Hear my prayer, O Lord; heed my cry for mercy; I have been Your servant, and I’m trusting in You. Give me joy and new hope, for I am so needy. Teach me how to follow You and live Your truth.

You alone are the Living God. All nations will before You bow. No other “gods” compare to You So I will praise and worship now.

You, O Lord, are good, and ready to forgive me. Your exceeding mercy comes to all who seek. You, O Lord, are great; wondrous in Your workings For you have delivered my soul from the deep.

You abound with kindness and truth; You will give grace and comfort too. Show me Your goodness; give me strength, And I will praise and worship You.

—Marcia Hornok, 1986
In August my husband, myself and our youngest daughter Emily flew to Salt Lake City where we met my parents and drove to their home. Emily didn’t feel well that evening and so went to bed without any food and with a headache. We thought sleep would take care of her pain.

Thursday morning she awoke with an even worse headache and was throwing up. Mid-morning I recommended that she take a warm shower hoping it would help her pain. She got light-headed and passed out, hit her head and then had what seemed like a seizure. It was so frightening as we called 911 and tried to awaken our daughter. We spent from 10:30 am until 4:00 pm in the emergency room at the hospital watching as Emily had a CT scan and then an EEG trying to rule out any possible bleeding in her brain or a tumor.

As I stood in the ER rubbing her head, trying to hold back tears, and calling out to God for His help, my mind went to a passage in Scripture that I have been memorizing—John 17. Here Jesus is praying for His disciples and those who will be part of His body in the future. One phrase came to my mind: “I pray for them....” That thought touched my heart—Jesus is praying for Emily right now. What peace flooded my soul! No one greater could be praying for her.

Then my sister-in-law came into the ER and told me that believers all over Utah had been notified and that many were praying for Emily’s recovery. More peace and joy came to my heart as I realized the unity and strength that come from being part of the family of God. From that point on my anxiety and concern were handled by the peace of God that was mine because He is mine.

Emily hasn’t had any further problems. We praise the Lord for caring for her, for giving us peace and for allowing us to travel through this so that we can help others as they travel through their pain.

How important it is that we pray for those in need. Now when I pray for a request from a friend/relative/neighbor, I remember how prayer helped us through one of the most frightening events we have ever experienced.

—Miriam Lofquist, Editor

BROKEN DREAMS

As children bring their broken toys with tears for us to mend,
I brought my broken dreams to God because He was my Friend.
But then instead of leaving Him in peace to work alone,
I hung around and tried to help with ways that were my own.
At last I snatched them back and cried, “How can You be so slow?”

—Laruetta P. Burns, copied from the Internet

DID YOU KNOW? You can access back issues of CHERA Fellowship at www.ifca.org. Click on CHERA Fellowship under IFCA Publications and then at the top click on Archive Issues. For descriptions of helpful books for widows and widowers, click on Recommended Reading.
A Very Hard Year

In 1986 our five-year-old daughter had a blood transfusion and contracted a disease from it. Doctors told us it was incurable, progressive, and fatal; she would probably not live past her twenties.

In desperation I memorized Psalm 86, choosing it merely because of the year. It became my life vest. Whenever I felt I could not keep my head above water, I would quote Psalm 86, crying out for God's mercy.

It took a while for me to realize that every fifth verse said special things to God about His character. I could count on God despite my circumstances and lack of joy. Instead of a why-focus, this gave me a Who-focus. Whether our daughter lived or died, He would be with us and get us through. But I often despaired—I needed to learn to base my faith on God's attributes not on the outcomes I wanted from Him. I needed to learn His worth and His words more than I needed to have His works eliminate my problems!

Because Psalm 86 means so much to me, I chose it for our cover poem and as the Bible study in this issue. Quoting it got me through a tremendously difficult year.

Since both Miriam and I have written about the trauma of knowing our loved one—in this case our daughter—might die, we recognize that this does not compare to the loss of a life partner. Some widows/ers have expressed that it is like being personally ripped in half and yet having all their responsibilities doubled. Miriam and I want to remain sensitive to you and your unique suffering. We share our experiences to point out insights and practices that helped us get through difficult times in hopes that you will be comforted and encouraged as you apply them to your situation.

