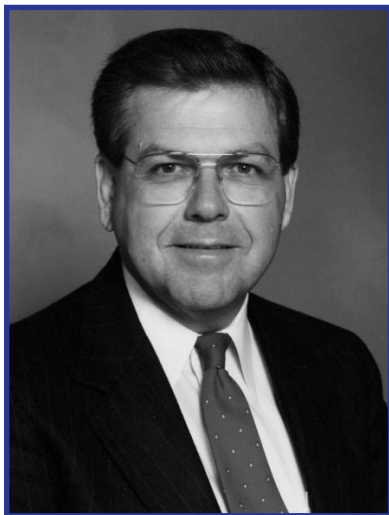


A CRY FOR

Relief



by
David A. Wheeler



“Shrimp Boats”

Watercolor Painting by David A. Wheeler

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"A CRY FOR RELIEF" came about at the urging of my wife and children, and friends. I must take this opportunity to thank everyone that has had a part in making this book a reality. Friends gave me the computer program to write the book, several worked at making the sentence structure proper and making sure that the grammar is correct. There were those that trained me on how to use the computer and when I didn't realize how to do things on the computer they carried on for me. I am so fortunate to have friends like this who not only wanted to help me but who also wanted to get this book into the hands of people that need it! I truly believe that they think this work will benefit the people that take advantage of it.

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FOREWORD

After more than thirty years of serving God as a preacher, a song leader, a Bible teacher and a Christian school development director, on December 12, 1986, David Wheeler found himself in a very difficult position. As he lifted a machine that was too heavy, he felt a pain in his back. After months of unsuccessful therapy, he underwent his first surgery. In a short period of time he had submitted to the surgeon's scalpel six times to no avail. He was finally declared completely disabled in January of 1992.

Through the years since the accident, he has experienced a great deal of pain and has had to face up to some of life's most difficult questions. Does God exist? Does He know about my suffering? Why doesn't He answer my prayers? Am I not valuable to Him?

While wrestling with his pain, his depression and his questions, David has strengthened the faith which he already had and has gained new and deep understandings.

It is comforting to me to read of David's journey through the difficult valley. I have known him casually for more than thirty years. I have known him intimately for ten years. He is one of the best men I know. His heart is pure. He, more than most people I have known, honestly wants to please God.

When you read of his experiences, please know that you are reading about a person much like most of us who has been forced to deal with pain and disability which, we pray earnestly, we will never experience. His suffering is real. His faith is encouraging. His answers are helpful.

Jesse C. Long

INTRODUCTION

So many friends, acquaintances and people that are up against extremely hard and difficult events in their lives have insisted that I write this book on how I have and am coping with my disability. I decided to write this book and try to tell how things actually were in my life while dealing with terrible back problems. I have read several books on how things ought to be in one's life. But I have read none that told how things really are. by some one in the grasp of terrible fear and anxiety. I really don't know what my reaction should have been. I just know that I survived to this present time. I realize that I should try to gain spiritual perfection but perfectness has not been achieved by me up to this point. When you finish reading this book I believe you will find some tools to give you ultimate hope and confident faith in whatever the outcome for you may be.

I have also included in the book some suggestions for visiting the critically ill, what to do when a visit is made, and some of the statements that we should not make to those that are sick.

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addendum: "A Cry For Relief"

When I first wrote this book, I had been in the ministry for thirty years. Now it has been fifty years. The book has already sold out from a second printing. My pain doctor, Dr. Reisman (who has been my faithful friend and pain manager for several years) has requested the book for his patients. I have a wonderful first cousin and his wife that have offered to make a large contribution toward the reprinting of this book. Barry and Carryl Ryan of Chattanooga, Tenn are their names. Also, Hollis Smith a dear friend from Baton Rouge, La. has said that he would like to be a part of this third printing in a large way. Let me thank both of these friends for this nice gesture in providing a tool that will help people cope with their pain.

My pain is manageable. Because of the large amounts of steroids I was injected with over a long period, I developed osteoporosis. My spine has four compound fractures. I injected a drug called Forteo each day which with vitamin D and calcium have helped my bones to stabilize. I have not had another fracture since I started this drug. Carolyn and I are members of the Buford Ga. Church of Christ. I am an Elder there functioning as a teacher, and have a responsibility for the worship services. I am 67 years old and enjoy painting beautiful masterpieces with watercolor paint. My speaking engagements on 'Dealing with disabilities and pain' have taken me to Churches and Universities. I have held private counseling sessions, fielded numerous phone calls and led devotionals at businesses for employees.

Carolyn, my dear wife, is the love of my life and she is the savior of my physical life on earth. She has recently spoken to two women's groups and from the reports I received, she did an outstanding job.

We are going to Quitman Ga. in July 2007 for four days to speak on dealing with the different facets of pain. One of my hopes is to get in touch with a wonderful Christian man there who will make the new printing happen. Below I have listed the topics that I will be presenting at this seminar on pain.

Sunday School "Thankful Living With Pain"

Sunday Morning Worship "Why Does God Allow Man To Suffer"

Sunday Evening Worship " Why Does God Allow Man to Suffer; continued"

Monday Evening "Prayer And Perseverance In Pain".

Tuesday Evening "Why Bad Painful Events Happen To Good Christian People."

Wednesday Evening "Depression in Pain"

CHAPTER ONE

The Worst of Days and the Worst of Days!

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." JOHN 16:33

On a beautiful winter's day a personal tragedy came my way when I severely injured my back . The accident occurred on December the 18th, 1986. At the time, there was no way I could know that this seemingly insignificant accident would have such a catastrophic impact on the rest of my life and the life of my family. Surely, most people could pick up a postage machine and set it on the back of a van without being injured. I had been accustomed to lifting heavy objects all of my life, but this time it was going to cost me.

My wife, Carolyn, and I went to a wonderful couple's farm for a Christmas party on the evening after my back first was hurt.

My pain just grew more severe. I laid back in a lounge chair at the holiday dinner, but I could not get any relief from the excruciating pain. We had to leave the party early.

What was I to do now? Who do you see for back problems? If I went to a back orthopedist, would he operate? We didn't know the world's best and we might pick the wrong surgeon. Finally, someone suggested a chiropractor. I went to one for two and a half years. He kept me on my feet, but he could not correct the problem. My condition just deteriorated to the point that I had to find a surgeon.

Yes, you guessed it, I selected the wrong doctor. My wife and I had great confidence in this doctor, but during the first surgery, while installing large metal appliances, the doctor destroyed certain nerves in my back that will never rejuvenate themselves. This surgery took place in 1989.

After the surgery, my condition just grew worse. Eventually, the same surgeon had to take out the metal because the muscle in my left leg started atrophying and I began to fall. The strength had gone out of the leg. This story just gets worse and worse and more involved. I could do nothing during the days and nights but lay in a lounge chair or bed and take pain medication and go to therapy several times a week. On March 26,1990, the same surgeon performed a third

radical surgery. He installed what he said was the largest metal appliance perfected for the back. He had told my family that he was going to use rods in my back this time. But when he came out of the nine hour surgery he had installed large thick metal plates, extremely long screws, and huge bolts in my back. He had also cleaned up all the scar tissue from the two prior operations.

