

Challenge

THE GOOD NEWS PAPER

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PRAYER LETTER OF CHALLENGE LITERATURE FELLOWSHIP (AUST.) INC.

When my sister-in-law Ann married the man of her dreams we were delighted not only for her, but also in how God had provided for her. Things were going wonderfully well until one day Ann collapsed while being involved in volunteer emergency service. When she went to the doctor she looked fine and the doctor just assumed there was no major problem.

Ann was sent off to have a precautionary brain scan to make sure that there was no other sinister problem lurking undetected. Soon after she returned to the doctor feeling confident that there was nothing major to be worried about. Unfortunately the doctor was stunned to see that Ann had a rather unusual form of brain tumour. However, the good news was that for the short-term it could be managed with medication.

As we have been looking at Psalm 23 we have been encouraged that God, our divine shepherd, provides our every need, cares for our every need, and directs our every step and stop.

We now come to verse 4 where David as a shepherd would have led his flock up and down hills and through valleys. As he recalls those occasions he draws a parallel to the Christian. It is because of these words in verse 4 that this psalm is so commonly used at funerals. For Christians who are dying or for those still alive they are words of enormous encouragement.

For my sister-in-law Ann the shadow of death hung over her for almost ten years. During those years she walked by faith with her husband knowing that the future was uncertain at best and very short at worst. During those years she gave birth to two children, as well as being able to live a quality of life.

As the years went by Ann continued to exhibit optimism that God would sustain her, and if He so desired would heal her. However, if He didn't she knew that her destiny was secure in Christ Jesus. She recognised that as the apostle Peter states, our bodies are nothing more than a tent, a covering for our souls and spirits.

For Ann death came as a blessed release from the hurt and pain that is so often associated with the result of sin on our bodies. The wonderful thing for Christians is that death is only a brief shadow because it is the doorway to eternity. However, the choice one makes in this life obviously determines where the doorway of death leads.

Sadly for those who reject the gift of God's salvation death is not only a dark cloud, but something to be feared. I remember talking to my wife's aging grandmother about death. Her response was one of complete fear and denial. She just did not want to know or even think about the prospect of death.

That is so often the way it is when your destiny in Christ Jesus is rejected. When Ann died her husband almost immediately went into a prayer of praise and thanks to God for all that He had done and for the way He had kept and blessed Ann over ten years. John related to me later that the Lord's presence in that hospital room was just incredible.

For Ann, the angels in heaven rejoiced as she came through the valley into the awesome presence of God. No wonder John and the others around Ann's bed were able to break into a prayer of praise and thanks to God.

For some of you reading this Prayerletter you may not be facing death right now, but some other struggle or battle. Just recently I was talking with a Christian man who was and is going through a valley experience. He came home one day to find his wife in the arms of another man. Obviously he was devastated with such an unexpected happening.

How do you deal with such a shadow, with such a valley experience? Well first of all we need to understand that a shadow cannot harm us. For example the shadow of a gun or a knife cannot hurt or kill us. While we may be experiencing a time of shadow we need to see that shadows are not permanent. I know from my own experience there are trials that you think will never end, but they do. One thing I have noticed about shadows is that they tend to distort or give us an unclear view of what is being shaded.

Going through shadow times is not the time to make critical decisions, as often our perspective on the particular problem is distorted.

(Please turn over)

We need to also understand that as we walk through the valley of the trials and tribulations we are passing through, that we are not setting up camp in the valley. The reality is that we need to go through these times because through these times we learn most about God, about ourselves and our need for a deeper walk with Him. In fact we can have our most profound witness through our valley experiences. Someone has said that in our Christian lives we are either just entering a valley experience or just emerging from one.

Again we need to understand that valley experiences can transform our worship of God, and dramatically deepen our prayer life. In all of this we must constantly remind ourselves that God is there with us and that He will never leave us or forsake us.

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge



Praise

1. Praise the Lord for his incredible faithfulness to the work of Challenge over nearly 25 years. We have been greatly blessed in every way and are most thankful for His wonderful provision.
2. Praise the Lord for His provision of finances. The Australian and overseas work requires ongoing finances and we have been greatly blessed as His people have given generously.
3. We have been able to provide many books for pastors and leaders in South Africa. We praise the Lord for those who have made this possible. There is so little available there and even then their resources are very limited. Our Impact Africa team was also able to provide much in the way of literature, food and bicycles for pastors and evangelists.
4. Praise the Lord for the wonderful way He watched over the Impact Africa team and blessed them as they worked among the folk there in squatter camps, prisons, tenements, hospitals etc.

Prayer

1. Please pray for Carl Carmody as he visits some pastors in Ghana before he returns from the Impact Africa mission trip. He has made some good contacts there and is looking at the possibility of getting Challenge into that country.
2. We are still endeavouring to have a Challenge representative in other States. Please pray with us that the Lord will provide people willing to help in this way.
3. Pray with us too as we are looking for someone to take over the editorship of the paper so that Carl Carmody will be freed up to do the other work such as administration and promotion more effectively.
4. Please pray for our regular writers. We would not have a paper if not for their willingness to supply us with articles. Pray for them as they consider each month what the Lord would have them to write.
5. We still have some outstanding finance needed for the air conditioning. Please pray for that to be completed soon.

Special Request: We are still collecting books to send to African Pastors. If you have any good quality books on Christian Living, Commentaries, Biographies, etc., that you are no longer using, please contact us here at Challenge.

Challenge Literature Fellowship

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