My young friend, Moriah Davis, has suffered one trial after another, including having a baby with life-threatening disabilities. When someone asked her how she was coping, she replied, "It's not a matter of coping. You only have to cope when you are going through something that will pass or improve and you can see light at the end of the tunnel. What we have is not going to end. Our minds are set to view it as our new lifestyle, and it's fine. So we have to carry oxygen tanks everywhere we go; so we find ourselves in the emergency room about once a month—this is the life God has for us, and that's okay." I think all of us can learn from fellow sufferers, like Moriah, even though our trials are uniquely different.

That's why we invite you to write and tell us what is helping you adjust to loss. How has God reveal Himself in a significant way through His sufficient word and His presence in your life? What things happened that helped you move on? When did you start feeling good again?

Other themes we want to cover in future issues include: Singleness, dating, and living alone; Helping children (and grandchildren) grieve their loss; How reaching out to others helped you heal; Finishing well—tell us how your spouse finished the race and fought "the good fight" in a way that revealed his/her faith as well as God's goodness; Lessons from Loss; Looking back, how has God compensated some of your loss?

So write or email us with your story. God will use it to minister to others. In the meantime, learn from this issue what our authors others did that helped heal their wounded hearts and restore meaning to their lives: like cleaning out the garage, reading poetry, learning to enjoy stillness, writing their thoughts, and turning anger into humor.

What about our daughter? After a year of living with the distressing diagnosis, she had major surgery and further tests: no signs of the disease were found. She is now a beautiful wife and step mom—and still symptom-free. "Great is Your mercy toward me…You have delivered my soul from the depths" (Psalm 86:13).

—Marcia Hornok,
Managing Editor
The Five E’s of Grief

I remember on one of our anniversary trips that Helen and I went through a real “Adult Maze.” It took us about an hour; at times I did not think we would ever find our way out. But we did, and as a game it was enjoyable. But in real life the maze of grief is not a game.

My wife’s body stopped functioning on January 5, 2005, after 34 years of marriage. It seemed like I had been put into a maze, and there was no way out. As Job 19:8 says: “He has fenced up my way so that I cannot pass.”

But we serve the God of hope (Romans 15:4). Some told me that grief is optional, abnormal, or even an indication of a defect in my life and my walk with the Lord. However, I am learning that kind of thinking is far from the truth. Grief is a fact of life that is exemplified, expressed, established, expected, and essential. I call these “The Five ‘Ease’ of Grief.” Accepting them does not eliminate grief but can make the burden easier.

1. Grief is Exemplified: (Genesis 50:1-2) It is universal. From the beginning of mankind, we see people deeply affected by their losses.

2. Grief is Expressed: (John 11:33) It is how people respond to significant personal loss.

3. Grief is Established: (Book of Ecclesiastes, 1 Thessalonians 4:13) We cannot avoid it, as it is something that is built into us.

4. Grief is Expected: (John 11:35) We were created to grieve, just as we were created to love, and when we lose someone we love, we grieve.

5. Grief is Essential: (Ecclesiastes 7:2-3) Grief is a beneficial way to handle the loss of a loved one and everything they mean to us. Trying to disregard or evade grief will not work. It will only make the grief last longer and may bring about more pain.

One of the important lessons I learned in the past months is: Give yourself permission to grieve. It is not unspiritual to let the tears flow. It can be the best and healthiest thing you can do for yourself and others who love you. In God’s time He will ease you through the maze!

—Bill Lake, Bill is Director of Pacific Fields for Biblical Ministries Worldwide.

God Weeps With Us

What is the meaning of Psalm 116:15, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints”? God certainly doesn’t value or find enjoyment in the death of His children! If He did, why would the psalmist praise God for delivering him from death? And why did Jesus groan and weep as He saw the grief at Lazarus’ tomb? (John 11:33-35). I agree with scholars who render Psalm 116:15, “Costly in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”

In this world, unless you are a celebrity, your passing will soon be forgotten by all but a small circle of relatives and friends. But Jesus showed us that God shares the sorrow and pain of the bereaved, and that the death of the humblest believer causes His heart great pain.

Eventually we must start doing things our [spouses] usually did or whatever was left undone when they departed. When I thought about cleaning the major storage areas—basement, workshop, garage, garden sheds, and closet shelves—anger surfaced, self-pity took over, frustration reared its ugly head...It wasn't simply a matter of cleaning or rearranging, but serious sorting, disposing of and giving away mountains of accumulation from a lifetime. I had to decide what was useful in my life alone and what was historically significant to me or my posterity.

I confess that I resented having to do this alone instead of with Ted, who liked to put off such chores. My sons were ready to help, and I appreciated their help, but I had to make the final decisions. If not I, who? If not now, when?

