



## BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

Devotion

*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).*

In May of 2017 my husband and I were getting our home ready to move to our first call in Minnesota. My husband was finishing his final quarter at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The most exciting part was we were expecting the arrival of our first child, a son named Henry. He was due in September of 2017. We were looking forward to what God had in store for us in the next few months and we were eager to wrap up our time as a seminarian couple and start a new chapter of our lives as a pastor's family.

Wednesday, May 10 was supposed to be a routine ultrasound appointment. We were so happy to see our precious son again and to hear his heartbeat. As the ultrasound began, the technician stopped the ultrasound and began rustling around with papers. She politely excused herself from the room stating she needed to print off some other documents. We waited in the room for nearly a half hour, which seemed like an eternity. Finally, a doctor entered the room and gently informed us that they could not detect a heartbeat from our son. My husband and I looked at each other in disbelief, feeling numb. At that moment I was flooded with thoughts like, "Can we do another ultrasound to double-check and disprove my disbelief? This isn't happening to us right now. What did we do wrong?" But even in the midst of our confusion, we had to trust what the doctor was saying.

We were then taken up to the hospital's labor and delivery unit and I was prepped for the delivery of our son. After informing our parents, my husband immediately called our fieldwork pastor who rushed to the hospital to be with us. We were overwhelmed with spiritual support in this dark hour of our lives. We received spiritual care from the chaplains at the hospital, the chaplain of the seminary, pastors from our previous congregations, and close family and friends. All of these people reminded us that Christ is the shining light that we cling to during this tragedy. We had spiritual reminders in overwhelming abundance and they all were true Christ-like examples of bearing one another's burdens. We were not alone. Those present constantly and gently reminded us of that fact.

These are some of the specific gentle reminders I remember: *For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him (Romans 6:5, 7–8).*

*Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... For I am sure that ... height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:34b-35, 38a–39).*

We know God gave His one and only Son as a sacrifice for our sins, and He rose again to grant us eternal life with Him in heaven. As I regularly heard God's Word proclaimed and partook of

the Holy Supper every Sunday, I was reassured that Jesus suffered, died, and rose again for our unborn Henry. We trust Henry is resting in Christ's arms and we are assured that *God* works for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). God showered us with blessings and constant reminders of His unending love by those instrumental people He placed in our lives to help carry this heavy burden. They fulfilled God's law with their selfless love and care by way of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said, "... *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' *There is no other commandment greater than these*" (Mark 12:31).

The best way you can comfort a mother who is mourning the loss of her child is to be present with her, even if no words are spoken at that time. In many instances words are unimportant. My husband and I cannot recall any of the phone calls we received or kind words said to us after the loss of our son, but we can remember every person who came to visit us at the hospital, and came to Henry's funeral. Actions speak volumes. It is vitally important to invest your time with these grieving mothers, even if it is out of your comfort zone and you think, "I don't know what to say." Just remember to let them know they are not alone. Be a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on. Jesus constantly stepped forward in the Bible to attend to those who needed tending to the most. When we step out of our comfort zones and pray for God's guidance, the Holy Spirit takes over and helps us bear the burdens of those around us who need it the most. As God's Word says, *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ* (Galatians 6:2).

**Prayer:** Most gracious heavenly Father, please open our hearts and give us the courage to seek out the grieving mothers in our midst and care for them. Help us to be like Jesus who sought out those who needed care. Please fill us with your Holy Spirit to be able to bear one another's burdens. Guide us to perform caring actions to help those in our midst who are hurting. In Your most precious Name we pray. Amen.

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