After a short period of time, all of the newly-inserted metal began to work itself loose, and the horrible pain returned. I was forced to return to the hospital for almost a month because of the pain which was accompanied by great depression. The doctor called in a psychiatrist because of my emotional state. Finally, I felt that he had at least done something right by referring me to this doctor.

On January 7, 1991, this first surgeon told me that the bone had fused and that I had completely healed. I asked him how this could be, since I was in so much pain that I was hardly able to stand, much less being able to walk. Not convinced of the doctor's conclusions, that very same day I took the same x-rays to a general practitioner, and he had his radiologist read them. Her conclusion was that there was only one bit of calcium that had formed, and there was no healing apparent. I was completely blown apart by this news. When I reported this back to the surgeon, he tried to say it was in my mind, and that I needed to continue to have something for my mental state, according to his office notes. I have since learned that the doctor can say whatever he wants to say and as long as he states that it is his opinion, he is protected, regardless of whether it is the right opinion or not.

I then asked the surgeon to send me to Dr. Whitesides at Emory University. Dr. Whitesides said that my back was a mess. He and his staff would eventually perform the first of two more surgeries. Before he performed the first surgery, he sent me to the department in Emory University that would draw blood to give back to me if I needed a transfusion during the surgery. I have always been a borderline anemic, and because of this the hospital administered the drug Procrit made by Orthobiotech that would help my body manufacture blood. Members of the Campus Church of Christ gave blood for me.

I did not have to use their blood, but was grateful that they had given it for me.

The reason that Dr. Whitesides wanted to use my own blood was that he would be sure that there would be no HIV virus hiding in given blood that no one knew about. At this point in time I was in horrible pain again, the kind of pain that I wished that I could have forgotten.

The first of the two surgeries was performed in May 1991. This surgery that Dr. Whitesides performed was accomplished by entering my back from the back and taking out all of the metal and scar tissue again. These appliances had worked loose and had wallowed out vertebrae L4, L5, and S1. During this nine- hour operation the surgeon and his staff performed another fusion.

For the second surgery he and his staff entered my back through the stomach and intestine area. The doctor took bone out of my lower left leg and pelvis area to remake parts of three vertebrae. He also did fusion in the front area of the back as well.

After the last surgery I contracted a C-Defercel infection that lasted for months and months. I still have problems from it. After each major surgery I had to have numerous tooth root canals because of infections. I have really taken good care of my teeth. The doctors said that they could not say that there was a connection, but I really feel that there was.

My reason for being fairly detailed thus far is so each reader of this book can be informed as to my great frustration and my perplexing situation. A doctor told me that back in the late twenties and thirties a person that had serious surgery either got overwhelmingly better or died. Now you are not overwhelmingly better and you are not dead. You are somewhere in between. Maybe by my going through these events in my life as a Christian, preacher, song director, development officer, husband, father, grandfather and friend to many, someone in similar circumstances can find some resources to help him.

"Have mercy upon me, O Jehovah; for I am withered away;
O Jehovah, heal me; for my bones are troubled." PSALM 6:2

"My soul also is sore troubled: And thou, O Jehovah,
how long? PSALM 6:3

I always had thought that because I was covered with the blood of Jesus and I considered myself a devoted servant that I would be insulated from circumstances in my life that I would not

be able to tolerate in some way both mentally and physically. So far I have been able to survive, but I have had no control over the events that have come my way. How I have reacted to these circumstances, I guess, has been the result of the thought and habit patterns that I have practiced in my life through the years of service to our GREAT FATHER. From this experience, I have really had the dawning of a great truth, and that truth is, it doesn't matter how often a Christian walks in and out of a building with the name of our LORD over it, or how much one prays fervently, or how much one is a soul winner, or how much money one gives to our LORD, or how many widows and orphans one cares for, or is not a troublemaker among the saints, or sings with the spirit and understanding, or manifests the proper attitude, etc. I have come to the conclusion that we are human beings living in a world where God has allowed all the illnesses of mankind to be as big of a problem to His people as to those that are not His people. What differs between Christian people and non Christian people is the fact that we have all the resources that heaven has to offer. The unending, abounding help is there for us when illness and problems that are common to all people come our way.

I found myself in just as much pain, being just as frustrated, spending just as much money, having just as many unknown answers about my situation as non-Christians often have. Yes, I had much rage toward God. I have been so ashamed for questioning God's love for me. Oh, yes, I asked over and over again, "Why ME???". What could I possibly have done to bring on God's wrath over and over again?

You see, there were times, and still are, that I didn't know whether or not I would ever be able in my life to again publicly proclaim God's love, lead congregational singing in praises to him, be the financial provider for my wife and myself, or be actively involved in seeing about people. You talk about having a bleak outlook on life at times, yes! I had it.

I can kind of understand what Job was saying in the book of Job chapter 7: verses 13-15, when he said "My bed will comfort me, My couch will ease my complaint."

Then You scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions, so that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than my body." Job felt abandoned by God. What frustration, fatigue of the mind and terror-filled days and especially nights he must have endured! Job just didn't

understand God's way with him. When I read further, I see Job with a humble and contrite spirit: Listen to Job in chapter 23:1-9:

"Then Job replied: 'Even today my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning. If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say. Would he oppose me with great power? No, he would not press charges against me. There an upright man could present his case before him, and I would be delivered forever from my judge. 'But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him' and JOB 13:15-18., " Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless man would dare come before him! Listen carefully to my words; let your ears take in what I say. Now that I have prepared my case, I know I will be vindicated." Right now I feel as if the reader will want to put this book down and will not want to read on to the end because it is so depressing. However, I feel that only by my being open and honest can you understand where I have been mentally and emotionally as I tried to cope with this overwhelming disaster as a Christian. You will know what a blessing it is to claim God's blessings before the book ends.

"For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning." PSALM 30:5

CHAPTER TWO

My thought processes, what a mess! "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." HEBREWS 4:12

You see, I came from a tremendous loving and caring Christian home. The Church of Christ in northwestern Georgia is what it is today to a large extent because my father and mother were so fervent in their dedication to our Lord. They reared eight children in this atmosphere. From as early as I can remember, my mother told everybody that I was going to be her preacher. When I was fifteen years of age I entered Alabama Christian High School, thinking that I would be a better prepared preacher by starting in Bible courses early in life. I received my education at Alabama Christian High school, Alabama Christian College, which is now Faulkner University, and Alabama Christian School of Religion, now known as Southern Christian University, in Montgomery, Alabama.

While in high school, I fell in love with the most lovely girl that I had ever met. We have been married for thirty-five years. The wedding took place on March 26, 1957 in Montgomery. We have raised three children.

Our daughter, Tammie, married Adrian Freeman and has given us two fine grandsons. They are living in Lawrenceville, Georgia. Anthony, our oldest son, married Marva Lynn King of Menden, La. They have given us a fine grandson. They live in Fayetteville, Ark. Phillip, our youngest son lives in Roswell, Georgia.

