

Appendix E

Ed's Goodbye Eulogy

How Do You Say Goodbye To Someone You've Loved 43 Years

On February 26, Jackie and I learned she had terminal pancreatic cancer. It had already metastasized onto her liver. The doctors said it was a stage four cancer with little hope. It was also the worse day of my 57 years of life. Jackie said several times during our 39-year marriage that she believed she wouldn't live past age 60. In contrast, I've always loved Genesis 6:3. That is where God says we could live to be 120. It still sounds good to me today despite many years of physical pain and now Jackie's death. You might imagine that as we approached our 50's together that I have encouraged Jackie to change her thinking on this very subject; but she never could.

Last Christmas Jackie told Paula and Patty that she thought it would be her last. I believe that God lets people know when their time on earth is fulfilled. Jackie always knew God's timing. I believe God told her HIS timing after we lost our first son Glen in 1965. God also told her that HE would give her many more boys to replace the firstborn son we lost. We were both amazed over the years as God fulfilled HIS promise through Brian and seven grandsons. Each new boy was a gift from God along with HIS gift of three daughters and two granddaughters.

When Jackie and I learned of her diagnosis, I experienced two days of terrible chest pain followed by 7 days of lesser pain. It literally felt like my heart was being ripped out of my body. Pain ravaged my body over every thought of losing Jackie. She asked me several times if she should call 911 for me during the first 24 hours. I said no and told her, "It was just a broken heart over the thought of losing her."

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Jackie was a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother and friend. She was also a counselor to many who needed her help. Many of you loved her deeply like I did, especially our children, grandchildren and other family members. Some of you might also be experiencing a broken heart like me. If so, take comfort in the words of the Psalmist who writes.

“The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.” [Psalm 34:18]

Indeed, it is God Almighty who stands near to our broken hearts. We are taught in Proverbs 3:5 to “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.” Why should we do this?

It is because there are actually two realities for our life. One is what we can pick up with our own human senses and the other is what God sees. Only God has the total picture of our life. That is why I confess to all of you, “My human understanding is totally useless in this time of our grieving.”

It is only in God that I can find peace for my mind, spirit and body. I know that it is God who now holds Jackie in HIS loving and caring arms. My turn during her earthly life is over, so is yours. The prophet Isaiah records some important words on the subject of our peace. Isaiah 26:3 paraphrased reads:

“God will keep you in perfect peace,
When your mind is focused on HIM,
Because you trust in HIM.”

Jackie trusted in God. If you want peace during this time of grief, you will need to shift your focus from this limited earthly domain to God's unlimited heavenly domain. Peace for the loss of your grandmother, mother, friend, my wife and the loss of her love for all of us can only be found if we go to the place where Jackie found peace. What was the source of Jackie's peace?

Jackie found God's peace through the work of HIS only begotten Son Jesus Christ. Jesus gave her an understanding of God and of HIS Commandments.

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Apostle John writes in 1 John 5:20, “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know HIM who is true; and we are in HIM who is true, in HIS Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

Jackie came to know God because she accepted the gift of eternal salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ. She was a Christian all of the days that I knew her.

After the diagnosis, Jackie also told me that she believed her work on this earth was completed and it was time to go home. It was tough words that I didn't want to hear. However, it wasn't long before I realized that the physical pain I felt in my body was a result of a spiritual confirmation inside of me about Jackie's impending travel plans to Heaven. You see, God confirmed to my own spirit that it was indeed her time to go home.

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 31:14-15

“But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, ‘YOU are my God.
My times are in your hands.’”

Jackie was comforted by these words of David on the face of a calendar she purchased after the diagnosis. She knew I would also be comforted by the words because she knew I loved God's Word. It seems like some confusion exists in Christianity today over God's healing power. Does God always heal his people? If so, why not heal Jackie? The quick answer is no, and the subject is too complicated to discuss in any meaningful way here today.

