

Bermudian Church of the Brethren

WEDNESDAY'S WORD – a midweek thought from Pastor Larry M. Dentler
to share a word of inspiration ... encouragement ... challenge ... a smile ... in the middle of your week
January 16 in the year of our Lord 2019 - #772

Karen

Thirty years ago this week my dear wife's sister Karen died of a rare cancer at age 30. It was a devastating time for our family. She was so young. We were living in IN at the time and being so far from Karen was so difficult for Cathy! The four Hoover girls: Cathy, Karen, Sharon & Nancy are like four puzzle pieces. They are all so different... unique... amazing... blessings... and yet they fit together to make a wonderful 'whole.' I hadn't grown up with a sister so learning to be around this household of four girls & their Mom was a fascinating time for young Larry!!! I learned to love each of them deeply. And when Karen died a piece of the puzzle was missing.

Karen had been on a busy career path at the time of her diagnosis and wasn't really as close to the Lord as she had been at an earlier time. She acknowledged that openly & honestly to me. Cancer brought her focus back to her Lord. When we anointed her we prayed and prayed & believed for a miraculous healing. The Lord provided healing. Everyone who knew Karen talked of how bravely she faced her death and how renewed her faith was. But the physical healing we prayed for did not come.

I remember the day ... like it was yesterday ... as the end was drawing close ... when Karen asked me to preach her funeral message. My first response was, *"No Karen, there is no way!"* But Karen was a strong person and she never budged. She wanted me to do that for her. I did.

I remember kneeling in tears in the basement youth room before the funeral service. *"Lord, I can't do this! But You can! Please speak through me!"* I spoke about the truth that we all had more questions than answers and that this is OK. I spoke against the clichés that folks toss around at a time like this out of desperation for something to say. They don't help ... they hurt. And they are not Biblical.

No – Karen didn't become an angel. She's Karen! Every fascinating quality you loved about her is still part of her. She's not an angel, but she is singing with angels.

No – The Lord didn't need her more than us. That's not how God works.

No – Cancer isn't God's will. Illness is part of our existence because of Satan.

No – The Bible doesn't say that all things happen for a reason. It says that if we truly love the Lord He will take even our worst times and help us find good from them.

No – Neither our family nor Karen were being punished by God. Again, God doesn't work like that.

No – Karen wasn't taken from us *"too early."* She lived exactly the perfect length of time that God had planned for her to live.

I encouraged folks to cling to God's promises.

Yes – Karen’s death didn’t surprise God. Karen lived every day that was outlined for her from before she was conceived. While that may not make sense to us, it is perfect in God’s sight, in fact God rejoiced on the day Karen went from this life to Glory!

“You planned how many days I would live. You wrote down the number of them in your book before I had lived through even one of them.” Psalm 139:16 NIV

Yes – God didn’t abandon Karen, nor us, for nothing can separate us from God’s love and He will never forsake us. He cared for and loved Karen through her illness and drew her close to Himself, and when she died to this life, He welcomed her home!

“For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Death can’t, and life can’t. The angels won’t, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God’s love away. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, or where we are—high above the sky, or in the deepest ocean—nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ when He died for us.” Romans 8:38-39 LB

“When they arrive at the gates of death, God welcomes those who love Him.”

Psalm 116:15 Message

Yes – Karen’s suffering ended the moment she breathed her last here. As a believer in Christ she had a “Place” in heaven that the Lord Jesus had prepared just for her. These past 30 years have been the very best years of her life. I suspect she watches out for us and will wonder what has taken us so long to meet her there!

“In my Father’s House are many rooms; if it were not so I would have told you. And I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you with me that you also may be where I am.”

John 14:2-3 NIV

“...we would rather leave these bodies and be at home with the Lord.”

2 Corinthians 5:8 CEV

And Yes – God can take the pain and help you to use it for ‘good.’ Cancer brought Karen back into close fellowship with Jesus. Karen’s death has made each of the “Hoover girls” more caring, sensitive, responsive to the hurts of others around them. The three of them are beloved by friends that they have ministered to through the years. They are special friends to those around them, and more so because of the pain of the loss of Karen when they were young. I like to think that this painful experience helped me in my ministry to those who suffer loss.

“So we are convinced that every detail of our lives is continually woven together to fit into God’s perfect plan of bringing good into our lives, for we ... have been called to fulfill His designed purpose.” Romans 8:28 TPT

In Karen’s funeral message I used the illustration of an oyster. When a grain of sand gets stuck in an oyster it is like glass. Painful! And would kill the oyster. But God-given secretions form

around the piece of sand and a pearl of great price is formed. I quoted Peter Marshall who referred to the pearl as, ***“something wonderful wrapped around trouble.”***

As our family remembers 30 years since Karen’s home-going, it still brings a tear, I pray these thoughts will be meaningful if you’ve recently lost a loved one, or still feel the pain of a loss from years ago. Know for sure dear friends that the Lord understands and is with you in your pain!

In Karen’s funeral service we shared the Irish blessing that she so loved. I leave it with you today. ***“May the road rise up to meet you, May the wind be always at your back, May the sun shine warm upon your face, And the rains fall soft upon your fields, And until we meet again, May God hold you in the palm of His hand.”***

Pastor Larry <><