Carolyn and I have worked through the years with churches in Florida, Alabama, North Carolina, and Georgia. We also worked at Faulkner University and Greater Atlanta Christian Schools, Inc.

I write this brief life's history just to let you know that I have been involved with people that I believed were spiritual giants in the faith. I often feel that I have so hide faith that God hates me and that I surely have been one of the very worst people who has ever been in the faith. What could I possibly have done to make God so angry at me? I preached regularly on faith,

unconditional love, grace. God's care, how he knows the number of hairs on our head, and that he will not allow us to be tempted above that we are able to bear. I have offered my family on the altar of sacrifice. My labor and service to the Father has been twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty-five days a year for most of my life. What more could I have accomplished? Why, oh, why could God do this to me? You see, before a catastrophic occurrence came my way, I knew all of the answers. But now that I was in a circumstance that I could do absolutely nothing about at all, all I had was doubt and questions.

I write these things not to brag about how weak spiritually I was, but to let you know how low my spirits were at times and for long periods of times.

Please bear with me and let me tell you more of my dilemma. You must realize that the first surgeon did not consult another back surgeon to help him know absolutely what to do for me. There were insurance forms on top of forms that were complicated and had to be filled out over and over again. The doctor finished filling out the forms, but he still had to sign many of the them and send them in by certain deadlines. Now, have you ever tried to get a busy surgeon or surgeons to fill out forms correctly in a short period of time? I was down in bed, and my wife was working full-time outside of the home; yet we were the only two people who could take care of this situation. The wrong forms were sent to be filled out on many occasions. Trying to find someone at the doctor's business office and in the insurance office who cared was at times awful. Trying to receive some disability funds was just about impossible (I had to have a lawyer to help, and that cost greatly.) Reading forms on top of forms that the insurance people themselves did not understand [or that they pretended they didn't] was frustrating. Papers that supposedly got lost in the mail several times made no sense.

When you are well and need no assistance, everything usually runs smoothly, but when you are helpless, it is a completely different story.

I have learned many things from my experiences with doctors and insurance companies.

1. For example, never, never have a conversation with an insurance person without getting what is told to you in writing. The only safeguard in dealing with insurance companies is to very carefully read all of the papers personally. I urge everyone to read the fine print in your policies

and have a good lawyer in mind just in case you ever need one. You will find that this will prove most beneficial to you, but you may still come up on the short end of many things. For example, in August, 1992, I contracted a severe C-Defercel infection, and on one occasion Carolyn had to rush back to Emory University to pick up some medicine. She had to get from our house to the hospital [twenty miles in the Atlanta traffic] in forty-five minutes, for this life-saving medicine, not knowing where the pharmacy was located in that vast hospital complex. Just as she hurried into the hospital, the best back surgeon in the world DR. Whitesides was walking down the hall, and he showed her to the pharmacy. I discovered that, often, Great Doctors are great men! Such caring, such dedication, and such skill in one man—for this I give God the glory.

In October, 1989, my oldest brother passed away. Then in May of '90, my sweet mother passed away. A few months later, my dear aunt died. She was determined that I would speak at her funeral, but I could not. In fact, I was unable to attend any of these heart-burdened passings. What a horrible situation.

Several told me that those that had passed away would understand why I could not attend their funerals, and I know that, but I could not understand.

"My times are in your hands." PSALM 31:15. As I think back on things, my mind goes back to January of 1991. At that time, my mind was in such a shape of depression and despair that I told myself that I had to pull my thoughts together. Karl Menniger said that "Attitudes are more important than facts." I determined that whatever it takes to get my attitude right, that I would do! I had to stop trying to fix the blame and get busy fixing the problem. In my conversation with myself and prayer with the Father, I came to the conclusion that I did, in fact and for all times, believe that God himself revealed himself in His holy and divine word. I felt that I had to do a study of the scriptures like I had never undertaken before. I called the Greater Atlanta Christian Book Store and asked them to send me a loose leaf Bible work book. I asked for a version that I was not at all familiar with, thinking my mind would look sharply into it. I also ordered that version on cassette tapes. In my personal search of the scripture, I wanted to find the promises of God for me and God's power that makes sure that the promises would be kept. For instance, the Apostle Paul wrote, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened

in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength." EPHESIANS 1:18,19. That's what I badly needed at this time in my life.

So I made a pledge to myself that I would choose one book of the Bible to be read every day for seven days. At the end of the seventh day I would outline the book with the promises of God and the power of God to fulfill his promises in my life. "A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time," TITUS 1:2.

It was, for me personally, at that time and place in my life the most beneficial mental and spiritual exercise that I have ever accomplished. I started with the gospels of the New Testament. There were three passages that I constantly quoted to myself everyday and sometimes many times a day. They are:

" Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold
of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies
behind and reaching for the prize of the upward call of
God in Christ Jesus." PHILIPPIANS 3:13.

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."
PHILIPPIANS 4:13.

"This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and
be glad in it." PSALM 118:24.

I think that I need to write that during all these months and years, Carolyn and I have been constant in the stewardship of our money to the Lord and to the congregation where we worship.

Still, during this period of my life I could not count my blessings. I really was trying to do this but I could not appreciate my blessings.

I felt completely deaf, dumb, and blind to all that I had to be thankful for in my life. Someone told me, "Look around—you can always find someone that is worse off than yourself," but this had no bearing on my thinking. I felt sorrow for everyone. I knew the statement was true, but it was such an inopportune time for me to be told that.

By this time, because of all of the chemicals administered to me by the doctors, I was suffering from a severe chemical imbalance in my brain. Because of this I then was put under the care of a psychiatrist. Dr. Stephen Whipple Sr., a man that had great compassion and had a strong desire to help me handle all the pain. He really assisted me with the proper prescription drugs to handle the chemical imbalance. He also counselled me through this devastating situation. Yes, I felt that I needed to be very careful to be certain that I find the right psychiatrist, and I found the right doctor for me. He has really helped me, but you see I was involved with the word of God and constantly in prayer to the Father while seeing the doctor. Going to a psychiatrist was really a big step for me, because I was really afraid of what he might tell me to do or what he would cause me to do contrary to God's word. Before I started going to see him, I had made up my mind that I was not going to let him influence me to knowingly do something contrary to what I believed and practiced.

Then I had to come to grips with the fact that God had not singled me out and does not enjoy beating me to death both physically and spiritually. I finally realized that I was living in a world where terrifyingly bad things are allowed to happen to human beings, with no regard as to their being a Christian or not. I was also made aware through the study of the Bible that my being a Christian has the God of all things at my beck and call to make sure that I would survive, even if it meant that I would leave this world in death.

There really are a lot of things that are worse than death. My ready and capable God is able to see that I can hang in there! Finally, I reaffirmed the truth that God holds the future and he has not revealed it to me. I thank God for this. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." PROVERBS 3:5

CHAPTER THREE

Friends give much strength to work hard at getting better!

