

June 2000 Urgent

by Aaron Greenway

On April 20, 2000, a close friend of mine, Rhonda Carlson, traveling with her sister-Megan, going up to visit friends in Michigan, was killed in a head-on collision with a semi-truck. Megan survived. Rhonda went home to be with Jesus.

I did not find out until two weeks after the event occurred. Her mother (someone I had never met) called me and left a message, telling me that it was very important that I call her. How gut-wrenching can it be, to find out that your friend is no longer here. Just a couple weeks before she left on her trip (from Colorado to Illinois and then from Illinois to Michigan), I had the opportunity to speak with her over the phone. I thank God for just one more opportunity to encourage her and to be encouraged by her.

The process of grief is a difficult one. I found myself crying many times over the course of two or three days. I would never be able to call her up again. I would never be able to see her again. When God puts people in our lives to be a strength to us, we thank Him for it. But when God takes those people out of our lives in some way or another, many times, we sulk and we wonder why God chose to do that. We then realize that they belonged to God from the start.

But, more importantly, these kinds of events (for those of us who have been through them) are just constant reminders of our limited time on this earth. If I could sum up one thing that the Lord has continually taught me in the last two years, it has been that I do not have time to waste. This has come out in the form of a new album, due out this fall (Lord willing), entitled "Urgent." Because of this, it has been my heart to communicate to all of you, as well as remind myself, the

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things that are important: being REAL, being exposed, loving God, loving the lost, loving the brothers and sisters, checking our hearts and lives, avoiding hypocrisy, learning what it is to be a servant, etc. Because in the end, our status, our accomplishments, our money is not going to save us.

This leads me to the first point of this devotional. **Where do we stand with Jesus Christ?** Are we trying to earn God's favor by our meritorious deeds? Are we figuring that our good will outweigh our bad when we stand before God? Do we just assume that God's love will cancel out His justice? We can quote the verses that say to the contrary, but is our faith truly in the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Is our lives surrendered to His cross. Are we depending on His work and not our own?

The Scripture is very clear that nothing that we could ever do could ever win us "brownie-points" with God. Nothing we could ever do could give us any merit before a pure and holy God, because we are impure and unholy. And only God's Son, Jesus Christ, is able to save us from our impurity and our unholiness. Only He can change our hearts by His Holy Spirit. And all that we are as Christians is a result of His work in our lives, not because of personal willpower.

What about the Christians? Are we learning to depend on Him more everyday? Are we learning to be REAL and exposed? Are we learning what it is to be a servant. Because when our time is up, will we be able to stand before Him in confidence or we will shrivel up, because He can see right through us with all our hypocrisy and lies. Will He see that we have been faithful, that we have loved others at our own cost? Or will He see that we have been selfish, giving into our own agenda?

The very thought of this frightens me, and alerts my spirit as I, too, will stand before a holy God one day. I am also encouraged that I will see my friend again and that she is with the God that I love and seek to love all the more. I guess this is all part of the grieving process. But these things, regardless of how we process them, are realities. God is real. Heaven is real. Hell is real. Life is real. People are real.

How we view God, eternity, people, and life has a bearing on how we handle each. If we are careless of them, our behavior and attitudes reflect that. However, if our lives are thoughtful of eternal things, then our behavior and attitudes reflect that as well. How we treat God and others demonstrates how deep our spiritual lives run. Guarding our hearts and lives shows a value placed on what God is doing inside of us and protecting it from the tactics of the Enemy. It is also knowing our Enemy and being aware of his schemes.

Let us not get caught up in the cares of this life, but rather have an eternal perspective. Let us care for one another, loving God and reaching out to the needy. Who knows? I may be gone tomorrow. And nothing outside of these things will matter.