



## A Time for Everything: Mourning

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It was three years ago that I had the privilege of working through the process that would eventually lead to me being selected as the executive director of the CGGC. As with any selection process, there were lots of questions to answer, both in written form and in personal interviews. There was much about that process that I don't necessarily remember now, but there was one question that has stuck with me closely, even now, three years later.



“What’s the most difficult or hardest thing you’ve experienced in life or ministry and what have you learned from it?”

I thought it was a great question and I’ve asked it of others several times since then, but it’s a question that stopped me in my tracks. I remember my initial response almost verbatim: “I feel like I’ve lived a fairly easy life as far as hardship goes. My parents are both still alive. I’ve never buried a friend. I’ve enjoyed relatively good health. Many things in my journey have left me feeling fortunate and blessed.” For the record, I was able to identify some painful and difficult circumstances from my life and talk about what I was able to glean from those experiences, but the good in my life has far outweighed the bad.

There have been many, many times over the past three years that I’ve gone back to that question and pondered it. We all walk through good times and bad in the journey of life. Some may seem to have it a little easier, some folks have to walk much more tragic or difficult paths, but we all get to walk through the good and bad that life brings as we work out our faith. Ecclesiastes 3:1 reminds us “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”

As you get older you often add experiences. Since answering that question just three years ago, I’ve said goodbye to a couple of dear friends and grieved alongside their families. I now have a better understanding of both the pain and great comfort and grace that comes with losing a friend in death.

This week I added another experience to the list of my life experiences. It’s not unique to me as most of us have to experience these things as we walk through life, but it is new to me as I’ve never been down this road before.

My father, Marlyn, entered into glory late Tuesday afternoon this week. My father had battled Lewy Body Dementia for the past several years and drew his last breath with my mother, Bonnie, brother, Nick, and sister-in-law, Sara, by his side. Dad hated the disease and what it had stolen from him. We hated the disease and how it devastated my father. My father no longer has to wage war against this awful disease.

My dad had made a decision to follow Jesus many years ago, before I was born, and that one decision transformed his life. My father's Christian faith was the real deal. As my sister-in-law reflected earlier this week, "He read the Bible and lived by it." So we are grieving this week, but we do not grieve as those who have no hope, because we know that Dad is with Jesus now and he is more alive, more whole, and more complete than he's ever been. There's a real peace and comfort in knowing he's in the presence of Jesus and no longer confused or angry or agitated.

This experience with grief is new for me and I'm sure I'll continue to learn as its waves wash over me without warning in nearly uncontrollable ways. I know this experience isn't unique to me, but it's unlike anything I've ever experienced in my years of living. The pain and sorrow are more real than I have ever felt, and the grace and comfort of Christ are more present than I understood was even possible.

I'm grateful for a dad who loved Jesus, loved my mother, loved his boys and their families and our extended family and made every effort to love his neighbor as he loved himself. I'm grateful for a Savior who broke the power of sin and death, who rescued my dad and now holds him in His arms when I cannot.

I'm grateful for a church family who has overwhelmed me with their expressions of love and support. The words thank you are not sufficient at a time like this. Just know that my family and I are grateful for all your kind words, loving acts of compassion, and the many prayers lifted up on our behalf. You have blessed us beyond measure.

Christ's Peace,  
**Lance**