

## News & Notes

Sunday, August 26, 2007

**Remember in Prayer:** Daryl Alberson; Steve Alberson; Vikie Cobb; Diane Cox; Melba Cox; Sally Etta Crawford; Gwynn Curtis; Robert Gibson; Charles Johnson; Heather Joyner; Lettie Mae Hunt; Dot Ketchum; Tate King; James Luna; John and Deliah Mann; Carla Miller; Diane Mize; Rob Norman; Shirley Ortiz; Forrest Phelps; Ann Ray; Judy Robbins; Katherine Shaw; Chris Spence; Jamie Spence; Ron Tega; Calvin Ursery; Nancy Griffin Wamack; Tony Wilburn; Alvie Williford;

**Sympathy** is extended to the family of Billy Jean Ray.

**Pantry item** for the month of August is aluminum foil.

**Ashland events:** Tonight: Pot-luck dinner after evening service; September 2: Singing at Briarcrest Extended Care at 4:15 PM.

**Area events:** Beginning today: Gospel meeting with Lance Foster at the Marlow church of Christ;

### Sermon in Preview:

AM: Mount Calvary

PM: Last-Sunday-of-the-Month Singing

### For the Record (August 19, 2007):

Attendance: 81    Contribution: \$1325.00    Budget: \$1326.00

### *The Ashland Church of Christ*

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#### Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM

Worship 10:30 AM

Worship 5:00 PM

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

#### Shepherds:

Barney King

Carrol Street

spreading the Good News  
**Ashland Announcer**

"GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS..." (MATTHEW 28:19)

## Grieving

Jeremy Northrop

Webster's New World College Dictionary defines 'grief' as "intense emotional suffering caused by loss, disaster, misfortune, etc." Everyone who has ever lived any considerable amount of time has experienced grief. It is a part of life. It is unavoidable. Everyone must deal with loss and even suffering in different ways.

Many have used the existence of grief and loss as a legitimate reason for the supposed invalidity of the Bible and even the existence of God. However, the Bible actually shows the great compassion of God. Jesus, who was God in the flesh, dealt with people who grieved in a loving and compassionate way. In fact, Jesus Himself grieved on occasion. Lazarus, the brother of Mary, died in John 11:1-16. Mary quickly ran to where Jesus was and told Him that if He had been there earlier, Lazarus would not have died. Now, notice what Jesus did when He saw Mary weeping: "He groaned in the spirit and was troubled" (John 11:33b). The compassion and heartache of Jesus is seen further in what is the shortest verse of the English Bible: "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). This brings a new light or at least a proof to the text that says, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus not only has compassion on those who deal with loss but He understands loss. He knows what it is like to experience loss.

There is another account or event with which Jesus was involved which shows the compassion of Christ: Luke 7:11-17,

Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went

with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us'; and, 'God has visited His people.' And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

It is noteworthy that the text points out that this lady was a widow. She was grieving as the Lord directed her not to weep. She was experiencing loss because her son had died. Interestingly, the point of this story is to show who Jesus is and what He was about. Yet, as an interesting side-note, one can learn that Jesus is compassionate and concerned each time His children deal with pain and loss. Christians can know emphatically God does indeed care.

There is another passage of scripture which might well be considered when discussing the subject of grieving. Luke records

Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, 'Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' Then He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.' And another also said, 'Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:57-62).

Some have reasoned because Jesus said "Let the dead bury their own dead" that it is not biblical to grieve. Yet, this conclusion can only be made to the grieving that Jesus was involved in located in John 11. This conclusion would have to be made in contradiction to the grieving of the widow of Luke 7. The point of what Jesus is trying to say in this text is that anyone's grieving must not interfere with his or her own relationship with God. The man who wanted to bury his father was willing to allow this burial to get in the way of his following of Christ.

Can grieving over suffering or loss prevent one from putting God first in their lives. Absolutely! Some let their sickness get in the way of their service to Christ. Some do not experience closure with a particular loss and after such an event did not put God first in their lives. There have been those who have lost mates and after such they were not faithful to the cause of Christ. Jesus encourages His followers to never give up on following Him. Children of God do not need to allow their suffering or loss to get in the way of their following of God. Hence, Jesus said, "let the dead bury their own dead" and "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." One way that children of God can deal with loss and suffering is simply to move on. There is certainly a "time to mourn" (Ecclesiastes 3:4). The time is and needs to be temporary. Jesus tells His followers to look ahead because looking back (i.e. struggling with regret) is not fitting for citizens of the kingdom. A lot of the suffering that people go through is self inflicted in the sense that they are struggling with regret. Paul said, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead..." (Philippians 3:13).

Everyone has to deal with loss. Everyone has to grieve. God understands. God cares about the grieving that His children endure. Yet, God deserves first place in the life of His children. He demands such. Therefore, let all children of God take the necessary time to grieve. Let all children of God find the peace and comfort in just knowing that God is there and He cares for His people. He grieves with them. But, most importantly, let all children of God look forward, not backward, in order to move past their grief and put God first in their lives.