

## ***Reflections from a Grieving Pastor***

### **Volume 2**

I've discovered something about myself over the past few weeks: I deal with stress by eating yummy junkfood. Actually, I didn't just discover this recently. I've known this about myself for some time. When life gets crazy and uncertain, I reach for chocolate!

A friend of mine made an interesting statement in my hearing this week: Human beings tend to medicate their pain with a wide variety of things. What she meant is that we tend to reach for something when life gets difficult. We need something that will dull the pain and distract us from real life. It may be (like in my case) a 24-pack of chocolate-glazed Timbits. It might be new clothes...or a manicure...or a big screen TV. We deal with the stresses and strains of life by reaching for something and using it to medicate us and help us to cope.

Sometimes we find ourselves medicating with something other than a tangible item. Often people medicate their pain through their own emotions. We deal with the stresses of life with anxiety, or anger, or by withdrawing from established relationships. To be honest, I'm there. I can see myself being tempted to deal with the stresses and strains of leaving Burns and moving across the country by pulling back from some relationships. I'm finding myself not wanting to talk with people, not wanting to answer the phone, not wanting to be around people. Over the past few weeks, I have caught myself wanting to medicate through solitude. Now don't get me wrong - solitude is not a bad thing. Withdrawing from people on a regular basis is a healthy thing. But I'm finding myself wanting to be alone so that I don't have to do the hard work of talking with people and sharing my emotions about this time of transition with them. I'm being tempted to withdraw from some personal relationships in order to medicate the pain and stress of leaving Burns and entering a new situation. God has challenged me in the last few weeks to be intentional about staying engaged with people and not withdrawing from the people who are important to me and who I desperately need to help me get through this time of transition.

I have learned a valuable lesson just in the last few weeks: God longs to be my "drug of choice". God longs to be the One I turn to help me life gets crazy. There's a great verse in the Old Testament book of Psalms: *"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God."* (Psalm 20:7) God has done business with me during this whole process of transition. He has challenged me to be honest about what I'm really trusting in when life gets difficult. As a follower of Jesus, I am called to trust in God to get me through. As a follower of Jesus, I need to get honest about what I'm medicating my pain with and confess it and get my trust back where it belongs.

What about you? How do you medicate when life is stressful? What's your "drug of choice" when things are painfully uncertain? Think for a moment about this transitional time at Burns in particular. As I wrote in Volume 1, this is an uncertain and stressful time for this church family. The next few months here at Burns will be full of unique challenges for us all, individually and collectively. My announcement a few weeks ago may have left some of you reaching for something to medicate the uncertainty you feel. It is possible that some of you feel angry or resentful about this announcement. *"Why is he leaving us now? Why didn't he give us more warning?"* Or it's possible that (like me) you feel like pulling back emotionally from others in order to cope.

I want to challenge us here at Burns to refuse to trust in the chariots and horses of our day. I want us to say a firm "NO" to medicating our pain away. My prayer is that we would be honest with each other about how we feel and how we're coping with any uncertainty in this process. My prayer is also that we would learn through this transitional time what it means to fully abandon every other "drug of choice" and trust fully in the LORD our God.

So...drop the Timbit and get out of the McDonald's Drive-Thru! Why rely on horses and chariots when we've got the power and presence of the King of the Universe in our corner?

*"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. They are brought to their knees and fall...BUT WE RISE UP AND STAND FIRM!"* (Psalm 20:7-8)