Strong intimate relationships are very important. "A friend loveth at all times;" PROVERBS 17:17. "A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends." JOB 6:14.

The next accomplishment for me at this point was to make sure that my relationship with my family and friends was even deeper and more sensitive than it had ever been. This catastrophe made me really realize that, when all is said and done, my family and my friends are where the lasting human blessings are found. When you are lying in bed for months on end, material things lose their real appeal. I could hardly do anything for myself. My own flesh and blood brothers and sisters and their families have been such a blessing in all this.

I have come to the conclusion that when your health is taken from you and you do not have anyone else to turn to, you need to have been living in a very intimate relationship. This relationship needs to have been built up over the years with your wife and family without any ulterior motives but out of pure love only. They are always there for you and you must have always been there for them. Therefore it will just come naturally for them to be by your side caring for you.

I was working for Greater Atlanta Christian Schools Inc., in Norcross Ga, and the Campus Church of Christ, Norcross, Ga., when I injured my back. These great institutions have been absolutely wonderful in their care for Carolyn and me. Jesse C. Long, President of Greater Atlanta Christian Schools Inc., spearheaded a drive from friends and the brethren in congregations that Carolyn and I have worked with over the years to ask them to help with our needs. Each of the congregations has been so thoughtful and wonderful.

If by chance, I have not told you thank you, please let me say it now. Thank you! Thousands of cards, notes, phone calls, and visits have come my way. I have always said that the fellowship of the Church of Christ is the GREATEST ON THIS EARTH, and this has proven to be the case as far as I am concerned. The Bible said it best:

"A friend loves at all times." PROVERBS 17:17.

You really will find this hard to believe. In September of 1991, Herschel Walker [not the football star] came to my house and asked me a very simple question. The question was, "Would you like to paint?" At this particular time of my life I could not watch the news on TV. because it was so full of brutality and it added to my depression. I could not read much because I really had a problem concentrating. Herschel asked if I would like to paint today? I laughingly told him when I was in elementary school I could not stay inside the drawn lines and it just got worse and worse as I grew through the years. However, before he left that day I had painted a par three golf hole in water color. The painting contained trees, water, sand bunkers, tall and short grass, sky, birds, and clouds.

Oh, how I miss playing golf! Brother Walker has come to my house every week, except when he or I was ill or he was on vacation. Sometimes he came twice a week to teach me how to paint and dream of things beautiful. Truly, painting lets the sunlight of your soul escape. Now I paint not only in watercolors, but in acrylics and oils.

"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." PROVERBS 18:24.

Herschel taxied me to the hospital over and over again, and sat through surgeries with Carolyn. He drove me to lunch to get me out of the house on numerous occasions. Yes, he is a very dear friend!

There was another couple who are dear friends that brought me a bird feeder and a book on birds. When they brought these to me, my hospital bed was next to a large window in our den. The bird feeder was put just outside of the window. Several varieties of birds came everyday to the feeder and they just keep coming. I kept thinking about what our Father had said, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them." (MATTHEW 6:26-32). Yes, if God is taking care of them. He really is taking care of me.

My mind is flooded with what people did to encourage me and what they just keep on doing for us. On one occasion a dad brought his little girl by to see me and to give me some peppermint and get-well cards. When Maren left she just couldn't know how much encouragement she had given me. Then, Ashley sent me several cards and her mother told me that she prays for me everyday. All of the children's classes at church sent me many cards over and over again. The mother of Lauren told me that she still prays for me every night at the evening meal. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. MATTHEW 19:14.

The hugs, handshakes, kisses, special handmade things sent to me told me that I really was a very special person. The sensation of the human touch means so much to me and it keeps on having a tremendous positive influence on my attitude. During most of the surgeries there were at least forty or more family, friends, and fellow ministers sitting with Carolyn.

I have always worked hard at making house calls and hospital visits. It never really dawned on me how much good was done. Yes, I realize that there are those who do not want anybody to come by to see them, but I think they are in the minority. Wonderful things started to happen when other human beings came and prayed with us or when total strangers came by and said that they were praying for me. One word of caution here: when you visit sick people leave the patient smiling rather than leaving the patient trying to figure why you came by in the first place.

Another believe-it-or-not happening involved some other special Christian friends. A. W. and Mary Anne Padgett came to the hospital and to our home on numerous occasions. Let me tell you a little something about what it took for Mary Anne to make a visit. Mary Anne has been racked with crippling arthritis for several years. Among many other things that she has accomplished in this world is that she was a violinist in the Atlanta symphony. A. W. dresses her each day before he goes to work. She has a full calendar of Christian endeavors everyday. Would you believe they have also called me almost every Saturday night for years? This couple

has not ever lost interest in me. Oh, yes, if you are ever in attendance at a Georgia Tech football game you will probably see them in the stands. It doesn't matter whether the game is here in Atlanta or not. I was able to attend their fiftieth wedding anniversary a few weeks ago. You better believe that a person like Mary Anne who has such determination has impacted me greatly and continues to encourage me.

Lamar Harrison in Mobile, Alabama told me to call him collect when I need to talk to someone. I have a standing invitation to fly down and spend some time with him at his expense. He comes up at the most helpful times and takes Carolyn and me out to dinner.

Dave Miller of Charlotte North Carolina, calls me each week to see how we are doing, etc., etc., etc.... People from all over this great nation have called and told me that they are praying for me. Whole churches have had prayer on my behalf on a regular basis. Ladies' groups have taken time to send me cards of encouragement and inform me that they were in prayer for me. Prayer groups and Bible study groups have told me that they were praying for me. Hundreds of prayers as well from Christian people have gone before the throne of God in prayer for Carolyn and me. God just had to hear and fulfill their fervent prayers.

I would like to encourage you to tell Christian friends your trials and burdens. Please get your circumstances out in the open so godly people can pray for you. Please don't keep them a secret. People will come to your aid if they only know what to do. Yes, it takes humility, fear, anxiety, and trust in people to tell them where you are hurting and that you need their help.

I promise when you get through hard times you will be glad that you let folks know what you needed.

"A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." PROVERBS 25:11.

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you." I THESSALONIANS 3:12.

"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." I PETER 4:9

I have indicated before how I have really been blessed by many, many visits. There are still times when I crave someone to talk to about issues of my life. When visits are rare I sometimes feel that I have been forgotten. That is when Carolyn informs me that brethren have

not forgotten me, **they just are not thinking about me at that time.** Brethren are just overwhelmed with their lives and hassles living in Atlanta. They are struggling to work. Taking care of their families is overpowering to many. Many are getting an additional education in addition to their work and family duties. Remember that the traffic is usually horrendous! Yes, I really understand what she is saying, but one can read just so many books, write just so much in my book, write just so many speeches, write just so much class material. Paint just so many paintings. At times I have really wanted someone to talk with me. Continual silence is truly devastating. I really don't think needing to see human beings has anything to do with one's self-image or any other such factor. I remember a song that went "people who need people are the luckiest people in the world."

