

## TAKING TIME TO HEAL

"I walk on an isolated, lonely beach, and her absence is a vast and angry sea that breaks over me repeatedly--one black and terrible surge after another. Each batters me relentlessly, and I am powerless to resist, stand, endure. And I go down under their weight and intensity." Thus reads my journal a scant six weeks after the death of Mary, my wife.

A question plagues me: how does one ever heal after being wracked to the bone by devastating loss? Recovery has been excruciatingly slow and painful, and many days produce setbacks instead of advances.

There's no way around it; the healing of the soul takes time... different kinds of time.

### TIME TO REMEMBER

When the burdens of caring for a retarded child overwhelmed us, friends reached out to love us and our little Jenny. Three--Harold and Dot Walden and Linda Hammett-- repeatedly march across the pages of Mary's journal for 1976, our lives intertwined in great intimacy.

Still too painful for me to do alone, these three have granted me time to remember by reading some of Mary's notations to me. Together we've laughed, cried, marveled at God's goodness--and my soul has been calmed.

Though Jenny's physical and mental infirmities struck us down like an unexpected thunderbolt, the hard times are barely visible in these remembrances. More apparent is the grand and good scheme of God in difficult circumstances. Likewise, peace in my current situation, dark as it may seem today, will eventually prevail.

### TIME TO FORGET

Cumulatively, I have shoveled hours of words into the ears of patient listeners in my attempts to offload hurts. Remarkably, they've never reminded me that I keep recycling the issues of shock, despair, apathy, loneliness, bewilderment, escape. Instead, they assure me that all will be well... in time.

And though I know that I'll never actually "forget" 40 years of companionship, current relationships and friendships slowly seep into the void death has created. And as the emptiness gradually disappears, I can mentally set it aside--and forget.

### TIME TO CONSIDER

To consider is to bring the disputes of head and heart into agreement. So on both our 40th anniversary and on Father's Day, I took time--sitting in the cemetery where Mary and Jenny are buried-- to consider. Where I am? Where I'm going? What do I do next?

Sometimes my head quotes the Scripture, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." But then my heart instantly responds with a strong rejoinder, "But I sure do miss her." So the wrangling goes until peace and healing come. Another baby step forward.

Though the Apostle James admonishes, "Consider it all joy my brothers, when you encounter various trials," I still await the joy. More time.

### TIME TO REGRET

Do I have regrets? Hundreds. Things I wish I'd said or done but didn't. Things I wish I hadn't said or done but did. They whirl about in my mind, taunting me until I can lay hold of one and wrestle it to the ground. Then comes the hard reckoning.

Does it really matter to her now that she never made that leisurely drive through Maine or write the children's picture book? The loveliness of heaven majestically overshadows any beauty or pleasure of this earth. She is now well satisfied; I'm the one with regrets, but time will bring each one into resolution.

My head embraces this fact: time to heal, like the healing itself, is a gift of God. But anticipating a glad reunion, my heart leaps rapidly forward with these words: "Farewell is not goodbye; my heart no longer cries. I'll see you in a minute over there!"