

Care Capsule[®]

*Capsules of motivation to dispense
care and kindness*

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The Hardest Death of All

— Dr. James R. Kok

In This Issue

The Hardest Death
of All..... 1

Partnering for a Care
Conference in your
area 3

Regional Care
& Kindness
Conferences 4

Simple Acts of Care
& Kindness, Inc..... 6

Light Notes 7

Little Johnny..... 8

Loss is an inevitable part of life. Every loss hurts. Seldom does one occur without pain and unhappiness. They all change our lives and take time to heal. When moms, dads, brothers, sisters, husbands and wives, or friends leave us, the cost to us is heavy.

It is not wise to compare one death to another or to try to rank them on a scale of which is most difficult. For one thing they all are different, the one from another. Also no one knows how deeply hurt or how much sad circumstances affect the survivor. The

death of a brother may be more devastating to one than the death of a mother. Grief is hard; we should avoid comparisons.

There is one exception to this rule—the death of one’s child is in a league by itself.

When Shauna Stuewe, a beautiful, athletic teenager died five years ago on Valentines Day, something



awakened in me that is not likely to change. An articulate young Christian cheerleader, she slipped to the floor in the

practice gym and could not be revived. What awakened in me as I spent time with her

(continued on page 2)

The Hardest Death

Continued from page 1

family was the realization that such a death stands alone on the scale of heartbreak.

I have been close to a couple of handfuls of other such tragedies where children had died—car accidents, suicide, drunk drivers, even murder by a father. All were tragic beyond words. But Shauna’s death, for some reason, opened my eyes. I regret now that I didn’t realize years ago the enormity of the death of one’s child. Not that I was inappropriate as a Pastor, but I see now so much more clearly that those deaths were so much more tragic than I realized. I should have been more personally devastated, and could have been more sympathetic and empathetic. I am deeply apologetic.

The death of a child is so wrong. Children are not supposed to pre-decease their parents. They are supposed to grow up, enjoy life, laugh, learn, love, and live. Some day they are supposed to “lay their parents to rest”, not the other way around. Every father and mother carries that timetable deep in their heart

and if their child dies, there is no capacity to comprehend such a reversal. It is not the way life is supposed to be. It is wrong! Hopes, dreams, plans, joys—all lie shattered with no hope of revival. They are ended.

In such tragedies Christians are in a different place than others. On the one hand, there is usually the strong assurance of their young one’s being safe in the arms of Jesus. But that is not where they want their child at this time. They want him and/or her in their own arms. Yes, there is profound comfort in Jesus’ promise. But this comfort is more of a valued belief than a true anesthesia for their broken hearts. Their pain is lessened little. It will never be gone.

Caring people do not try to fix the broken-hearted

Sometimes the death of a child is harder for Christians than for others. It can be spiritually very confusing, and even enraging. If God is seen as allowing, or in some way the author, or gate-keeper, of this terrible untimely and wrong death, personal faith can be shattered or deeply angered. Some, when a child dies, turn their

backs on God and never return. Others find it possible to accept it as God’s will, as heartbroken as they are. There are a few for whom the only comfort to be found is the conviction that this unwanted disaster is in the plan of God.



At our church cemetery there is a steady trickle of people coming to visit grave sites. Most of them, by far, are parents who have lost a child. Some

are there regularly for years. That underscores the main point here, that the death of a child stands alone and far beyond other deaths.

My observations are limited, but the truth seems to be that most who lose a child survive, regain their strength and spirit, and live again as productive and even life-enjoying people. The loss is always felt, even when a meaningful life goes on. This is the healing of God. God does restore the crushed, even though the pain endures forever.

What can we do?

Believing that God heals is essential for those who love and care. Embracing that conviction allows, and declares, that caring people are not expected to try to make this incredible heartache

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less awful. Caring people leave the healing to God; they concentrate on love and compassion. They do not endeavor to fix the broken hearted when they put their arms around them. They shelve their remedies and answers and concentrate on loving-kindness.

I have spent many hours with parents where a child has died. I am convinced there is nothing I have said, other than prayer, that has ever made a difference. I am also certain my time with them has been appreciated and helpful. My presence is love. Love is the primary ingredient that may contribute to the healing process.

There is a way of responding to ordinary grief that is pretty consistent. Calls, visits, messages, assistance, food, prayers—for several weeks in most cases. When a parent loses a child, this help should be multiplied many times. Instead of for only a few weeks, such things can be meaningful for a few years.

