

THE ENCOURAGER

“He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.” 2 Cor. 1:4 (The Message)



It's Time to Trim..

Living in Florida, we have been led to believe that Sunshine is our most valuable asset. Not anymore. Over the last few years, those pesky northern winter storms have made their way down to “God’s country.” I tried something new this year. Instead of blanketing my tender tropical foliage with sheets, I used white outdoor Christmas lights. My friend promised the lights would keep the plant roots a good ten degrees warmer. Wrong! My delicate little lights were no match for our unseasonable conditions. The little fledglings look, horrible!

Now that the threat of future freezes has diminished, I should go out and trim up the front yard. Fresh growth is already springing forth, beckoning me to prune the dead stuff. Something within me resists the urge to let the old go and make room for the new. Just over two weeks ago we lost my father. Oscar had been diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease a few years back, but only displayed a few symptoms. Throughout 2010, Dad’s walk became slower and by Thanksgiving he had plummeted to new lows. In addition to a number of other medical conditions he tanked.
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DON'T GRIEVE FOR ME ... (Author Unknown)

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free
 I'm following the path God has laid you see.
 I took His hand when I heard him call
 I turned my back and left it all.

I could not stay another day
 To laugh, to love, to work, to play.
 Tasks left undone must stay that way
 I found that peace at the close of day.

If my parting has left a void
 Then fill it with remembered joy.
 A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss
 Oh yes, these things I too will miss.

Be not burdened with times of sorrow
 I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.
 My life's been full, I savored much
 Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.

Perhaps my time seemed all too brief
 Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
 Lift up your hearts and peace to thee
 God wanted me now; He set me free.

*" Faith sees the invisible, believes the unbelievable,
 and receives the impossible. " Corrie Ten Boom*

“IN HIM WAS LIFE, AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN. AND THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS AND THE DARKNESS DID NOT COMPREHEND IT.”

JOHN 1:4.5 (NKJ)

NEEDY FRIENDS:

IT'S TIME TO TRIM, Cont'd

Over the Thanksgiving weekend,, it took my brother and me forty-five minutes to walk Dad from the bedroom to the den where his recliner was. Our Christmas season was filled with hospital visits and two different unsuccessful Rehab programs. In time, eating became too frustrating for Dad. Even getting liquids in him was difficult. One day after Dad rallied around and started eating a little, the Rehab. Staff found him that evening unresponsive in his room. He had experienced a heart attack and was rushed to the hospital again. Sadly, his food had begun backing up the wrong way and he developed Pneumonia. After suctioning out the food that backed up into his lungs the doctors told us there was nothing more they could do for him and called in Hospice.

In God's marvelous providence, Dad was admitted into a beautiful Hospice House facility, in Tallahassee, where he and my Mom live. For the next five days, Dad remained generally unresponsive but pain-free. He was given excellent palliative care that allowed him to pass from this life into his eternal reward of heaven. Our family spent the final week of Dad's life at the Hospice House where we were all treated like royalty. Dad remained free of any tubes or machinery other than oxygen and occasional morphine. As his organ systems began to shut down, we likened it to a pilgrim's journey home; pulling up the tent pegs to his earthly house. Dad's death was peaceful and serene

I rejoice that Dad is now in the presence of our Lord, so I guess it's time to start trimming back my dead plants and see what new life is springs forth. Just as with the plants, each of us die a little more each day, as we embrace our inevitable losses and disabilities. The other day I started reading, 'Tuesdays with Morrie' by Mitch Albom. Mitch recounts his days with an old college professor dying of ALS. As I've been reading, I'm amazed at the similarities between Parkinson's and ALS. Both progressive terminal conditions allow for plenty of time to repair broken relationships and say our good-byes. I'm so grateful to God for the Father I was given. Oscar Gullede, will be remembered for his keen wit, kind manner, generosity, and unselfish consideration others needs. I will miss Dad! I'll always love you and value the man you have inspired me to become. It's time to prune some plants!

I've always found the old Sunday School adage, A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED to be true. A few years ago, I was sitting in a Wednesday night church service on the other side of town, when my back pain became unbearable. Pulling my friend Peter from his back row seat, I imposed upon him to drive me home. Even before we reached my house, I knew there was no way I could change cars and sit upright. He ran inside to get my wife and we raced to the emergency room. Looking back now I can smile, but at the time all I could do was cry out in pain. By the time a triage nurse saw me and took my blood pressure it was 170 over 110. Within minutes of admitting me she snickered and told me I had a kidney stone.

A KIDNEY STONE? Was that new supposed to make me feel better? The only association I ever made with that condition was pain! Thank God for a little morphine that made the cat scan bearable and helped confirm the diagnosis. Weeks later, the stone had to be broken up and removed while under anesthesia, twice! At least it was gone. I will always remember the kindness my friend Peter showed to me that night, even after being stuck in the emergency room with us till midnight. Another kind friend of ours drove across town to pick Peter up and take him home. My friend Peter and other friend George certainly understood 1 Peter 1:22: "so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters, loving each other deeply with all your heart, (NLT). Cindy and I no longer have family in Orlando, but I'll always be thankful for my TRUE brothers of a different mother.

Embrace...



Last week, I found myself sitting in an Al-anon meeting listening to a bunch of strangers comment on the topic of feelings. We were told that feelings are just that, feelings. They were not to be seen as holding any undue power over us. Feelings can be embraced, rejected, stuffed, or even dismissed.

What do you do with the feelings you encounter from day today? Those that make us happy we tend to embrace, but those that are uncomfortable, hurtful, or challenging too often are dismissed, rejected, or stuffed. Why not embrace every feeling for being just a feeling? When we embrace a feeling it allows us time to sit with it and examine it from all sides. Once we have disciplined ourselves to feel the feeling and live in the moment, we are then free to keep or dismiss it..

Mitch Albom, in his book ' Tuesdays with Morrie ', likens a feeling (such as loneliness) to an old flannel shirt we have become accustom to wearing. Since the feeling is familiar you can embrace it as a shirt and put it on yet you are also free to experience it and take it off at any time. I want to become better at living in the moment and embracing the feelings that come my way. Won't you pray with me that God will help us experience the feelings and not let them become a controlling influence in our lives?

THE ENCOURAGER - A MONTHLY PUBLICATION TO ENCOURAGE THE BODY OF CHRIST.

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