Going through boxes of photos and mementos from our years of marriage and ministry opened fresh memories. The chore exposed me again to both the near and distant past. I took several steps backward from the adjustment I thought I was making. I was closing the book on large chunks of our life together.

I sensed that if I didn't accomplish this difficult task, I'd be leaving it for my family to do after I left for heaven. They wouldn't have the slightest idea of either the significance or triviality of those material things. I did it partly to relieve their future burdens, partly for my sake. I needed to bury the past. It was part of “setting my house in order.”

I came away with new convictions. I'm determined to travel light for the rest of my life journey. I will appreciate and enjoy material things—if they belong to someone else! I'll carefully decide what is of value to my life as it is now, and what I need for carrying out the Lord's new assignment. I won't covet more or better or bigger or newer things. I will throw the ballast overboard to lighten my life ship.

—Leona Choy, Excerpted from her book, Singled Out, pp. 100-101. See Leona's website at www.goldenmorning.com to learn about the encouraging books she has written for widows, which she offers to CF readers at a discount.

I could barely believe my ears when a few short days after my life partner of 44 years went to be with the Lord, I was asked to originate and edit a publication for widows! After all, it was I who needed comforting and help in coping with a life alone. How could I help others? I was greatly exercised in spirit and sought God's will in prayer concerning such a ministry. But after some weeks...I accepted the challenge [and CHERA Fellowship was born].

For our very first issue, Winter of '93, Mrs. John R. Rice submitted her poem entitled, “I Am Not Alone”, after her husband of 59 years went to be with the Lord. My own loss and grief were still very fresh, and I can remember what a comfort her words, in the form of poetry, were to my heart.

An article from a widower mentioned the last song his wife played on the organ when she was dying of cancer: “No One understands like Jesus / When the days are dark and grim. / Cast your every care on Him.” What joy the Lord can give, and what encouragement, [when we] ponder such musical messages.

—Nila Rae Phelps, Editor Emeritus of CF. Copied from an article in VOICE, May/June 2001.
Quietness

I would take you to Psalm 46. “God is our shelter and our refuge, a timely help in trouble. So we are not afraid when the earth heaves and the mountains are hurled into the sea, when its waters seethe in tumult and the mountains quake before His majesty.” Now there’s a description of some pretty upsetting things, isn’t it? Earth heaving. Mountains being hurled into the sea. Waters seething in tumult. Mountains shaking. Well, what are the figurative flood waters in your life, the figurative mountains, the tumults? “God is our shelter and refuge, a timely help in time of trouble. So we are not afraid.”

Then in verse 4: “There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God, which the Most High has made His holy dwelling. God is in that city. She will not be overthrown.” There are different ways in which we could think of that river. But I think of it today as the river of prayer—my communication between my life here on earth in the state of Massachusetts and God’s life in the holy city, the perfect city of God. Prayer opens a channel for that river, whose streams gladden the city of God. It can gladden my life.

The psalmist goes on: “The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob, our high stronghold. Come and see what the Lord has done, the devastation He has brought upon earth. From end to end of the earth, He stamps out war. He breaks the bow. He snaps the spear. He burns the shield in the fire.”

We don’t often see Him doing all that, do we? But we know that He has power to. He has power over all the kings and kingdoms and dictators. Another translation of verse 10, “Be still and know that I am God” is, “Let be then. Learn that I am God.” In other words: Shut up and know that I am God, high over the nations, high above earth.”

But He’s not just high above earth, is He? It says in the last verse, “The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our high stronghold.”

Amy Carmichael wrote this lovely poem:

O Thou, who art my quietness, my deep repose, my rest from strife of tongues,
my holy hill,
Fair is Thy pavilion where I hold me still.
Back let them fall from me, my clamorous foes; confusions multiplied.
From crowding things of sense, I flee and
in Thee hide.
Until this tyranny be over past,
Thy hand will hold me fast.
Although the tumult of the storm increase, grant to Thy servant strength, O Lord,
And bless with peace.

—Elisabeth Elliot, Used with permission from her radio broadcast on August 10, 1999. See her web site www.gatewaytojoy.org for complete transcripts of this series (on “Gratitude”) and for other useful resources.

FOR “PRINCESS”

Life must go on, and to us down here It may seem crass
To return to earthly labors and resume our daily tasks.
Yet there is a Living Savior, Who shares the pain we feel
And earth has no grief or sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.