I am one of those people who need people! Do you think that I am the only person that feels like I do? I believe God made man to need other people. Isn't that why He made Eve?

This is really a point of interest to me. The Church that makes house calls is naturally going to grow because people need people. Everywhere I go in society people really don't want my name—they just want my Social Security Number, or my account number, or my driver's license number, or something else by which I am tagged. When I go to the bank, the same one I've gone to for years, the teller still asks for identification. They hardly look up. The look of your face is no longer important, just your number and your transaction.

Could it be possible that some churches are running away from the AVERAGE person by just wanting their attendance and their contribution? Many congregations put no emphasis on who the soul is or how he can really be a part of the church. Just think how uninteresting the Bible would be had God left out the names and actions of individuals! Just think what a church could do for this old world if it really put a "VERY IMPORTANT PERSON" sign on every member. The church that settles for nothing short of Visiting when tragedy strikes, that VISITS the hospitals, nursing homes, housebound people, as well as making a VISIT when people have victories in their lives has the Spirit of Jesus in it.

Yes, I really believe that there is a world of people that need other people. When we don't go and look a person in his eyes when he is hurting, we personally miss so much. The person

when visited gains so much. Again, I know that there are those who don't want a visit in the hospital or when they are sick at home, but I feel that this person is in the minority.

We who VISIT should be careful when visiting. We need to know if one cannot have visitors, does not desire visitors, whether he has a contagious illness, or is in the hospital for a day or two stay. We need to be sensitive to follow directions before we make a visit.

I have actually known of people who asked for no visitors and then became upset because nobody came! The big question that I have is if Christians did not have the many pressures on them, would they then see about folks? I think the saying that people basically do what they want to do is right. God knows I certainly don't know. Please let me encourage each one that takes the time to read this book to not only talk the talk of our Lord, but to walk His walk.

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power,
and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under
the power of the devil, because God was with him." ACTS 10:38.

It really seems that a majority of people feel like they don't have the gift to care about people. Satan has really worked his lies on the Lord's body, hasn't he? Even if the church is really organized to do the visiting, that does not necessarily mean that every one in the congregation who needs a visit is receiving one. I feel that many churches are in gridlock when it comes to compassionate, responsive, sensitive, sympathetic and understanding care for 100% of their membership! Truly, the lonely, hurting, depressed people are in a dark world. We should never allow our Christian light of love to go out.

Through this bout with loneliness, I do know that people caring for one another is the greatest source of encouragement that one could receive.

He will be seen in us, and because of our caring, loving spirit some will be moved to come to Him. If only the members of the great church of God would move on to the lowly, downtrodden and lonely, the result would be a world changed. Then we would not be like the world, but we would have shown the world that there is truly a better way.

Here are some helpful hints on making a visit that I learned and am learning in my illness:

- 1) Don't take it for granted that somebody else is going to see people.
- 2) Pick out those who need a visit.
- 3) Set aside a couple of hours to visit every week. The same time each week is great because it will become a part of your weekly routine.
- 4) Give a little thought as to who you are about to visit. Structure your visit for that individual. Pray about the visit. Many people with cancer still don't like to hear that word.
- 5) If you visit many that are sick in one day, don't bring the problems of prior visits to people you have visited to that individual you are visiting at the time. If that person asks about another's condition, then feel free to share the requested information, being careful not to betray any confidences or reveal anything that that person might not wish revealed.
- 6) Wash your hands thoroughly when going from patient to patient.
- 7) Carry some HONEY. Oh, not really honey that bees make, although that is nature's most perfect food. But you know, something nice, warm, and sweet.
- 8) Ask the patient if they would like to be a part of a prayer. It is one thing for you to tell someone that you are remembering them in prayer, but to pause and have an optimistic prayer on the spot to get the sick person through the day and through those long dreaded nights is really wonderful. Really think about what you are saying in the prayer and don't say one that sounds like it is the usual prayer offered. Oh, how sweet were the prayers from children on my behalf. Only love is shown.
- 9) Be very conscious about the amount of time you spend with a sick person. The bodily functions usually come on a regular basis because of the IVs given to the patient.
- 10) Please don't tell a person how he really looks since beauty is in the eyes of the beholder! Also, please don't tell them that they look good when they have had the very life stomped out of them in surgery.

11) Don't apologize for not coming sooner. The patient probably can't handle your guilt and his too. The important thing is that you are there now. Sometimes I feel that some people put off a visit because so much time has passed since the person became ill. Don't worry about that; that person probably needs a visit now in the worst way.

To conclude: **PLEASE** don't let the trivial though urgent things get in the way of making that visit.

CHAPTER FOUR

The tongue can hurt and can help! Irresponsible statements people say to severely ill people!

Whatever comes to some people's mind comes to their mouth.

I do realize that some people like to shock the patient, thinking that they will get them out of their depression. If it is a chemical depression, words won't help much—the patient needs the proper medicine.

A word aptly spoken is like apples of
gold in settings of silver. PROVERBS 25:11.

How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth! PSALM 119:103.

Oh, no I can hear people say, "Why David, how could you write that statement?" I realize that people primarily have good intentions, and their motives are for the most part good.

But, please permit me to give you a for instance. I have known people who have told parents when they lost a child in death, that God needed the child to be in His rose garden. Would you not think that since God created that child in the first place that HE has the power to have as many children in heaven as He would like?

Do you have the concept of our loving Father as being an ugly, nasty, uncaring, hateful, arrogant God?

I have even heard of people telling a father who has lost his young wife and the mother to his children that God needed her worse than he did.

Surely one cannot entertain the idea that God needed her more than those small children needed their mother.

I have never read anywhere in God's holy word where he would even have such a thought under the Christian dispensation. Oh yes, if he wanted to He can do anything that He wanted. I really don't believe His nature would allow Him to do this.

A Christian lady told me the other day that a lady told her while her mother was lying beside them in a casket that this facet of her life is over and she must go on with her life. Can you imagine how cruel this lady was in the name of meaning well?

I could go on and on with stories like these. It is no wonder that we have reared a generation that thinks that God is an ugly tyrant.

Now let me come to some thoughtless statements, innuendoes, and insinuations good meaning people have made to me.

"Your accident will be for your own good." What they mean is that God has severely punished me for my own good and I should bear it like a man. I really thought that I was a pretty good man before the accident. Are they saying that losing my health, my income, most of my mobility, not being able to preach, teach, lead singing is for my good? I might be blind to what they mean, but I just cannot accept that God singled me out and said, "OK, Jesus, Holy Spirit, and Angels, let's let David have it with full force so he will be made in our spiritual image."

Would it not have been better to say that your going through this situation will really reward you in your depth of appreciation for people that have similar problems?

Read this statement, "You will be the most humble person you could possibly be when all of this is over." What they are saying is that I needed this accident for me to be humble. Now I thought that I was kind of an humble person before this tragedy. When I make the just mentioned statement I do not say it with arrogance at all. I realize that I need more humility, but I was struggling for my existence and I needed a healthy faith in God. I did not need to be reminded of the great fear I already had. I feared that because I was not a better Christian that this illness was allowed to come my way. Now I really watch how I say a prayer for God to please make me the most humble man that I could possibly be. I wonder if the person that makes this kind of statement really can define the meaning of HUMILITY.

