



ENCOUNTERING A GRIEF

"I am so sorry for whining, I ask God to help me. There are other people so much worse off than I am. I try to count my blessings but it is getting harder and harder." Karen said to me when we sat down for our little chat. I stated more, than inquired, "So Bill is getting worse?" She nodded affirmatively, her face now drawn, the lines more visible.

One look at her told me that her husband was getting worse. "I keep praying that God would make things better, would heal Bill but I just get nothing back." She looked down, "I know I shouldn't feel that way about God, I know God is here. I just don't understand why this had to happen to Bill."

"Well, Karen, nothing can help genetics, they think Alzheimer's disease is genetic."

*"The thought of my affliction and my homelessness
Is wormwood and gall!
My soul continually thinks of it
And is bowed down within me.
But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end;
They are new every morning;
Great is your faithfulness!
Lamentations 3:19-23*

"I know, it is just that I am so sad. Bill is my best friend, we did everything together. Now it is so difficult to even go anywhere, much less do the things we used to enjoy. Bill loved to read and that was something we did together. Once in a while he seems like his old self but that isn't very often these days." She looked defeated.

I was thinking of Joe and me. He is certainly my best friend and we do most everything together – we even joke about it. I felt so sad for Karen. Karen is the type person that remembers birthdays, has a card

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



- 1ST: SHANA ANGLE**
10 Little Mountain Circle
Rocky Mount, VA 24151
540-420-4691
- 1ST: DEBBIE POLLARD**
250 Sunnybrook Lane
Boones Mill, VA 24065
540-420-7296
- 3RD: CHRIS WAGNER**
5400 Bernard Drive #C202
Roanoke, VA 24018
540-676-4648
- 4TH: DAVID AMOS**
3427 Moran Street S.E.
Roanoke, VA 24014
540-427-5622
- 6TH: GEORGE CARLSON**
744 Foggy Ridge Road
Rocky Mount, VA 24151
540-483-1714
- 6TH: RICHARD LABARBERA**
5563 Alean Road
Boones Mill, VA 24065
540-334-1081
- 6TH: PAT ROBERTS**
2513 S. Clearing Road
Salem, VA 24153
540-330-0451
- 17TH: LINDA SIMS**
419 Valley Drive
Durham, NC 27740

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for every holiday, always offers me an encouraging word especially designed to show that she listens when I pray publicly at events. I thought about how random disease is, you can't be "good enough" to avoid the loss, especially the loss that comes with death. The human condition is continually moving in that direction.

I added my own thoughts "I believe Alzheimer is the most cruel disease, the person you love is now a stranger but still looks the same on the outside." She nodded in agreement, "It hurts because sometimes he is aware of it and I can see his fear. Do you have a special scripture for me today?"

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



- 18TH: TIM AMOS**
120 Coys Lane
Boones Mill, VA 24065
540-334-1009
- 18TH: ELLEN EVANS**
545 Riverbend Drive
Rocky Mount, VA 24151
540-580-6334
- 19TH: VONDA BRATTON**
45 Mountain View Drive
Rocky Mount, VA 24151
540-263-3853
- 20TH: JEFF ECHTERNACH**
2502 Poteet Road
Hardy, VA 24101
540-355-2787
- 20TH: BOB MOORE**
P.O. Box 134
Boones Mill, VA 24065
540-334-2087
- 21ST: STEVE BERNARD**
7879 Grassy Hill Road
Boones Mill, VA 24065
540-334-2960
- 21ST: NATHANIEL MCNEW**
7375 SW Short Road
Trimble, MO 64492
712-355-3772

**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY
Y'ALL!**

"Have you tried reading Lamentations?" I ask. She is taken aback but I continue "You know those ancient writers lamented their losses."

"Oh, but I know I am whining."

"If you complain because you don't get pickles on your burger when you go through the drive through, that is whining! Karen, you are not whining you are grieving." She looked puzzled, as I continued, "I went to a conference once and the only takeaway I had was this, Alzheimer's disease is terminal. Medical science allows people to live on long beyond what they need to at times. Bill has a terminal disease, just like cancer. You are losing the one you love and you are grieving."