—Betty Jo Mathis. For “Princess” Delaney Coleman who died on August 14, 2006 in LaGrange, WY.
FROM GOD’S WORD

“That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4)

Encourage yourself in the Lord from Psalm 86, “A Prayer of David.”

1. Look for the cause-and-effect constructions in Psalm 86:

Verse 1  God will _________ His ear and _____ me
Because I am ________ and __________

Verse 2  God will ________________ my life (soul)
Because I am ___________________ and I
__________________________________________ in Him

Verse 3  God will be _______________ to me
Because I ___________ to Him all day long

Verse 4  God will ________________ my soul
Because I _____________ my soul to Him

Verse 7  I will ________________ upon God in the
day of ________________ Because He
will ___________________________ me

Verse 9  All nations will come and ________________
before God and will ________________
His name Because (verse 10) He is
_____________________________ and does
_____________________________ things

Verse 12 We can ask for a _________________
of His Goodness So that our enemies will
________________ it and be _____________
Because God has ____________ me and
__________________________________________ me

2. Read through the psalm again as you pray the requests in verses 1-6; 11; 16-17.
What kind of heart can we pray for (verse 11)?
__________________________________________

3. Every 5th verse makes grand observations about our wonderful God:

Verse 5  You, Lord are ________ and __________
Abundant in ____________________________

Verse 10  For You are ________________________
and do wondrous things;
You ________________ are God

Verse 15 lists five attributes of God. What are they?
_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________

Conclusion: Because of God’s nature, I can boldly request God’s nurture. Relating to Him provides the resources necessary for dealing with life and loss.
The first few years after losing my 36-year-old wife to cancer were spent holding God at bay. While parenting two sons who were then 14 months and three years old, I tried to make sense of this new reality regarding what God allows. It was so different from the paradigm I had developed of Him over the previous 20 years of faith. And I was mad. In retrospect, I see that I had expected God to explain Himself for allowing this tragedy, and I was holding our relationship hostage until He did. As childish as that position was, I am thankful that was not God’s position. I shut Him out, but God still wanted in.

Widows/widowers face the dilemma of dealing with anger associated with the loss of their mate. I have often thought that two of the things that have kept me sane through these past eight years of being a single working parent widower (four words that describe four distinct challenges and roles), has been laughing/humor and singing to myself. This article is an attempt to unabashedly address the anger subject, while approaching it from an angle that includes a little humor. Hopefully this will resonate with those who feel like they are in the “white water” of anger in the aftermath of losing a spouse.

The late author, publisher, writer, and speaker Michael W. Benson writes in his book, See You At the House, a chapter entitled “Is He Garbage Can Mad?” Mr. Benson’s story gave me fresh perspective to “live my life in union with Him” (Colossians 2:6); and thankfully my relationship with God has been astoundingly restored.

In this excerpt, Mr. Benson writes:

There is a scale at my house for registering temper. To my shame, I hold the dubious honor of posting the highest reading ever. All outbursts of anger are measured against my record.

Until the boys got old enough to carry the garbage out, I had to do it. I grew up in a time when the two chief duties of a husband were to bring the money in and carry the garbage out. It was a good day for me when the boys were finally old enough to begin to carry it out and scatter it around on the ground near the cans. They got just enough in the can to entice the neighborhood dogs to turn it over and aid in the distribution process. Such things as pushing trash down and putting the lid on securely seemed to be taking unfair advantage of the dogs. I really got tired of picking that stuff up.

I was out early one Saturday morning and I don’t remember exactly what happened. Something just got all over me. I don’t even remember how the lid got on the roof. I really do think that the can already had that huge dent in it.

But now at my house they say, “Is he mad?”
    “Yeah.”
    “But is he garbage-can mad?”

To this day I wish I hadn’t done that. It is difficult to see how God would like to be a participant in the life of anybody who acts like that. But He didn’t say to me, “Son, when you can get your act together and stop behaving that way and start treating the ones you love the most as if you do, and when you can pick up a little garbage without feeling like a first-century martyr, and when you can stop raising your voice and throwing garbage can lids on the roof, I might be willing to visit you sometime.”

No, it’s always the same. I know He would like for me to quit acting like that. I certainly hope He is succeeding in the process of remaking me. (A trash compactor has helped some.) But He still desires to come and have union with me. The starting place is in my life.