We believe that God's heart breaks with those parents whose child has died. What Jesus says, slightly paraphrased, is this: "Inasmuch as it happens to the least of these my children, it happens to me." What an amazing help that is—to see Jesus weeping with us in our sorrows. That is the posture of the family of Jesus. We must surround the broken-hearted and be broken-hearted with those who have lost a child. That is where Jesus is, and, more than anything else, helps. "Weep with those who weep," says St Paul.

A few years ago I met an older woman with whom I had to spend some time. She was not married

and she lived alone. In our conversation I asked about her family history and the first thing that happened was she began to cry. Then she went on to tell me about the death of her only child at six months of age. It had to have been at least sixty years before that day when we were talking. The heart-break was all still there.

Weep with those who weep

Those of us who have not experienced the death of a child must remember that. It is always there in those who have had a child die. That pain can always be touched in a loving encounter, and the mother or father will always be grateful for an empathic listener—as they are weeping again even decades later.

Another dimension of this is the age of one's child who dies. Even a 90-year-old who loses their 70-year-old son or daughter is often in deep anguish and will make the wrongness of this death clear when they say, "I should go first!" The issue of losing a child is not exclusively about youngsters.

Summation

Loving-kindness stays tuned to heartache, even looks for it, in order to touch those especially tender places in another's heart. Not only does such love touch deeply another's sorrow—it builds a friendship in a special way. So, bravely reaching into the heart of a friend or stranger for tender memories both heals and endears but it also makes an unforgettable connection.

As caring Christians each of us can carry a hidden agenda: namely, we can sensitively be open to, and even looking for, the special hurts in other's lives like the death of a child.



Partnering for a Care Conference in your area !

We would like to work with your team to schedule a local mini-conference that would make it easier for people in your area to attend.



We had a number of wonderful events in Garden Grove, California (13) but not everyone could make the trip to the west coast.

So, we are working on several smaller conferences in various parts of the United States.

How would you like to help host one in your community?



We will offer as much help as you would like, drawing upon our past experience. You can determine the topics, speakers, schedule any way you want — or we can work alongside your people in developing those things.

And . . . Dr. Jim Kok will come to speak (*no honorarium required*) to share the Care and Kindness vision.

Drop us a line at: ShowUp@careandkindness.org to let us know of your interest. Then we can begin planning together!

Regional Care and Kindness Conferences



The Federated Church of Castleton, Vermont, hosted the most recent Care and Kindness Conference.

The conference, **on October 19 & 20**, included lay people, as well as a number of pastors from other local churches. They will in turn be able to pass on the Care and Kindness Campaign in their own locales. Music, plenary speakers and workshop speakers filled the conference with wonderful inspiration and delightful memories.



Jim Kok's presentations were enthusiastically received, with many positive comments about his messages that were shared. He said we must appreciate people who are making the world

a better place—that the spirit of Jesus is working through each of them, even if they do not acknowledge it in themselves. He emphasized Jesus' words in the Lord's Prayer: "on earth, as it is in heaven." Jesus wants us to help bring the joy of heaven to people while they are still on this earth.

Workshop topics were **"The Joy of Care and Kindness"**

(Jane LaBrutto),

"Go Ahead...

Inconvenience Me"

(Beverly Carroll), **"Just Visit"** (Jean Britt),

and **"Following His Lead"** (Ceil Hunt)



Jim Kok with pastors Rob Noble and Steven Berry

March 8 – 9, 2013

Artesia, California

New Life Community Church will host a Friday evening and Saturday day time conference on their beautiful campus in Artesia.

You haven't been to Southern California lately? This conference



would give you a good reason to come.

It is easily accessible from nearby Long Beach Airport.

Disneyland, Knotts Berry Farm, Downtown Los Angeles and other area attractions are all nearby.

A friend is someone who knows the song in your heart and can sing it back to you when you have forgotten the words. I believe that friends are quiet angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly.

— Find the one most convenient for you !

April 12 – 13, 2013

Santa Ana, California

[First Presbyterian Church](#) is a beautiful, historic church in downtown Santa Ana. With lots of rooms that will work out well for break-out sessions, the church will



be able to accommodate the multiple topics and speakers that are being planned.

In the heart of Orange County, this conference provides all of the same area convenience and attractions as described on the left for the Artesia conference, and perhaps April is a better month for you to travel.

April 26 – 27, 2013

Chicago, Illinois

[Trinity Christian College](#) has been the site of two previous Care and Kindness Conferences – 2008 and 2011. The campus is in Palos Heights, which is a suburb in the southwestern Chicago area. It is surrounded by Oak Lawn, Orland



Park and Oak Forest.

