

Knowing the Comfort of God

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

While I have spoken with many of you individually, I wanted to write a letter to all of you to share the journey I have been taking in my grief process after the death of my sweet husband, Mike. You were there for our family in the death of our brother, Gordon and our parents. Mere words could never tell you what your prayers and many acts of kindness have meant to Natalie and me along with the rest of our family. With the letter I also want to comfort you and encourage you with the truth that I have not only known, but have personally experienced as I have gone through this difficult time. That truth is that God does not and will not forsake us, even in the most difficult experiences of our lives. In fact, in John 16:33 Jesus tells us that we will have tribulation in this life but he turns right around and encourages us with the message of the cross in that same verse.

In the past four years and especially in the past two years since Mike's passing to be with God I have learned that the grieving process is like a snowflake—it is a very unique experience for each individual. With the Lord as our guide, Natalie and I continue to work through and discover what that process looks like for us. When Mike died, both Natalie and I were overwhelmed with the love and the support of Beltline, Midway and all the surrounding congregations of the Lord's Church. We so appreciated every sweet card, every hug, and every tear you shared with us. However, when we saw this grief within the congregation, we began to come to terms with the grief that we were experiencing. We came to the realization that in order to grieve properly, we needed to seek solitude to let the Lord repair our hearts as only He can do. Because our grief was so great at that time, we felt called to find peace in the loving arms of our family while the Lord worked to heal us. At separate times Natalie and I both have been apart of grief support classes, which have proven to be a blessing to both of us.

In the Fall of 2011 I came to Nashville to be with Natalie, however during 2011 and the first half of 2012 we were back and forth with love and concern for many of you in the passing away of so many of our dear friends. During her school year Natalie worked with three schools in Sumner County and I traveled with her most every day. While she was with students I would take my Bible and try to find comfort from God's word. There were times when I was able to assist her with special projects and at Christmas of 2011 I was given the opportunity to shop for needy families on behalf of the teachers at her various schools. Mike's cousin Amanda and her husband Steve along with their two daughters Emma Grace and Sophia were an amazing blessing to us through these months following Mike's passing. When I was not with Natalie or back in Alabama I was spending special time with them and Mike's aunt Dean, who we recently lost in death this past December. During all of these months Mike's sisters, brother, and family stayed close to Natalie and me. In our grief and loss we supported one another. My sister Janet and her husband Wayne along with Gordon's sweet family have been an amazing support to us as well. We are so thankful for them.

The Church at Crieve Hall, as well as other congregations, has also been a blessing. The church is a refuge and shelter in a time of grief. In September 2012 I placed membership with Crieve Hall and became involved with the ladies ministry. Then at the first of this year I began teaching a Sunday school class for preschool children, which was very enjoyable for me. There is nothing like children to brighten up your life in such a sweet way.

In all of our trials we can say our faith is stretched and even though challenged, our trust in the Lord becomes a great blessing. Doesn't this sound familiar to all of us? We learn from Abraham and many others that faith does not demand explanation, but rests on God's promises. When we view the cross, it is not the only place where Jesus died for our sins, but it is also where He transforms suffering into glory. With this realization we climb our mountains looking to Jesus the finisher of our faith. A song that speaks to this and has meant so much to us in the past few years is titled, Where Joy and Sorrow Meet by Zoe, which helps us gain God's perspective.

We believe that we have climbed that same mountain with faith and trust in the Lord, feeling heartbroken and lost, but knowing that God would not lead us on this journey without a purpose and that we must remain faithful like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who told the king "we will serve our God whether He delivers us or not". In our trials God is also with us, much like the fourth man in the fire, who was likened to the Son of God. This is our purpose: to serve God through all life's storms. With a steadfast faith that we have been taught as children, we know the Lord will continue to guide us and see us through.

We thank you all for your continued love, support, and especially your prayers. Many of you have also asked about Mike's final days on this earth. I will tell you that like Moses, Mike spent his final moments encouraging others in their walks with the Lord. I can tell you with absolute certainty that Mike would rather our grief for his passing be focused on the joy of God's goodness and about comforting and encouraging others in that goodness than on his physical absence. Mike left us with a legacy of the joy and freedom that comes with trusting the Lord and living sacrificially by serving others. While many people use the euphemism of a loved one being "lost" when they die, I want to let you know that Mike is not now, nor has he ever been lost. We know where he is. I believe there is a great deal of anticipation in heaven among our loved ones who know we are coming home to be with them forever. Hope assures us that our parting here is not the end of our relationship, only an interruption. They are only a step ahead of us in a place so wonderful God called it paradise! One day there will be a reunion of which we have never seen the like. The greatest of all will be to see our God face to face and spend an eternity with Him and all of the people we love.

As I write this letter, I am reminded of one of Natalie's favorite memories of her Dad. She remembers being at the church and seeing Mike go from performing a funeral service, to a wedding service, to physically getting down on his knees to pray for someone with the congregation. She loved seeing how, no matter how much he had on his plate, Mike very clearly lived his life to serve others for the joy of the Lord, always trusting that God would help him overcome any difficulty. His optimism was contagious. It is because of

this great, shared love that we have for the Lord and for others through Jesus that both Natalie and I can stand fortified and renewed, proclaiming God's faithfulness. As Mike demonstrated in his life, so we too live fully, knowing that to trust and walk with the Lord is the only answer. So much of this Mike, Natalie and I learned from Kyle and Willodean McWhorter, our legacy of faith.

We can all truthfully say we have seen God's providence and care in this journey. He is and always will be fulfilling His purpose in His Church. Now we wish to share with you God's word spoken by Mike, Kyle and Gordon through this website. We will continue to share God's messages from them over time. Our hearts are full as we have gotten to know Steve and Cindy Smith who continue in moving forward to reach souls for Christ and encouraging others to live for the Kingdom. This is true with so many ministers who have meant so much to us over the years. All of you who have shared in our lives in the preaching of the gospel of Christ are always in our prayers and in our hearts forever. God says, "Beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim his word". The best is yet to be my Christian friends and we live in great anticipation of the day that we will feast at the wedding.

*With the Love of the Lord,
MaryLynn and Natalie Nix*