“It is in the failure, success, joy, sorrow and shame that I want to bring graces and power to you. Your life may be wonderfully good or painfully bad or terribly mediocre. More probably, it’s some curious mixture of the three but ‘let Me in.’”

—Gary Chew, The book excerpt is used with permission of Deeper Life Ministries, Inc. Gary is a healthcare financial analyst in Tulsa, OK. He also enjoys reading, exercising, and most of all being with his two sons (ages 12 and 9). He may be contacted at gchew99@yahoo.com
Write About the Last Day

February 28, 2007 started out as a typical day for my husband Norman and me but ended on a much different note. Our daughter talked to her dad on the phone for a while before lunch that day. He seemed upbeat and looked forward to the coming weekend when she, her husband and son were coming to visit. Our nearly five-year-old grandson has been a big part of our lives since his birth, and Norman loved playing with him.

Come With Me

God saw you getting tired,  
And a cure was not to be,  
So He put His arms around you  
And whispered, “Come with Me.”

So when we saw you sleeping  
So peaceful, free from pain,  
We could not wish you back  
To suffer that again.

Lord, keep your arms around her  
And in Your loving care  
Make up for all she suffered  
And all that seemed unfair.

A golden heart stopped beating:  
Hard-working hands at rest.  
Yet with our broken hearts we know  
God only does what’s best.

—Author Unknown

After Norman retired, we had moved to McDonald, Kansas, in 2004 so I could look after my 97-year-old mother who still lives in her own home. In McDonald I established Myra’s Bridal and Fabrics, a dry goods store, and Norman came to work with me every day.

After work on that Wednesday, I let Norman out at the house and went to check on my mother. I told him I would return in a little while and that we were going to do some cleaning. He responded, “I'll be ready.” How ironic that those were his last words.

I walked in about 45 minutes later and he was asleep on the couch. I said, “Wake up; I’m here,” and he let out a snore. I would like to believe that he was waiting to hear my voice. Quickly I discovered there was a problem and called 911.

At the hospital, the doctor assured me Norman’s life had ended suddenly, with no signs of trauma. I’m thankful that he died so peacefully. His hands were folded on his chest and he had a smile on his face as if he were in a pleasant dream.

Since there was no sleeping after I returned from the hospital from saying good-bye to my husband, I sat down and wrote out the day’s occurrences. Yes, I was in shock, but I was compelled to put this in writing as I felt that my husband’s last day on earth was pleasant for him and wanted to share that with his children and siblings. I simply wrote out the sequence of events that transpired on that day. It was good therapy for me! It helped me realize that the departure of one’s mate does not mean the end of love. Like water, love must flow and only changes forms. The tides of love change but do not disappear.

I’ve taken some steps to lessen the “empty chair” mealtime stress by sitting in Norman’s place at the dining room table. After five months my children updated my office where both Norman and I had worked. Now I no longer “expect” him to be there. With courage, faith and prayers, my heart is slowly healing, and I have accepted the reality that my husband is in God’s hands.

—Iris McIntosh, Iris has two married children and one grandson. She retired as a secretary after 47 years and now enjoys genealogy and promoting community events.
Meaningful Life

A friend recently sent me an engaging book, Man’s Search for Meaning. The author, Viktor Frankl, survived the Nazi concentration camps of Dachau and Auschwitz. He came out of the horror stronger than he went in. He watched others and asked, “Why do some endure while others throw themselves on the electric fences to commit suicide?”

He concluded that only those who had found a meaning for life could live through the terror. Those who had discovered a WHY for life were able to endure any HOW of life. He decided that meaningful life had to explain three things: pain, guilt and death. He concluded: suffering must be turned into achievement. Guilt must motivate us to change for the better. Death must move us to responsible action now since life is transitory.

I was humbled by what others have endured. I was moved to faith when Frankl defined man. “Man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who entered those gas chambers upright…with the Lord’s prayer on his lips.

—Garry Friesen, Garry has served as a professor at Multnomah Bible College since 1976. He is co-author of Decision Making and the Will of God.

Books to Help You Heal


When the loss of a loved one is too difficult to talk about, many people have come to grips with their sorrow through writing. This slim volume helps you do that. It contains questions that prompt your responses, which can be written in the book on the lines provided. The book can be used in a group setting and includes a guide for group leaders along with a list of suggested readings. If you wish to participate in a grief-journaling support group, hopefully you will become comfortable sharing and reading aloud. Or you can solo through the book like I did.

