

# Ministry Moments

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In January of 2006 I began writing a correspondence series titled *Ministry Moments* for the monthly supporters of the Sharing Org. In *Ministry Moments* I highlighted key moments that happened in the ministry and my own reactions to those moments. I've since received so many positive comments concerning that series that I have decided to begin adding it to each newsletter. These *Ministry Moments* that I share are my most personal thoughts about what I've experienced in the previous month. My words are not always flowery or politically correct but they come straight from the heart – the heart that is ever being challenged and changed by our God who seems to surprise me every time I turn around.

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October 2007

This month I was called to the deathbed of a friend. Her husband was sitting by her side wondering how much longer it would have to be and why God was allowing the process take so very long. He told me that he was afraid to loose the love of his life (*of well over 50 years*) and that the pain was excruciating.

What do you say to this? As a minister I probably could have started reading the 23rd Psalm to the guy, but I felt that to do this would have been to escape the awkwardness of the moment in order to change the subject. Instead I remained silent. I was silent and I listened. I listened to the man tell me stories from his and his wife's past lives together. I listened as he explained his wife's faith. And I listened to a story that was intended to cheer me up (*because of my broken knee*) about how I am not the only one who *runs for his life* at the sight of hornets. Simply, I just listened.

The husband expressed the concern that he might be having a *lack of faith* because he feared the death of his wife. At this point I spoke. I told him that I did not think it was a *lack of faith* but rather the breaking of the most significant human relationship of his life. I told him that the Scripture informs me that he and his wife are "one flesh," and I thought that what he was feeling was the pain of that "one flesh" being ripped apart. I told him that I thought that the more loving and close a relationship was that the more painful the experience was supposed to be.

I know that my words did not alleviate his pain (they were not intended to). I know that the anguish that he was experiencing could not be relieved by any words that I had. But as I prayed for him and his dying wife, I knew that I had spoken words of truth and words of comfort to him and he knew it, too. Because I spoke of a God who wept when his friend Lazarus died – a God who is not above feeling and grieving the very real pain of a relationship having been ripped apart. A God who is *present* with him during his pain and agony while his wife was leaving this world for the next..

As I left my friend's bedside that day I realized that God was actually using me to touch the lives of hurting people in a very real way. Not just the residents of care facilities but their family members too. I used to pray "God use me" but as of late I have changed that prayer to "*Lord, make me usable.*" I think it has helped, I think God is teaching me not to rush in to try to *fix* everything as soon as possible. I am learning that by simply being silent I can *be silent and know that He is God.*

~ John