Jackie and I both knew that our times and life firmly rested in God's hands. Both of us are comfortable with that knowledge. We have always tried to teach our children and grandchildren to live each day well because we do not know if God will give us a tomorrow. God knows the number of our days and the plans HE has for our lives. Job says, “Does [God] not see my ways and count all my steps?” [Job 31:4] The words of the Psalmist that our life is in God's hands confront the idea that God heals everyone all the time; at

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least in the sense that we think of healing on this earth meaning a longer earthly life. Job confirms to us that it is God who is in control of life.

Despite all of our efforts at prayer and attempts at the use of alternative nutrition technologies, in the end, we were forced to yield to God's larger plan. I doubt if any of us can fully know or appreciate HIS larger plan for Jackie until we join her in eternity where there is no pain and no sorrow.

Jackie was raised in the Minneapolis community of Bryn Mawr by her mother Beverly and father Archie. She had a brother Jim and sister Candy. Her mom, dad and brother preceded her in death. Candy lives with her husband Al in New Hope.

Jackie attended the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church only a few blocks away from home. She was baptized as a baby and then confirmed in her faith around the age of 13. Jackie was an active Christian teen in her church where Pastor Searfoss taught her three basic messages of the Bible. Fear God, accept Jesus and be a good person. Just doing the right thing in life was an easy to accept message from God in those days. Today, however, these three Bible messages have been distorted and Christians are confused. In 1995, at the age of 49, Jackie expressed her faith in God once again through a water baptism by immersion at Lake Rebecca. Our grandson Christopher was baptized at the same time.

Jackie always liked wholesome activities that would edify and build up our character. She was the first to admonish me if I strayed from a godly life and character. She was also soft and tender. She was often a mitigating force against the harder edges of my personality. In many respects, God blended us together in our 39-year marriage. Jackie and I were one flesh.

I too was baptized as a baby and confirmed at the age of 13. However, it seems like nothing stuck to me in terms of spirituality until I reached the age of 32. That is the age when I found God. When I did find God, Jackie asked me what took me so long and said, "I've been waiting for you." It was a poignant moment for me that illustrated the depth of her simple faith in God. Jackie was more to me than a wife, friend and lover; she was also a helpmate sent by God Almighty to complete me so I could be all that God

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wanted me to be. Where I was weak, Jackie was strong and I always knew that she was God's gift to me.

It was Jackie who did the painting and remodeling projects at home. Of course, sometimes she just smashed a wall to get me going on a project she needed help with when I was reluctant to get started. That is what she did recently when the bathroom needed some work to get rid of mold.

To the extent we enjoyed a clean and lovely house, it was her handiwork, not mine. Jackie also liked to garden, sew, garage sale and finish furniture. She was also a veritable encyclopedia of help for all the gals and guys in the family who needed an answer. I remember many years that we had food on our table because she gardened. I also remember many years where her sewing clothed our children. Jackie and I knew we could choose different paths in life. We chose the path where she would maximize the family and home. She would stretch the dollars. I would try to get some and keep the roof over our heads. Jackie chose to be a homemaker. She wasn't just good at it; she was a natural caregiver who always looked out for the interests of the members of her family. Jackie was God's gift to our entire family and we will all miss her.

Jackie served on the board of Christian Education at one church we attended. She also served in the Jaycettes when I was in the Jaycees. We both tried to make our community a better place. Sometimes, her contribution was taking care of the home front, so I could contribute to some project or organization. I always knew my efforts were made possible because of her love for me. We viewed our lives as a team effort. To the extent I have accomplished anything in my life, it was because of her love for me. It was her love for me that always kept me going and she was the wind underneath my sails.

I was the dreamer and adventurer. Jackie was the pragmatist and she always tried to keep me grounded in the full reality of life. I like to wander off into the unknown. I don't know why. For example: At Pike Lake in Wisconsin, I liked to venture into the lily patches with the boat. She would get scared and preferred a clear path on the lake that didn't present uncertainty. Same thing with those muddy roads being built that I liked to explore. "Don't go there, we might get stuck." When I jumped off of an entrepreneurial cliff, I

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was conscious that she was tethered to me with a bungee cord. And as her life drew near to an end, I could feel the cord that bonded our physical life together start to separate. The one flesh that God created with our marriage was dissolving as our marriage vow 'till death do us part' became fulfilled.