Baumgardner and other journalists contributed writings to the book. They help you channel your grief and work through the steps to healing. The book also is a way to preserve memories and can be a love gift to family and friends.

The author acknowledges that men are less likely to attempt to journal their grief. They believe they can take control of it as they have been accustomed to doing with other things. The author encourages men to take this valuable step of journaling toward healing, even if they are not used to expressing their emotions.

Baumgardner reminds readers that mourners can get so involved in their pain and loss that they forget that God wants to be their source of comfort. Matthew 5:4 and Isaiah 49:13 tell us that the Lord comforts His people and has compassion on His afflicted ones. There is no right or wrong way to process grief, but writing about it can help you journey through it.

First times, holidays, and special occasions are difficult and will be filled with bittersweet memories. The author suggests you take a time out if the tradition no longer fits or is uncomfortable, or make a new one. “No matter what you do for the first time, it’s important that you reach out to take the hand of the One who said He would never leave you.”

For me, it took a long time to read through this book and record my thoughts. At first I found it difficult because it brought up feelings and memories that I thought I’d dealt with and put behind me. In revisiting the past and putting it into words, I became aware of my life beyond bereavement. “Tomorrow has two handles: the handle of fear and the handle of faith. You can take hold of it by either handle” (Anon).

—Patricia M. Chambers, Even at the age of 80, Pat is a regular contributor to CF.
The Reason for My Hope

Throughout the fall of 2001, there were may difficult logistics to deal with, as there are with all loved ones’ deaths—filing forms, finding documents, canceling credit cards, and sorting through personal items. One of the most painful for me was dealing with Todd’s car. It had been parked at the airport on September 11 and was impounded, along with the cars of all the other passengers and crew of Flight 93. The authorities were searching for information or anything that might lead to the identification of the terrorists, whose cars had also been parked at the airport.

When the car was available for release, I didn’t want it brought back to our house right away. I was concerned that the boys would see the familiar white sedan coming down the road and think Daddy was home. Brian and Elaine Mumau volunteered to have the police deliver it to their house temporarily. I asked if they would go through it and put Todd’s personal belongings in a box that I could sort later. They agreed and tackled the sad job.

I’m sure they threw away gum wrappers, coffee cups, and gas receipts as they packed up his sunglasses, CDs, suit coat, notebook, and Bible. One item they found, however, was intriguing. In the armrest tray between the front bucket seats, Todd had some Scripture memorization cards that he used while driving. The top card on the stack, the one that he might have read on September 11, was Romans 11:33-36.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out!

“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?”

“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.

It was the exact passage of Scripture that had helped me through my questions following my dad’s death [when I was 15 years old]; the same passage I’d been reminded of at Wheaton College; and the very passage that had been my memory verses for the Bible study I was preparing the week before Todd died.

Seeing that card reminded me that God is always speaking to us and giving us just the words we need for the events He knows lie ahead.

The Poisonous Cure

A certain man contracted a disease and was given one month to live. A friend brought him a pill, claiming it would save his life. However, the dying man had heard that this pill was poisonous. He wanted to be sure, so he searched the Internet. Chemists had analyzed the pill and found it contained no man-made materials. However they varied widely in their views about the pill's curative powers. Bottom line: results were inconclusive.

Next, he called several doctors to ask about the “poisoned” pill. The few who had heard of it said the pill probably caused a chemical reaction in the body, invisible to the human eye. But the Federal Drug Administration had not approved it, and in fact was trying to ban it, claiming no one should have something crammed down his or her throat by someone else!

Finally the patient consulted a pharmacist who knew of an ancient, well-preserved book that told about the pill's origin and purpose. The dying man read parts of the book but suddenly put it down and said, “How can this old book be reliable? I will try other medications first to see if they will cure me.”

By this time, 28 days had gone by. The friend with the pill grieved over the sick man's refusal to take the cure. He said, “I cannot force you to believe in this pill. Neither can I answer all your questions about it. I only know that I had the same disease and prognosis you have. I was dying, so I took the pill, and it worked. I know several other people alive today because they also took the pill when it was offered to them. Please believe this.”

The sick man kept taking his other “remedies” and died three days later. His friend was filled with sorrow. He recalled something that the ancient book had said about the pill: “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. For God in His wisdom made it impossible for men to know Him by means of their own wisdom. Instead, by the ‘foolish’ message we preach, He saves those who believe.” (See 1 Corinthians 1:18-21.)