A slideshow of photos from the 2011 con-

ference provides a glimpse of the great success of that event. It can be viewed at www.careandkindness.org/Chicago/index.html

Each of these three conferences are in their early planning stages, so details are not available as this edition of the **Care Capsule** goes to the printer.

If you recheck our website as each conference draws closer, details will be posted, including speakers, topics,

registration information, driving directions, etc. Go to www.careandkindness.org.

Helpful Hint: Bookmark this web page in your browser; it will be easy to visit again and again.

Simple Acts of Care and Kindness, Inc.

This year's **World Kindness Youth Conference**, organized by SACK, (see below) was held in Corona, California in October. It was attended by **4000 fourth-graders** from the city's elementary schools, plus 400 high school volunteers. This day long

event, first held in 2004, uses seminars and activities to help students learn the many areas of life into which care and kindness can be inserted. Students also visit exhibitors who have come with messages about care and kindness for themselves (*staying healthy*

with good food and physical activity), their family (*anger management, safety, emergency procedures at home*), their community (*programs for the developmentally disabled, helping keep parks clean and green*), and their world (*recycling, planting trees*).



World Kindness Youth Conference 2012

Simple Acts of Care and Kindness, commonly referred to as SACK, was created in 1999 as an outgrowth of the Conferences on Care and Kindness at the Crystal

Cathedral. SACK directs its efforts toward youth and schools. www.simpleacts.org

Emphasis is placed on dealing with bullying and undertaking

positive actions of kindness and consideration of others. This is accomplished by developing materials and resources for teachers in schools and for students of all ages.



Light Notes

I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid. He says he can stop any time.

How does Moses make his tea? Hebrews it.

Did you hear about the cross-eyed teacher who lost her job because she couldn't control her pupils?

I used to be a banker, but then I lost interest.

Be kind to your dentist. He has fillings, too.

I changed my iPod name to Titanic. It's syncing now.

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went. Then it dawned on me.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I can't put it down.

I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger. Then it hit me!

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.

I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.

Have you sent us your email address?

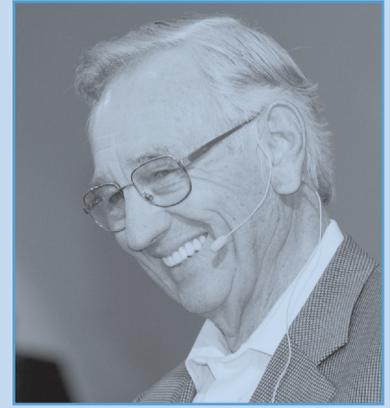
Many people have sent us an email at ShowUp@careandkindness.org to provide us with their email address so that we can send the **Care Capsule** to them online.

With all the new technology that surrounds people today (email, Facebook, Twitter, texting, iPads, iPhones, etc.), we have heard occasional remarks that printed material is a bit behind the times.

On the other hand, if you are one who enjoys holding a publication or a book in your hands, we are happy to continue sending printed copies to you.

What do you think? If you would like to receive future issues as an attachment to your email, please send us your email address.

Send it to –
ShowUp@careandkindness.org



Dr. James R. Kok has written a definitive resource detailing the key essentials in becoming a more caring person in his latest book, "**The Miracle of Kindness**" (available at major bookstores, in either paperback or eBook editions.) A handful of basic tools —wrapped in courage—are the secret to changing the world through intentional acts of kindness.

As the **Koach Of Kare**, Dr. Kok has been a pastor at the Crystal Cathedral for the past 28 years and heads the Care Ministry department of the church. He is the author of six books and numerous articles, and he is the founder of the Conference on Care and Kindness.

You really shouldn't say "I LOVE YOU" unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.

— Jessica- age 8

Little Johnny



The math teacher saw that little Johnny wasn't paying attention in class. She called on him and said, "*Johnny! What are 2 and 4 and 28 and 44?*"

Little Johnny quickly replied, "*NBC, CBS, HBO and the Cartoon network!*"

Little Johnny's kindergarten class was on a field trip to their local police station where they saw pictures, tacked to a bulletin board, of the 10 most wanted criminals. One of the youngsters pointed to a picture and asked if it really was the photo of a wanted person.

"Yes," said the policeman. "*The detectives want very badly to capture him.*"

Little Johnny asked, "*Why didn't you keep him when you took his picture?*"

Care Capsule

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