I think that it would have been better if they had said something like, "I know that you are at the most humble position in your life, but do you just suppose that this might not have come upon you for humility's sake, but for greater service's sake."

"You need to count your blessings." Isn't that a flippant statement? Yes, I really did and do need to count my blessings, but it was and is awfully hard to do so at times. I did try over and over again to be so thankful for the health I had left to deal and live with, but at times I really had to fight bitterness and anger. I still fight this problem.

I still wonder why at Carolyn's age she is having to add me to her burdens? Why is she having to go through what she has had to go through at work? Why does she have to go to school at night to learn to use computers so that she be able to get another position if her company is dissolved. She has worked so that we can keep our home. Yes, we are no better or worse than anyone else, but after a lifetime in our Master's service, why has it had to come to this as far as she is concerned. We have always worked with churches that did not have money for retirement in mind or funds for catastrophic illness to take care of the preacher. You might say that is my fault, but not really, not when I did not receive enough funds to take care of something like this. The churches and I always thought the Lord would provide. We forgot that he gave us a mind to take care of these matters. I am so thankful to the Lord for his care.

"But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." I TIMOTHY 6:8.

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have."

God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." HEBREWS 13:5

"Everything is going to be all right." Yes, I really believe that everything is going to be all right in Heaven. The only trouble with that is I am not there yet. I am more than a little concerned about the here and now! I am praying that God will help me make choices now that will help me be a giver and not a receiver all the time.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." HEBREWS 13:8.

"There are a lot of people that are in a worse health situation than you are in." This has been said to me many times at the wrong times. Yes, I really feel that is so, so, true, but that does not lessen my problem one bit. I have a tremendous empathy for all that have health problems. (There goes those attitude blasters again.) I am currently receiving treatment at The Emory University Hospital Pain Center, and because of this I can really write some horrible stories

where numerous patients are worse off than I am. I guess it is like closing the car door on my finger. I know that there are other people suffering, but at that point I just cannot comprehend their plight. It is not that I feel sorrow for myself or that I have been or that I am having a pity party; it's just the fact that I was unable to feel their hurt with my hurt.

"If you could recall the past years would you still have elected to have surgery?" That question makes me sad because I did everything to keep from having back surgery. In order for me to have a ray of hope for a normal life I had no choice. (By the way, the first surgeon told that I would be back on the golf course in three months.)

"O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not
in man that walketh to direct his steps." JEREMIAH 10:23.

Not long ago I was asked by someone if preachers still got hungry.

I think the question was asked in jest, but they implied to me that I am a failure now because of my injury. By the way they didn't give me anything to eat. I am trying to be tough-minded, but words like that shatter me to the core of my being. I ask, why would someone get their kicks by making fun of me? No doubt, he was just insensitive.

CHAPTER FIVE

Yes, a "Cry For Relief" is heard and the power of God is behind the answer!

"For thou shalt forget thy misery; Thou shalt remember it as waters that are passed away. And {thy} life shall be clearer than the noonday; Though there be darkness. It shall be as the morning. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; Yea, thou shalt search {about thee}, and shalt take thy rest in safety." JOB 11:16-18.

Chronic Pain is always the same and at the same time it is different for me. It goes up, down, sideways, upside down and goes in a crooked manner. It is never smooth sailing for me.

I realize that the statement, "THIS TOO SHALL PASS" is used so often like the words "I love you" that it could lose its effectiveness, but they really have a depth of meaning to me. I know that Solomon drew the conclusion in his book, Ecclesiastes. I then tried to find where the statement originated so I called the librarian at the Greater Atlanta Christian School Library. She sent me two documents that showed two men using the phrase who were born about the same time and who died about the same time. One was Abraham Lincoln who used it in a speech before the Civil War. This is what He said: "It is said an Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations.

They presented him the words: 'And this, too, shall pass away.' "How much it expresses! How chastening in the hour of pride! How consoling in the depths of afflictions!" This statement is from His speech to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, Milwaukee (September 30,1859). Then Nathaniel Hawthorne used the statement in his novel "The Marble Faun" (1860). Here is how he used it. "This greatest mortal consolation, which we derive from the transitoriness of all things—from the right of saying, in every conjuncture, 'This Too Shall Pass Away.'" This statement to me is so very true and is ever on my mind, whether it pertains to the pain of the moment, day, month, or year. Marilyn Long (a Christian friend) once told Carolyn that nothing ever remains the same on this earth. Everything stays in a constant state of change. When I finally realized that "PAIN" is like life, when I fathomed the fact that "life is a vapor that

appeareth for a little time and then vanishes away", JAMES 4:14,1 then understood that pain will vanish away. "This Too Shall Pass Away." In Heaven God has promised this: "and he shall wipe away every TEAR from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be MOURNING, nor CRYING, nor PAIN ANYMORE: the first things are passed away. REVELATION 21:4. God said that He cannot lie, "In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal;" Titus 1:2. "However, as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.'" I CORINTHIANS 2:9.

People are very concerned about my health and they ask me all the time how am I doing. I feel, they think because I look great on the outside that I look that way on the inside. They also hope that God has healed me. I tell them that I am "HANGING IN THERE". A judge that was ruling on my disability said, that I looked like a young fifty-two year old man. He could not see on the inside! I wonder how an old fifty-two year old man looks. I am fifty-three and I wonder what he would say now. I am really thankful to be a young looking person on the outside.

Yes, God has not chosen to heal me. I do not know what the future holds but George Bailey, a preacher in Dallas, Texas once said in a sermon, during a campaign for Christ in Mobile, Alabama, that he did not know what the future holds, but he knew who (GOD) holds the future. He really said what I feel about the future.

I am still having some major problems to deal with. Recently the doctor that has helped me so much with the chemical imbalance passed away at the age of forty-three. We were so close. I wonder if I will find someone that will help me as much as he has? You see, here is another unknown happening with no conclusion, no rhyme or reason to me.

I am able to pass through times like these because of my faith. I could not and cannot deny the power of God and the **power of His grace in my life. His providential care is ever abundant in my life.**

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. HEBREWS 4:16.

I cannot bring myself to say that things are improving as far as my back is concerned, but I can say things are better than ever as far as my fellowship with the Father is concerned and the outlook for my spiritual welfare.

God through the apostle Paul said "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?" ROMANS 8:31.1 accept and believe that promise with all of my heart.

I feel that my lot in life is to meet the challenge of setting the proper example in dealing with this catastrophic situation in which I find myself. Several anguish laden people have told me of their plight and informed me that because they are dealing with their problem I can too. Then, there are those that say that I need to keep on keeping on because I am an encouragement to them. I have never been one to blow out the flame of hope. I have always been one of the ones to light it and to keep it burning. Katie Cassetty who passed away recently said that I meant so much to her in helping her to deal with her fatal disease. Jerry Shackelford who is fighting a serious debilitating illness said that I was a great inspiration to him personally and to so many in the church. On and on goes the list from people who need some direction or tool that they can use to bear up against tremendous odds.

