

“For One Reason Only” By Fred Wilgenburg

A fundamental truth about God is His amazing grace. It's a gift in its purest form --- unearned, undeserving, and a bunch of other good things. *(Some names below are changed for privacy.)*

Vanessa passed away recently at the age of 31. She died from the effects of a seizure, but she had other medical problems as well. Vanessa's life was a struggle in many ways. She grew up in poverty, largely because her dad couldn't keep a job. Learning was hard for Vanessa, so school and work were difficult. Largely due to lacking a faith-foundation, as an adult, Vanessa had two children out of wedlock, both of whom are being raised in the foster care system, and she was in many unhealthy relationships. Amazingly, through it all, we experienced Vanessa as a friendly and courteous person.

We had known Vanessa off and on for over 13 years, ever since she was involved in Center of Hope's Friendship program as a 17 year old. But I had visited with Vanessa recently on several occasions, as a mediator between Vanessa and her estranged friend, in what was a messy situation. Vanessa's flickering faith from many years ago was still there. She told me that Jesus was her Savior. I attended her funeral with that estranged friend at Church at the Gate in Sioux Falls, where Vanessa had been attending with her brother lately. God only knows, but I have every reason,...actually, one reason, to believe that Vanessa is in heaven today.

Heather passed away recently at age 41. She died of a lung disease, six

months after her condition was determined to be terminal. We had known Heather as a soft-spoken, shy person for many years, mostly through her daughter, Haley, who came to our Kids Hangout, as well as through Andy, Heather's long-time boyfriend and the father of Haley; Andy comes frequently to our Care Center. Due to many health problems, Heather rarely left her apartment(s). Like many impoverished people in a city, in the past 10 years, Heather and her daughter lived in at least 6 different apartments.

Heather was perhaps most challenged being a mother of her four children. The two sons are presently in prison in Sioux Falls; we visited her son Russell (age 20) a few weeks ago, just a few days before his mom passed away, to see how he was doing. He came occasionally to our Kids Hangout as a child. Haley, now 16, came last week from a juvenile detention center in western South Dakota, in order to be with her mom on the last day, and then to attend her mom's funeral.

God only knows, but I have every reason,...actually, one reason, to

believe that Heather is in heaven today. About 4 weeks before her death, she came to know Jesus as her Savior. She had a vague faith in Tunkashila, also known as Wakan Tanka for years. This was her Great Spirit, her Great Mystery, her Creator as she understood through her Lakota Sioux tradition. But Jesus as Emmanuel, that is, God with us, made Tunkashila personal to Heather. We were blessed to conduct her funeral; it was a small service at a nearby funeral home.

Becky, the wife of a pastor in Sioux Falls recently passed away after a courageous, roughly 16-month battle with pancreatic cancer. She was a beautiful person of God, all of her life. Her husband's Facebook posts, and her daughter's blogs, kept the larger body of believers updated on this woman's, and this family's, strong faith journey as she fought a hard battle with cancer. Becky's visitation and funeral were attended by hundreds of people, as they celebrated her life, including now in heaven.

Vanessa and Heather, and Becky,
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Coffee Break had its best year yet. Thank you to students and leaders Grace, Dee, Glinny, Susan, & Bertha.

God bless your study and time. Look forward to seeing you next fall!

Continued from page 1 are all in the same place today, even though their lives were vastly different from each other's. They are in a place where there is no more mourning and crying and pain. Some might say, "I'm so happy for all of them!" Others might be thinking, "that's not right; their lives were so different, including the kind of impact their lives had, yet they're all in the same place!?" God says it in Romans 3:22b-24 of the Bible, "There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Remember the thief on the cross? Moments before he died, he received Jesus as his Savior, and Jesus declared, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

There's just one reason why these women are together in Heaven today; God's amazing grace...how sweet the sound...that saved a wretch like me...

Holiday Clearing House will have a name change this year to "Sharing Christmas" We



believe "Sharing Christmas" gives a clearer portrait of what this program is, as well as who Center of Hope and our partners in this ministry, The Community Outreach, are.

Falls Area Bicyclist—FAB

will be holding its annual fund raiser on July 5. Please consider supporting this by either being one of the riders, volunteering, praying for this, or donating financially.



Hy-Vee matched your donations and Center of Hope received a check for \$1,790. Operation Helpful Smile is a Sioux Falls Hy-Vee program that has assisted local non-profit organizations in our communities. Each week, a different area non-profit receives a monetary donation from Hy-Vee. *THANKS friends for your donations, and thank-you Hy-Vee for matching them.*

Save the Dates!

Aug. 17-7 pm "Night of Hope" Concert— Doug Anderson & Beyond the Ashes.—Benefit for Center of Hope

Nov. 8 - Fall Benefit

What Does the Center of Hope do? We...

- 1) distribute winter clothing & bikes-for-work at minimal prices.
- 2) we meet most guests in our Care Center.
- 3) We do many Pastoral visits.
- 4) we have Restored 2 Life church, which includes Sports Night for many young men.
- 5) we have Bible Studies.
- 6) we do Faith Community nursing.
- 7) we offer Journey Camp for children.
- 8) we coordinate "Sharing Christmas"
- 9) offer Work & Life Training Program
- 10) write "Iron Sharpens Iron."

MEMORIAL GIFTS

Center of Hope appreciate the gift made...

In memory of: Kathleen Easslink

As always, we are happy to have you on our mailing list. Please let us know if you would like to be removed from our list or have your newsletter sent electronically.



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