

## **A LASTING LESSON**

You never know when God will touch you and make an imprint that will last a lifetime.

Over forty years ago I was with a number of young adults in a prayer circle. Most of us were involved in an inner city ministry for children. The work was challenging but rewarding. We felt it was important for us to pray together to sustain us as we served.

We sat in a circle and each of us took a turn praying. When it was the turn of one of the young men, the words of his prayer were drawn from a hymn. I had never previously heard the hymn, but the words struck me and have remained deeply meaningful to me through the years.

Father, hear the prayer we offer:  
Not for ease that prayer shall be,  
But for strength that we may ever  
Live our lives courageously.

Be our strength in hours of weakness,  
In our wanderings be our guide;  
Thro' endeavor, failure, danger,  
Father, be thou at our side.

Let our path be bright or dreary,  
Storm or sunshine be our share;  
May our souls in hope unwearied  
Make thy work our ceaseless prayer.

We often want ease when we really need strength. We want to be free from obstacles when we really need the power of God to face them with conviction and courage. Faith enriches our lives with meaning and hope. It does not remove frustrations and challenges. "Take up your cross and follow me," said Jesus (Matthew 16:24). The words that were incorporated into my friend's prayer remain in my heart.

I believe experiences, such as the one I had, are more likely to happen in the company of others who are open to the presence of God. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am with you," said Jesus (Matthew 18:20). If we are open to God as we come together with others in his name, sometimes we get lessons that last a lifetime.