If you are in any situation that you feel inadequate to handle or you feel that your faith in God is so weak that it might die, or you don't have any faith in God please know that you can reaffirm your faith or become a person full of faith as a child of God.

If you cannot call God your father, Jesus your Saviour, and His family as your family, please consider giving God a chance in your life. There are Christian people all around you who are willing to help. Some of them have experienced circumstances similar to yours. Please remember that in God's eyes you are more valuable than all the world. Hold this thought in your heart continually and never doubt that it is so. I think that this poem really speaks to our situation:

If I can endure for this minute
Whatever is happening to me,
No matter how heavy my heart is
Or how dark the moment may be—
If I can but keep on believing
What I know in my heart to be true,
That darkness will fade with the morning
And that this will pass away, too—
Then nothing in life can defeat me
For as long as this knowledge remains
I can suffer whatever is happening
For I know God will break all the chains
That are binding me tight in the darkness
and trying to fill me with fear—
For there is no night without dawning
And I know that my morning is near.____

Helen Steiner Rice

Earlier you remember that I stated that I had to listen to some of the great music of the ages. One of the songs that helped me most was a song I listened to on a cassette tape sung by the group, Serenade, from Huntsville Alabama, titled/"Broken Things." This song really spoke to me. It is wonderful. Other songs that had a tremendous bearing on me were/"Great is Thy Faithfulness"... "Through It All"..."The Long and Winding Road"..."Climb Every Mountain." "Zippidi Do Da, Zippidi Aye, My!, oh. My!, what a wonderful day!" Then there is a great old song titled/"It Is No Secret What God Can Do." I first heard this song when it was sung at a schoolmate's funeral when I was in the fifth grade. And the song that I live with and love best is "Where No One Stands Alone". I feel sure that you have your list too, or that you can develop one. Yes, I love beautiful music. Someone has said, "If I can control the music of the world I can control the world." I say that one can have better control over his emotions in a time of hurt if he will let beautiful music into his heart. You might not hurt any less, but you will be more fulfilled and quieted in your mind's turmoil so that you may rest and be relaxed.

I would like to bring up the subject of prayer again. Some years ago I did some research for a speech. I gathered some interpretive statements concerning prayer from people who are servants of the Father, and who live by the Father's teachings.

Through this exasperating illness I have often referred to their responses. I have greatly benefitted from their teaching and I know that you will be, also.

M. Norvel Young, said, "Through prayer I have found God's strength in my weakness, His sufficiency in my lack. 'We kneel how weak, we rise again how strong'. I feel like a child wading in the shallows of the ocean and out there far beyond is infinitely more when I think of resources for the Christian in prayer and how much we need to launch out into the deep."

Batsell Barrett Baxter said (as he was in the last stages of cancer), "I have learned not to pray for recovery, though I have wanted to live for my family and my work's sake, but rather to pray, 'Thy Will Be Done'".

Ruel Lemmons said, "As a pair of pliers in the hands of a man in-creases his grip, so prayer brings to our limited powers the illimitable resources of God."

Ira North said, "I have found that it is almost uncanny at how you can come up with the right decision when you spend some time in private and quiet, alone and in prayer."

Ruth Collins said, "I cannot imagine the great void that must be in the lives of those who cannot and will not turn to God for their strength."

Margie Overton wrote, "I have often wondered how a person who doesn't pray could possibly bear all his burdens. I am so thankful that I can take my burdens to the Lord and leave them there. I can with full assurance say that God will give us the strength of body and mind to face each day's problems. When my son, Timothy died, I learned more fully the meaning of prayer. I could not have born the deep sorrow I felt, (and still feel) if I did not believe that God hears and answers prayer. I thank God for prayer."

These statements are not all of the statements that I have received, but enough, I think, to let you know how much they mean to me. Read what Paul the Apostle said, "with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints," EPHESIANS 6:18... "rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing steadfastly in prayer," ROMANS 12:12. Again, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving," COLOSSIANS 4:2. On and on I could write scriptures that show God's promise and power in prayer.

If your life of pain is not aimed toward the direction that it should be aimed, start praying in faith and it just might change your aim.

Prayer has and is playing a significant role in my life. Often, as I cried, pleaded, and urged God to give me relief just for a moment, I would think; what do people do in situations like this when they don't believe in Him? The worst feeling that I could imagine is not having an all powerful God to call upon. How dreadful! Many times the nurses and doctors would seem inadequate in their knowledge, or they didn't have the proper tools needed to care for me, or sometimes it seemed that they were deaf and dumb to me. I got the feeling at times that no one really cared about me.

But!, it is a burden lifting experience to know that God is always tuned in to me and I take great comfort in the fact that, "Oh, yes He cares!"

When one really understands that God understands and will help him, it really brings relief knowing He is close enough to hear my voice. Having an open dialogue with the Father is more than amazing. When ill health comes our way, the foundation of our soul will hold firm because God said that He will never forsake us. I feel that He is with me even unto the end of this world.

David said in the twenty-third Psalm, "Yea, though I walk", (He is there) "Through the valley of death" (or pain), He is there!"

No medication, therapy, or counsel will take the place of God in suffering, ever. There is a popular song that is titled "Lean On Me" and that is what God is saying to us.

Yes, God asks and tells us to talk to Him. He knows our needs but he put a stipulation to His taking care of us and that stipulation is the command to ask. With His pleading for my attention and my pleading for His attention I know that action is going to happen in Heaven's realm. The mountains of life start trembling and moving and our mental stress starts easing. In our worship services we are learning a new song with the title "Our God Is An Awesome God". This title says it all. He is! I have found that man often waffles or hedges, but God doesn't.

He is the same yesterday-today-and tomorrow. I hope that my prayers are a sweet saviour unto the Lord.

CHAPTER SIX

Up With Today

Change is in the air. The apples are getting ripe. Hunters are getting ready for dove season. The leaves are beginning to change. The nightly temperatures have already been in the low sixties. The farmers are harvesting the crops they have left after the drought. School is back in session. The Atlanta Braves have just swept the San Francisco Giants in a series trying to catch them to be in the play-offs. A new quarter is beginning at church. There are so many pictures that I want to paint. People are being baptized. Many families are coming to worship and serve with us. The ninety six Olympics are coming to Atlanta, etc. etc... I cannot worry about tomorrow, it is going to happen. All I have is today. I want to make sure I can develop the physical abilities that I have left. That means that I am constantly developing goals that keep me active.

I will be going to The Emory spinal center for therapy shortly and hopefully the pain will somehow be less today.

