



Alpha Counseling Service
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February 2018

Dear Friends,

I've just recovered from this flu that's going around and yes I got my flu shot. While I was awake coughing in the middle of the fourth or fifth night a thought came to me: 'if I feel like this for a week or so what must it be like for folks who have chronic illness and feel bad ALL the time?' I know people with MS and other chronic medical troubles who put me to shame when it comes to bearing up under painful conditions.

Last week a minister was quoted to say: "Jesus is the only flu shot we need." In fact I have both Jesus and the shot and got the flu anyway! I am in a helping ministry and want people healed from the sin and pain that is part of everyone's journey. I would love to see all physical maladies done away with but that is not what I have seen in forty years of ministry.

Now the realization I came to in the middle of the night wasn't about being healed but seeking out those who are chronically ill and ministering to them as they are. Years ago a friend who was suffering from cancer called me and asked why I didn't come to play cribbage with him? Then he said "you know I'm not dead yet!" I'll never forget how I felt when he said that. The truth was it was too hard for me to see him decline, and being selfish I avoided contact with him. He didn't want sympathy or to complain about his situation he wanted companionship and someone to beat at cards. We who are blessed with good health prefer avoiding those not as fortunate.

So the positive result of my having the flu is a renewed desire to seek out and spend time with folks who have pain and suffering even if it makes me uncomfortable.

2 Corinthians 1:3,4 *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in ALL our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."* ESV

So, hopefully, good will come from my episode with the flu.

Thank you for reading my confession and if it inspires you to reach out to someone — Praise God!

Richard

I would like to share brief note about Alpha moving to a new location. We still haven't made a decision on where to go and to make it more interesting we now have a third location that looks interesting! So we ask that you pray for our Board, Debi, and myself to have God's wisdom in this move.

Tomorrow is Valentine's Day! As I was searching the word LOVE in the Bible, (and depending on your translation), there are 150 to 200 times the New Testament mentions love. Sometimes it is confronting a wrong kind of love but mostly it tries to encourage us to be more loving toward God first then to those around us.

Abraham Lincoln "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?"

Benjamin Franklin "The best thing to give your enemy is forgiveness." Also, "Love your enemies, for they tell you your faults."

Matthew 5:44 ..."Love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you. Then you will be acting like your Father in Heaven.... If you love only those people who love you will God reward you for that?"...CEV