things...and the God of peace will be with you.

When I'm not writing about my family and our various shenanigans, I write novels and go to the grocery store. My novels are in stores and online. You can reach me by email at Lauren@LaurenKDenton.com, visit my website LaurenKDenton.com, or find me on Instagram @LaurenKDentonBooks, Twitter @LaurenKDenton, or on Facebook ~LaurenKDentonAuthor.

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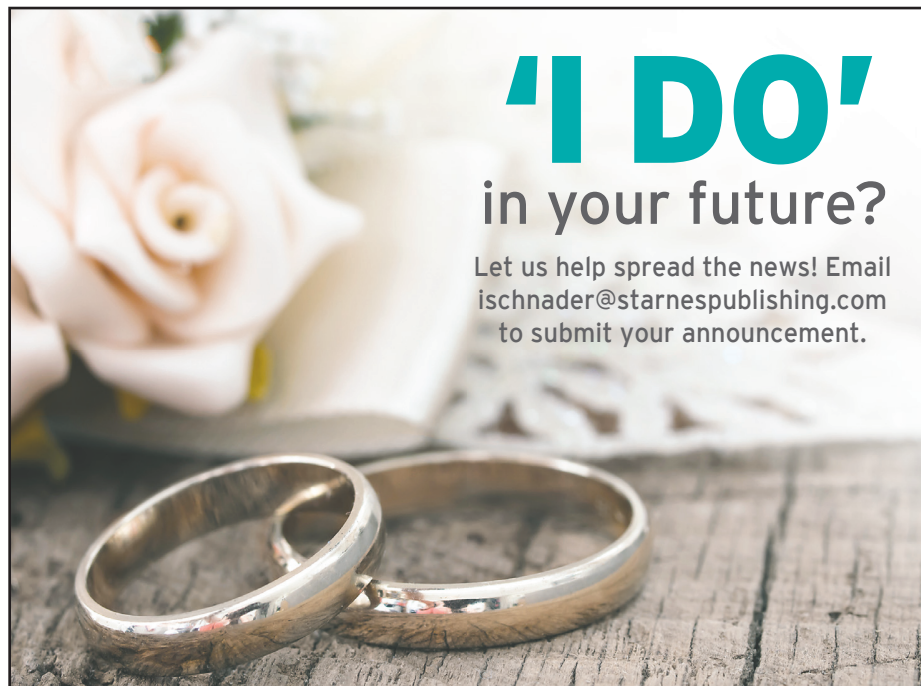
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