

## HOW ONE FAMILY COPEd THROUGH LOSS

Neighbours of ours recently had to put down their dog after 14 years. Daisy would sometimes meet up with their dog for walks and enjoy sniffing around the neighbourhood. I would sometimes refer to this dog as Daisy's boyfriend because she was always excited to walk beside him.

There has been an emptiness and void in this family's life since the passing of their dog. One thing that impressed me though is the efforts they have gone to in order to cope through their loss. Early into the loss they started going for walks with one of their neighbours whenever she walked her dog. The family found comfort to still being able to go out for walks even though it wasn't with their own dog.

After doing this a few times the mother and daughter began taking the neighbour's dog for walks on their own. One day the two of them stopped in front of our house with their neighbour's dog and you could see the smiles on their faces from being able to do this despite their loss.

They decided a few weeks ago it was time they got their own dog. The daughter began looking online and found a litter of five puppies. She called the breeder and was first told they were all spoken for, but shortly after, one family backed out. There was one of the puppies that really caught their eye and they hoped this would be the puppy they would get to choose.

Their wish came true. After the first three people chose the puppy they wanted, our neighbours got to pick the one they had hoped for which was the runt of the litter. This family still had to wait a few weeks after they chose their puppy before they could bring her home. Meanwhile, they didn't stop taking the neighbour's dog for walks in order to help them cope with their loss. On Sunday, this family drove to Guelph and brought home the new addition to their family. They sent us pictures online with the caption "We will love our new dog as much as we loved our old one."

I am so happy for this family that they have found a new dog to be part of their family. I was also impressed by the diligence and discipline they displayed in finding ways to cope through their loss.

Sunday marked a time of loss for us as well at the church with that being our last in-house worship service until the province allows us to reopen. We will still be offering services online, but for some of our people, being able to come to our Sunday services is what was helping them to persevere each week

through this pandemic. Coming to church was not just an outing, but a safe place they could come to each week to feel spiritually fed in worship and say “hello” to their brothers and sisters in Christ.

For some of us, including myself, this shutdown feels like a loss. With loss comes grief. I know my daughter is grieving not being able to return to school this week and having to do classes on-line instead. We are grieving having to go through another lockdown not knowing for how long. Just like my neighbours found ways to cope with their loss and grief, we need to remain diligent in finding ways to cope with our feelings emotionally and spiritually through this time of loss. I think Paul’s advice in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 can prove helpful to us to stay disciplined when it comes to our faith.

***“Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win. All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So, I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.”***

As Paul points out here, everyone of us is running a race through another lockdown in this pandemic. He encourages everyone to run this race with a desire to win. A win for us will be finding ways to cope emotionally, spiritually, and physically through this time of loss until we get to the other side. Paul encourages us to be disciplined when it comes to this race that we are running in. What does discipline training involve for us during this? It includes:

- watching our services on-line each week or a service on television if you do not have a computer.
- reading from your Bible each day or doing a daily devotional.
- praying each day and talking with God.
- calling and talking to your brothers and sisters in Christ and being uplifted by conversations with one another.

As Paul points out, if we are going to get through the race, we are in during this lockdown we need to remain disciplined when it comes to these things. Over these next several weeks lets make sure we run with purpose in every step we take to stay strong spiritually. However long this race might be, we will succeed and reach the finish line first because of our strong disciplined faith in our Lord and God.

My neighbours put a lot of diligence and effort into their journey of grief and loss. Now they are having to be just as diligent trying to adapt to a new puppy around the house. They sent us a video last night of the puppy playing. It was cute to see but they admit it was like having a newborn again. The diligence they learned in the tough journey of grief will help them stay disciplined in this joyful season. Now it is our turn to be diligent and disciplined in this time of loss. The lessons we learn from this will carry well for us when we get to the other side of this pandemic.

Keep Safe and God Bless,

**Pastor Dean**