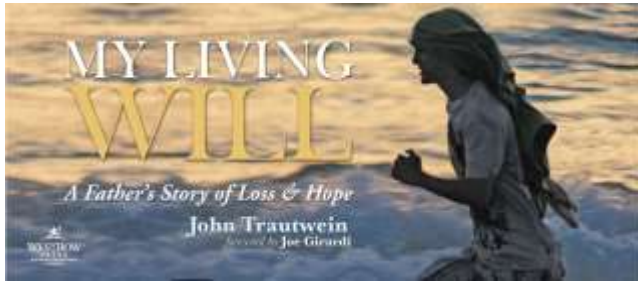


An excerpt from...

# My Living Will

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A Father's Story of Loss & Hope

John Trautwein

Foreword by Joe Girardi

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Chapter 25  
“Remember 13 and Love Each Other”

## Chapter 25

# Remember 13 and Love Each Other

The final character in The Will to Live Foundation's mystique is the number 13. The number 13 is one of those numbers that causes people to think. It's considered mysterious and even a little scary and superstitious, and for that reason alone, Will loved it. He always asked for it whenever his teams handed out jerseys. It was different, and Will liked being different. In his brief life, he was on many teams, from T-ball through high school fall lacrosse. Although he didn't always get his desired number 13, that was the number that his friends remembered him by. "Remember 13" was their creation.

Not everyone likes the number 13, and like so many other parts of his life, Will drifted to and befriended the individuals, the loners, and the outcasts. He embraced them. He didn't like to see anyone left out. So number 13 was a perfect representation of his approach to life.

The Will to Live Foundation's logo today has "Remember 13" on it, which represents the tagline the kids used after he died. It became their cry. Whether it was to remember their friend or what their friend stood for, it does not matter. What matters is that it makes them think of him in a good way, and hopefully, as a result, it makes them think of something good in this negative world. That's what Will would have wanted, and to me, that's the power in all of this.

I personally discovered a new meaning for Remember 13 over a year after Will was gone as I prepared for a speech to a group of Fellowship of Christian Athletes coaches. Over 150 coaches were expected to be in

attendance, and my speech was titled “The Power of Positive Passion.” My goal was to get these coaches to use their passion in a positive way when working with kids.

I was going to challenge them to get excited over good things, little successes, accomplishments, and improvements. Don’t just save your passion for when mistakes are made. It was relatively impromptu and only about twenty to twenty-five minutes long, but it was a good speech, and I could feel my message growing as I gave it. I had my A game going that day. I could feel it, and it was taking my life teammates speeches into yet another direction—a positive one that adults could benefit from. The surprise hit of that speech, however, was me telling my new Remember 13 story.

It was in preparing for this FCA speech that the “Remember 13” phrase took on a deeper meaning for me personally. I think it’s safe to say that when I speak about the foundation and what we’re trying to do, I’m giving a message of love. As a Christian man from a Christian home, it is clear where the roots of this message come from. The majority of the speeches I give, however, are not to religious groups; they are often in schools or other public places. It is also important to note when I wrote and created these speeches, it was not done with a religious intention. All I wanted was for kids to recognize the love they already have in their lives and not be afraid to show it. I love my Christian roots and the message that permeates when I speak, but at the same time, I want the message of The Will to Live Foundation to be able to reach all people and be for all people. After all, the Old Testament talks about love, too. Suicide, mental health, and depression have no prejudice, so I’m always careful to make sure my message of love is given to and accepted by all and that the foundation’s awareness message has no prejudices. Will would have demanded this of me as well. I want people to find their own meaning in the message.

The best analogy I can use is this. The Beatles were not a Christian band, but I’ll put their messages of peace, love, and understanding up against any Christian band out there. I told my son Tommy the other day, “It’s what you hear that’s important, not necessarily what they say. You can find the gospel in any love song, whether they intended it to be there or not. It’s really all about what you hear.”

On this cold January day in 2012, however, I was speaking to a Christian group, so I knew I could share my faith experience a bit more. In fact, I followed a young minor league player, who gave his life testimony. He talked in detail of the effect the Bible and the Lord had on him and his

career, and how it changed his approach not only to baseball but life. He must have quoted something from the Scripture ten times in his fifteen minute speech. This was typically something I rarely did, as I'm really not

a student of the Bible. In fact, the Bible verse that I can quote is what Linus says in *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, when he explains to Charlie Brown what Christmas is all about.

When I prepared for the FCA coaches' meeting, however, I wanted to take this "love your friends, love each other" concept to a more Christian level. I knew there was a part of the Bible where Jesus says to His disciples, "just love each other." So I did what any good Christian would do: I Googled it! I searched for that verse in the Bible. I immediately had a bunch of hits, and to my absolute delight, the first verse I found where Jesus says this was none other than John 13. Yep, in the 34th and 35th verses of John 13, Jesus tells His disciples to "love each other like I have loved you." In fact, it was one of the last teachings Jesus gave to the disciples at the dinner table during the Last Supper, just hours before He was taken.

After I read that, I had to sit down. "Holy cow" was all I could muster. My mind was racing. Will was all about loving each other and loving his friends. He loved the number 13, and his friends chose Remember 13 as their tagline. I incorporated it into the logo of the foundation, and well over thirty thousand kids now have it on their helmets, schoolbooks, T-shirts, and wristbands. For two plus years, in every speech I'd given—over two hundred of them—I told people to love each other. "My son loved his friends and his teammates, and he would want you to love each other." I ended each speech with a group "Love Ya Man!" Without even knowing it, I was telling these kids exactly what Jesus told His disciples at the end of the Last Supper, chapter 13 of the book of the gospel called John. Will would have thought, "How cool is that?" I was literally spreading God's Word and had no idea I was doing it.

Remember 13 will always be a part of The Will to Live Foundation's logo, and although it is created by the kids wanting to remember their friend who wore number 13, I am so pleased to know it also represents one of Jesus' last commandments to His disciples. Loving each other— something that Will was all about. I started to call this another "Will Wink" – but in this case, I had to admit, it was a "God Wink" that I was very thankful for.



Remember 13 & Love Each Other



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Happy Easter - Love Ya Man!

John Trautwein

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