In my life now: I must let God talk to me often through His word.
I must talk to my Father in Heaven several times a day.
I must see at least four different doctors a month.
I must listen to beautiful music and singing.
I must go to physical therapy continuously and not give in to the idea, "I won't go today."
I must read the best books and literature.
I must constantly remind myself that God did not have a slip up when He came to me.
I must constantly see about people that are in awesome un-get-overable circumstance.
I must take all of my medicine every day.
I must learn to accept the things that I cannot change.
I must make myself accessible to other people for my own mental salvation.
I must always know that this world is not and never will be my home.
I must at all times be my self!
I must realize that pain is not fatal.
I must understand that it was not my fault when I had the accident.
I must not live with the words "if only" in my heart.

There is, I believe, a silver lining in each cloud. I just have to bring it into focus.

It has been very helpful for me to write this book over the past two years. Maybe it would be helpful for you do the same just to get something off your heart and out of your mind. If you cannot type or write you might consider dictating your life into a tape recorder. Your special story needs to be told so people around you may learn. I must remember my true saying: "If life

were any other way it would be different." Let me encourage you to remember it too. Will you agree with me " this moment is the only moment that we have?" We are not promised another one. Let us not waste it in self pity! I think that I want to end this book with two statements. The first one is "**We Must ENDURE**". The second one is found in the book of PHILIPPIANS 1:21, "**For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**"

Thank you for making time to read my book. My prayer is that it will be a blessing to you to have read it, as it was to me to have written it.

SUGGESTED BOOKS TO READ:

*Finding the Heart to Go On...*Lynn Anderson

*Healing Grace...*David A. Seamands

*A Long Obedience in the Same Direction...*Eugene H. Peterson

*God Came Near...*Max Lucado

*Disappointment With God...*Philip Yancey

*Think...*Virgil R. Trout

*The Hallelujah Factor...*Jack R. Taylor

*Reversed Thunder...*Eugene H. Peterson

*You Gotta Keep Dancin...*Tim Hansel

*Happiness Is A Choice...*Frank B. Minirth, M.D. and Paul D. Meier, M.D.

*When God Doesn't Make Sense...*Dr. James Dobson

Appendix

A Perspective from David's wife, Carolyn

The Care-Giver

I must be the first to admit that I am not a writer or public speaker. I have always been uncomfortable when placed in a "spot light" position. Unlike David, I must say, who for many years was a minister and had always loved people and being involved in their lives. I guess this is why it has taken me so long to accept his disability.

I have been asked by several friends to write a chapter for the book and tell how I have coped, in the hope of offering some help to those who find themselves in similar circumstances.

The last five years have found me questioning many things about me as a person and my faith in God. I have gone through most of the normal disappointments in life in rearing three children, losing my in-laws and both parents, but nothing has been as hard as seeing my husband lose his health. Many may say I have so much to be thankful for and there are so many people with greater problems. This is true, but you are unable to see those blessings at the time. You find out first hand that there is a vast difference in talking the game of life and playing the game of life.

After the failed surgery in March 1990, my faith became so very weak. For the first time, I was so very angry when I finally faced the real truth that David was much worse and would not be able to return to a normal life we had known. After all, we were both in our prime! Had it not been for Jesse Long at Greater Atlanta Christian School, where David was employed when the injury occurred, and many of our friends, we would have been in great financial difficulty.

Now that you have heard my negative side, let me share with you some of my feelings today. I still do not have answers to many questions, but I can tell you that through your sad experiences you can find solutions to your problems if you don't give in or up.

Listed below are a few suggestions if you are faced with personal tragedy in your life:

- 1. Don't feel that life has been especially cruel to you, (i.e. singled out); God is in control.*
- 2. Don't feel guilty when your faith becomes weak. Only time can heal disappointment and hurt. Then you can emerge with a greater faith.*
- 3. When faced with a mountain, don't quit. Learn to take one day at a time.*

4. Learn to trust in God that he will take care of you. You cannot trust in your own financial planning.

Also, some suggestions or ways you may be of help to others who are care-givers.

1. Observe them and express to them your interest in their well-being. Ask them how they are doing. I have, on several occasions, wanted to say, "can't you see I am not doing good"!

2. Make conversation about other things besides the patient and how he is doing. The person has told the same story over and over again. In the case of a long term illness or disability, there is usually not much change.

3. Never say, "you are going to be a better person when this is over" or "God has a special plan for you when this is over." They may or may not be a better person - even if so, it is a truth they may not be able to fathom or appreciate at this time. (And, what a price to pay for becoming a better person, and, why should God punish your loved one to make a better person out of you?)

4. Don't forget the care-giver. We usually forget and move on but they still need encouragement.

I must say how blessed our family has been. Christians from several states have been involved in our lives and have shown much concern and support. I cannot imagine life without family and friends in time of joy or sorrow. None of us knows what the future holds and I am thankful that God has not allowed any of us to see into it. But we can know that sunshine follows the rain and joy cometh in the morning.

Carolyn Wheeler

ENDORSEMENTS

"I have been greatly enriched by reading this book by David A. Wheeler. Brother Wheeler is not writing about some personal theory. He writes out of the crucible of experience. David writes as one who knows the meaning of suffering and pain. This book should be read by all, especially those who are going through some severe crisis in their life."

by Billy Lambert, Gospel Preacher, Saraland, Alabama

"This book written by David Wheeler is different from most books on the subject of suffering. We are amazed at how he was able to deal with excruciating pain for several years. He speaks from the depth of his heart in talking about how he, as a faithful Christian, has dealt with almost unbearable pain. It will strengthen one's faith to read this book. David and Carolyn are some of the finest Christians I know."

by V. P. Black, Evangelist, Mobile, Alabama

"A Cry For Relief is a powerful reminder of the fact that one's relationship to God is the most important thing in life. His tremendous struggle with all the problems relating to his physical disability, assures us that faith really works. Sometimes we think that the only heroes of faith are those we read about in the Bible, but that is not true. Some live today, and I believe David Wheeler is one. Because of his faith, David, like Moses, has 'endured, as seeing him who is invisible.' Heb. 11:26 For many years David has been an effective preacher, but the example of his victorious faith, in the face of personal crisis, is more powerful than any sermon he might ever preach."

by Billy D. Hilyer, President, Faulkner University

"I have known David Wheeler for many years and have had the opportunity to observe him closely as he has worked through his struggles. He was a man of faith before his injury. He is even more so now in spite of the pain. Following him through his journey into pain and depression and then out of darkness to stronger faith and assurance will warm your soul."

by Jesse C. Long, President Greater Atlanta Christian School, Norcross, Georgia

"After reading David Wheeler's book, A Cry For Relief, I am very impressed. I highly recommend it to those who are suffering severe physical pain, those who are depressed and lonely, or those who know someone who is struggling with such circumstances. There is something in this book for everyone.

By their great faith in God, David and Carolyn have shown us how to deal with problems which many of us must face. They are much like the Apostle Paul in that in whatever state they find themselves, they have learned to be content. While David still suffers with pain daily, he maintains a good attitude and a great smile. He continues to be active in teaching Bible classes, preaching and visiting the sick which is certainly an example for us all."

by Edgar Walton, Elder, Campus Church of Christ, Norcross, Georgia