

## **From the Corner – *Good Grief***

On March 25, my mother passed away at the age of 92. In my 40 years of being a pastor I have never encounter the intensity of grief through which I am now walking. As a pastor I walk with people through the joys and pains of this life, but, being the son (not the pastor), the sorrow I feel around my mother's passing is agonizing. After all these years of offering comfort, prayer, and encouragement to others, I find myself jumping from one stage of grief to another within a few minutes or hours.

Some have said, "This is what you do. How can this be?"

I learned, to my surprise, that what I need to grieve is not only the loss of my mother, but the loss of all four of my parents (Dad, stepmom, stepdad, and now my mother) as well as the members of my congregation, whose lives I've connected with, and funerals I have officiated. The pace of ministry has required me to jump from pastoral care to the funeral service, to the burial and benediction, and right back into the never-ending responsibilities of ministry. I struggle with grieving these layers of loss.

This is embarrassing to confess. But the reality of a pastor's schedule requires jumps from one thing to the next: a lighthearted joyful event to the shock of an overdose, the birth of a baby to a suicide. The emotional, interpersonal, organizational, and spiritual responsibilities never cease; the result is very little time to step aside, regroup, or find peace and joy again. I need to grieve, I need to rest, I need to heal, and to carry on I need regular interludes of Sabbath. I'm learning to be easy on myself and I'm working toward wholeness. How about you?

"...do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." -Nehemiah 8.10b

Journey well,  
*Pastor Keith*

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