

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

### **Volume 3**

Next week Karen and I celebrate our 14<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. A quick google reveals that the traditional gift for the 14<sup>th</sup> year is ivory. Ivory??!! Fascinating. So I'm thinking a nice 3-pack of soap will fit the bill as a gift to my beautiful bride! ☺

When Karen and I were married 14 years ago, God gave me a verse from the Bible to cling to as we contemplated how He was leading us to serve him:

***This is what the LORD says—***

***your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:***

***"I am the LORD your God,***

***who teaches you what is best for you,***

***who directs you in the way you should go."*** (Isaiah 48:17)

Over the past 14 years, this verse has become our life transition verse. Whenever we face a major life decision, God brings us back to this verse. To be honest, it's the verse we claimed when we were making the decision to come to Burns back in 2000.

Our decision to pack up our tents and leave Burns and move to British Columbia has been a difficult one for us. But in the process, God has confirmed His perfect will in many clear and powerful ways. Here's the most vivid example:

It's a memory that will be etched in my mind until the day I die. It happened at Burns just a few months ago - after church on Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>. This was a weird Sunday for me because Karen and I were secretly flying out to Coquitlam that very week to check out the ministry opportunity there.

I was in my office and Joel appeared at the door with a Bible in his hands. He said, "Daddy, can I show you the verse that Miss Carolynn taught us in Kingdom Kids today?" Sensing a father-son moment, I replied "Sure buddy. Come on in." He did. "I've already found the book of the Bible that it's in," he said as he crawled up on my lap. "Isaiah". As soon as he said that, I had an immediate sense deep down in the core of my being. I knew right then and there that my son was going to show me THE verse: Isaiah 48:17. I just knew it. Isaiah has 66 chapters and 1291 verses in it. But I knew deep within my soul exactly what chapter and verse Joel was about to show me.

He began flipping through the chapters of Isaiah.

"I think it's in the 40's" he remarked.

"Of course it is," I thought to myself.

He kept turning pages: chapter 45, 46, 47, 48.

"Yes...this is it. Chapter 48. I'll recognize the verse when I see it."

With that his little finger began scrolling down the page through Isaiah 48. Verse 1, 2, 3 and so on.

All the while I'm thinking to myself, "Its verse 17 you're looking for Big Guy. I just know it."

His little finger kept on moving. Verse 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

"Here it is!" he exclaimed proudly. "Verse 17."

I could have jumped right out of my skin. "No way, God!!!" I shouted in my thoughts. "This is too cool!!!"

"Read it for me buddy," I said. He read it. Slowly and succinctly.

**This is what the LORD says—  
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:  
"I am the LORD your God,  
who teaches you what is best for you,  
who directs you in the way you should go."**

I cried without making a sound. It was a deeply profound moment. Right In the middle of our journey of discerning God's will for us in ministry and just days before we were to fly out west, God peeled the veil of heaven back and spoke directly and powerfully to me.

"I'm the Lord your God. I WILL teach you what is best for you and I WILL direct you in the way you should go. Trust me. Trust my heart. I've got this all covered. Relax and trust me."

It was a huge God moment for sure. The most powerful and profound thing in all of this experience wasn't that God spoke very clearly to me and reminded me that He is the God of our transitions. The most powerful and profound thing was that God used a 7 year-old as His mouthpiece. God used my own son to speak powerfully into my life and our situation.

Why am I telling you this story? Because I want the final volume of this series of journal entries to deeply encourage you. Catch this: God is all over this transition – both for the Illman family and for the Burns Church family. Let me be clear: As you enter this time of transition at Burns, you can rest confidently and trust unswervingly in the reality that the Lord of Burns Church is large and in charge. The Lord WILL teach you what is best for you and HE WILL direct you in the way you should go. You can count on it.

God is your Redeemer. He is the Holy One. It's all about Him. It's all for Him. All the praise belongs to Him. He is the Alpha and the Omega. The First and the Last. He neither slumbers nor sleeps. He will never leave you nor forsake you. HE WILL teach you what is best for you. HE WILL direct you in the way you should go.

Where are you at in your life right now? Where is the way forward kind of fuzzy for you? Where are you confused...or scared...or in need of direction in your own life? Here me loud & clear: God longs to be the Lord and Master of your life. It's his passion to teach you what is best for you and direct you personally and powerfully in the way you should go in your life. This is true for you as an individual. And it's true for His church in Ashburn.

Over the next week or so, there will certainly be some tears as we say farewell to our beloved family here at Burns. But there's a lot of joy in all of this as well. We're excited to see what God has in store for the Illman family in British Columbia! We're excited to see what our God will do in us and through us at Coquitlam Presbyterian Church!

And we're equally excited about what things God has in store for the Burns Church family.  
New things. Good things. God things.

The grace and peace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.

With much love,  
Graeme ☺