Her voiced softened, "I visited the Virginia Vet Center, and I think it might be time to consider that. Bill does hate crowds though...but I know I have to start making decisions. But I am so angry." She lifted her fist and looked upward.

"That is why I suggested Lamentations; give God your lament. It doesn't change things but you will join all the people in history who have felt this sorrow, this anger, this helplessness."

Karen slowly nodded her head and said flatly, "You know, I can't even cry anymore."

"Then let yourself join the mourners of history. You have lost so much. You have memories that keep you going but physically you can't continue this way."

"I think you are right, I am tired in my bones. Maybe it is grief; I feel like I need to do something more."

"You can," I added, "you can give yourself grace. You are not

whining, you are hurting and if the scriptures say that there is a season for everything, this is your season of pain. Don't apologize, you didn't ask for this but move into it. Go with it. Tears or not. Don't try to minimize your own pain by comparing to someone else's because everyone has their own

pain and only you can measure your own struggles. Karen, you are allowed to hurt; you don't have to be the tough one here. You don't have to do this alone."

"I know, I am going to tell the boys. They live in California so I haven't let on. But I do need help."

"Sounds like you have already been thinking of the future. Sometimes hope is thin or hidden, but I know you have faith. Don't let your emotions trick you. You are not alone and God is there, unbidden and mostly hidden, but present in your pain just the same."

She hugged me as we parted, promising to keep me updated.

One thing common to all of humanity is that we are finite - our bodies break down and as much as we fight, we cannot change that. As people of faith we have hope, even when it is not always tangible. But the stories of our spiritual parents included in our scriptures can help us to know that we join a great cloud of witnesses in our faith but also in our sorrow and our pain. And that is not only OK with God but an invitation to feel God's presence. I know Karen and she comes from stoic stock; her very honesty and vulnerability touched me.

May we always know that our God is so big that our rages are just hugged away with our tears.

Pat Roberts

DON'T FORGET!!!

- Through Sunday, February 26th, we will be working out of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel. In this part of the Gospel, Jesus outlines what it is to be a disciple and what we are to be about as disciples of Christ. Join us for these lessons which commission and call us and help us see the promises of God. If you have time, please read Matthew chapters 5 – 7 through a few times as preparation for this study.
- We have purchased Lenten daily devotional booklets, *The Fellowship of Prayer*, authored by Disciples President Sharon Watkins and well known First Testament scholar, Rick Lowery. Please get your family's copy from Diane Bernard or Pastor Joe. We think these devotionals will both bless and challenge us as we move toward Easter.
- It's not too early for us to be thinking about our first Applebee's Pancake Breakfast of the year to be held on Saturday, March 4th. The proceeds go to help *Helping Hands* and is an important part of what allows them to continue to help those in Franklin County who are in need. See George Carlson if you can volunteer – we need a lot of help. See George or Pastor Joe for tickets (\$5.00 each). Sell them to your friends! If that doesn't work buy them for all your friends! The thing is that the work that *Helping Hands* does is important and donations have been down this last year. Let's do what we can!
- Speaking of helping, the Boones Mill Christian Church through the efforts of the children, collected \$360 and purchased a goat for three different families through Heifer International this last year. Also the members of this congregation generously donated \$300 to facilitate a Gift of Clean Water for a small village, also through Heifer International. I am proud of us! I don't know of anything that we could be about that is more life changing than these kinds of projects in places where deep poverty and need are the norm, not the exception. I see Jesus in us! Bless you.

BMCC FEBRUARY 2017



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 CHOIR PRACTICE 7:30 PM	2	3	4
5 FIFTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME STUDY @ 9:15 AM WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM	6	7	8 CHOIR PRACTICE 7:30 PM	9	10	11
12 SIXTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME ELDERS @8:15 STUDY @ 9:15 AM WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM	13	14 VALENTINE'S DAY 	15 CHOIR PRACTICE 7:30 PM	16	17	18
19 SEVENTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME STUDY @ 9:15 AM WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM	20  HOLIDAY PRESIDENT'S DAY	21	22 CHOIR PRACTICE 7:30 PM	23	24	25 BMCC FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST THE ROANOKER 9:00 AM
26 EIGHTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME STUDY @ 9:15 AM WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM	27	28				