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Never Fail to Say these Words

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In a tiny, 20-by-50-foot air pocket, 24 stories below the ground--nine miners huddled in frigid water--praying for their lives. In a cavern so dark they couldn't see their hand in front of their face, the men passed the hours snuggled close to each other, and reminiscing about their families.

Notes in a Bucket

At one point, when it seemed they wouldn't be rescued, Blaine Mayhugh, a 31-year old miner, suggested they all write a final note on a piece of cardboard. After each man penned an expression of love, they placed their note in a bucket and sealed it shut. That bucket, containing the final words of the miners, is still sealed. They said it would never be opened. "We wrote those notes to be read after we died. And we didn't die," one of them said.

Later, during a nationally televised interview, Blaine Mayhugh sat with his wife at his side and reflected on the ordeal. "I thought, this is it. I knew I was facing death. My father-in-law tied us all together so we wouldn't float away from each other."

That Had to Be the Day

And then Mayhugh said something that shook me to the core. "It was the only day in my life I never kissed my wife goodbye before I went to work." Choking back tears, the tough-as-nails-miner said, "That had to be the day."

Blaine climbed out of the rescue pod knowing two things for sure. He would never enter the bowels of the earth to mine coal, and he would never leave home without kissing his wife goodbye.

The Last Words I Spoke

I've thought a lot about Blaine's words. I reflected on the day my dad died. The last words I spoke to him were, "I love you, dad. I'll see you tonight." And amazingly, his last words were an expression of love to me.

I have three sons. Ryan lives in Chicago. Paul lives in D.C. and David, who lives with us in Oregon, will soon move to Nashville.

Hardly a day passes without a call in which we tell each other about our day. And then I say, "I love you." I try to tell Cindy, "You're gorgeous, and I love you."

What's a Day?

It would be easy to go a day without expressing love to my family. What's a day? It's only 24 hours. So I skip a day--no big deal. And then Blaine's words echo in my mind--"It was the only day in my life I never kissed my wife goodbye before I went to work."

His Secret

Life is fragile. The psalmist tells us God has numbered our days. He alone knows when any of us, our wives or children will die. And God isn't telling. It's his secret. Most of us don't give a lot of thought to dying. We know our day will come, but figure it won't arrive any time soon.

But perhaps we should consider the fact that some of us will die an untimely death. We won't see it coming. Perhaps with that truth in mind we should ask ourselves, "What do I want my final words to my wife or kids to be?" If your single, what would you want your final words to your family, friends to be? If I found myself in a plane headed down or trapped in a mine I would want to know I kissed Cindy goodbye and told her how much she means to me. I would want my sons, daughter-in-law, and grandkids to know I love them.

As Mighty Men we've made a commitment to express love to our families on a daily basis. Let's learn a lesson from a tough miner--let's express love to our families every day, one day at day at a time.