

Reflections from a Grieving Pastor

Volume 1

OK, its confession time: I hate change. I really do. I just don't like it when my environment changes. Change the brand of toothpaste in my bathroom and I'm a wreck! I guess I dislike change a lot because I like predictability a lot. I like to have a sense of what's in store each & every day. I like to be in the know. Change is unsettling because change to my human senses means uncertainty. Change is unpredictable. Change is stressful. Change is not my favourite!

The harsh reality is that my announcement last Sunday morning brings with it a boatload of change. It means change for me, for Karen, for our kids, and for each one in the Burns Church family. Over the last few weeks, all this potential change has caused moments of panic in both Karen and me. Perhaps since last Sunday, some of you have had a similar reaction.

I think it's healthy for us all to simply admit out loud (or in this case – on paper) that the transition time Burns is entering into elicits a level of anxiety in us all. *“What's next? Who's next? What's going to happen with...?”* If we allow it, this anxiety can cause us to hit the panic button – both as the Illman family and the Burns Church family. But let's not do it! Don't panic! God is not the God of panic. God is still large and in charge of HIS church. He's got this all covered.

There's a great story in Matthew 8:23-27 about Jesus and his disciples weathering a storm together on a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. The key to the whole story is how everyone reacted to the uncertainty of the storm around them. The disciples' reaction was drastically different than Jesus' reaction. As they looked around at all the uncertainty and all the unpredictability and all the stress around them, they hit the panic button! Jesus, on the other hand, was catching some zzzz's below deck! They were frantic, Jesus was calm. They were stressed, Jesus rested. And then comes the best part of the story: Jesus wakes up, stretches, rubs his eyes, and calms the entire storm!!!

Let's be honest: There is a significant amount of change coming over the next weeks and months for both the Illman family and the Burns Church family. During this time, we will ALL have moments where we'll feel overwhelmed. There will be times where we will want to pack it all in and go somewhere else or do something else that will be safer and more predictable. There will be times ahead where we'll be tempted to hit the panic button. Let's promise to walk with each other and support each other during such times. Let's take the time to check in with one another and pray with one another during this transition time. Let's constantly remind one another that our God is the God who loves to show Himself strong when we feel weak and vulnerable.

Here's some Bible trivia that some of us might not be too excited about: Most of the major stories in the Bible involve drastic life change. In the Bible, the giants of the faith were people who faithfully obeyed when God called them to follow Him down life paths of risk & change. These heroes of the faith were men & women who learned to trust God when life was uncertain and unpredictable. As I am writing this, the thought just occurred to me: Maybe that's why God so often calls His followers to paths of change. It's when we are forced to trust God that we grow the most. It's when life is oozing change and uncertainty that we have to lean hard on our Saviour. God uses times of change to deepen our experience of His presence and nurture our child-like dependence on Him.

So I say *“Bring on that new brand of toothpaste!!”*

Change in life is inevitable. But God in all things is immovable.

We're ready. And (more importantly) God is faithful.