

Lutheran Women in Mission



When Christians Say Good-Bye

by Greg Cynova

Opening

Sing "Blest Be the Tie that Binds" (*TLH 464, LW 295*).

As we look back over our lives, we find ourselves again and again having to say good-bye- to family, friends, homes, jobs and events that have enriched and shaped our lives. Marriages, funerals, vacations, meetings, graduations and countless other changes mark our earthly experience.

1. The Long Good-bye

Throughout Deuteronomy, Moses prepares the Israelites for their entrance into the Promised Land. Forty years previously they had not been ready. Now the time has come, but Moses will no longer lead them. He had disobeyed God and forfeited the privilege of entering with the people. Moses knew his earthly journey was now complete, so he sat down with the people to review the laws God had given them to regulate their personal lives and the new nation. To get an idea of the length and content of this good-bye, quickly page through Deuteronomy, noting a few of the section headings.

What were some of the subjects Moses covered in his farewell?

What circumstances in life can lead to a long good-bye?

Have you ever experienced a long good-bye? What was its purpose? What subjects were covered in your discussions?

2. The Good-byes of Circumstance

Read **1 Samuel 20:35-42**.

Sometimes circumstances in life change to the point where we can no longer remain in our present location. Forced to move, we often leave behind close friends and family.

Why did David have to move elsewhere? (see **1 Samuel 20:33**).

What circumstances today bring about this kind of good-bye?

Have you ever experienced such a situation? What helped you deal with it?

3. The Impossible Good-byes

Read **Ruth 1:6-18**.

Sometimes, no matter how bad the circumstances, leaving a friend or family member becomes impossible because of love and concern for their well-being.

What reasons can you think of for Ruth's desire to stay with Naomi?

Have you ever found yourself staying with a friend or loved one knowing that it would be difficult?

Even though others may have been available to help, what kept you committed to remaining with this loved one?

4. The Good-byes Due to Changes in Leadership

Read **2 Kings 2:1-12**.

Leadership changes are often difficult and emotional. Elisha didn't even want to talk about the impending departure of his mentor, Elijah. When leadership changes involve those with close relationships, there may be a sense of loss and grief.

If you ever held a leadership position or committee responsibility, when your term of office or ability to serve came to an end, what emotions did you have to deal with?

How did you view those who succeeded you in office?

5. The Good-byes of Necessity

Read Jesus' farewell to His disciples in **John 16:6-13**. If Jesus had stayed on earth with us, we would have expected Him to feed and heal us. In our comfort, we would have had a hard time seeing the urgency of reaching the world with the Good News of His love and forgiveness. We could also have become comfortable with living in an imperfect world.

As a parent facing empty-nest syndrome, what is your consolation?

Have you ever had to step back and let others do the work

you had delegated to them? Was it easy or difficult? Why?

Where does the strength come from to continue doing the work Christ left for us to accomplish in His name? (see v. 13).

6. The Final Good-byes

Read the account of St. Paul's final meeting with leaders of the church at Ephesus in **Acts 20:17-38**. Final good-byes are a painful experience, but they are inevitable. As believers, we can face these good-byes with confidence and hope, for in reality, final good-byes between Christians are the end of ever having to say good-bye again. St. Paul helped the believers in the church at Thessalonica see that on the day of Christ's return we will be reunited with those who have fallen asleep and we will be with the Lord forever (**1 Thessalonians 4:17b**). Together!

We have all experienced or will experience the death of a loved one. What did your deceased loved ones do to prepare the family for their departure?

What do you wish they had done?

How might you prepare your loved ones for your departure to be with Christ?

Close

Allow a few minutes for private prayer and reflection. Tell the Lord about specific good-byes that stick in your mind and heart. Share with Him the emotions connected with those events. If there is joy, praise Him. If there is sorrow, lean upon Him and let the tears release it. If there is anger, pray for the ability to forgive. If there is concern for the future, pray for wisdom to make the right decisions. If there is a need to pass the mantle to another, pray that you do so with dignity and wise counsel. Pray that God would use every good-bye to strengthen your faith and give you the opportunity to share the love of Jesus in a concrete way with someone your life has touched.

Sing together (a cappella, if the music is not available):

God be with you till we meet again;
By His counsels guide, uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you;
God be with you till we meet again.
Chorus: Till we meet, till we meet, Till we meet at Jesus'
feet;
Till we meet, till we meet, God be with you till we meet
again.



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