You should know that Jackie was reserved and did not like taking undo risks in life. She preferred to put her trust into solid and understandable things. That is why she put her trust in God. She couldn't see HIM, but she could feel HIM in her spirit. God wasn't an abstract idea for Jackie. HE was real.

I started chasing Jackie Bowers when she was just 13 years of age. I even asked her to marry me when I was 15 and she was 14. Can you believe that? What was I thinking? When we got married, she was only 17. Fifty-six less thirteen equals the forty-three years that I have loved Jackie. So, how do you say goodbye to someone you have loved forty-three years? That was the question my mind posed to me the day after we learned of her diagnosis. Today, I want you to know how I can say goodbye to the love of my life.

Our love story began with a simple kiss goodbye at a party Jackie had in the basement of her Bryn Mawr home. The year was 1960 and Jackie was then dating my best friend Joey. After Joey got his goodbye kiss, I asked for one and guess what? She gave me one. It was a kiss that would alter our lives and it is still alive in my memory. I immediately told my friend that if he ever left her that I would be chasing after her. He did drop the ball.

It was a common thing for 18 year olds to go out into the world and make a life for themselves. Maturity levels were substantially higher in those days. I joined the Navy at age 17 and gave Jackie the ultimatum to marry me at age 18 or I would move on with my life. After she graduated in 1964, we got married. I think my Navy uniform carried the day for me. At least that is what she always claimed. She said something about getting taken in by a sailor's uniform. Jackie didn't have to marry me. Joey came chasing after her again and even after we were married she had several other propositions to leave me. She was loved that much at just age 17.

It was on Tuesday, May 13th that Jackie took a turn for the worse. I thought she might have had a stroke, so we took her to the emergency room. The

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pain meds were not doing the job and probably causing the severe side effects that were present. The solution was to change pain medication. Tuesday and into Wednesday were really rough. I honestly did not know if she would make it. The Hospice crew was in a state of disbelief over her health. Jackie always had a unique way of her own, even with this illness.

Of course, our answer to the crisis was prayer because we trust in the same God. I don't remember having much more than a few hours sleep when Jackie woke up at 3 am on Thursday morning May 15th. She was ready to go after having "rested" for two days. She started all kinds of activities even though almost blind. She could see and feel her way around enough to want to get some things done. I asked her at 3:30 am, "Do you know what time it is?" Like she really cared with all that rest. By 5:30 am, I called Candy for help. I know it was that time because Candy reminded me. By the time Candy arrived at 6:30 am, I was thinking, "Jackie is going to drive me nuts again." Such was the nature of my emotions.

Later in the day I had a conversation with God and I had to start laughing at the sheer dichotomy of my emotions. I couldn't stop crying on Tuesday and Wednesday. Now, on Thursday it seemed like she would drive me nuts. It wasn't the first time I had those emotions. When you decide to spend your life with someone, those emotions will occur. What is it that bridges the gap between your tears at the thought of loss and your angst at going nuts? It is love and Proverbs 10:12 teaches us that, "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins." When you choose to love someone, you recognize that they are not perfect; but you choose to love them anyway. Both Jackie and I learned to master the art of God's love, especially the aspect of forgiveness.

I can tell you, that in the 43 years I have loved Jackie—she has chosen to forgive my sins countless times. Likewise, I have chosen to forgive her sins countless times. Indeed, the very nature of a true love story rests in this forgiveness attribute of God, which is given freely to all who truly believe.

Jesus taught Jackie in Matthew 10:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear HIM who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell."

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Jackie chose to believe in a God who offered her an eternal life that transcended her limited earthly existence. Jesus taught Jackie in John 14:2, “In my FATHER'S house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”

Jesus taught Jackie in John 14:3-4, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

Jesus also taught Jackie in John 13:36, “Where I am going ... you shall follow me.” Jackie knew that Jesus went back to sit at the right hand of God Almighty, our FATHER, in Heaven. She believed in God who is the FATHER and she believed in the FATHER'S resurrection unto eternal life of Jesus Christ, God's Son who came to us in a human body of flesh and blood. Because of her understanding, she accepted the words of Jesus and knew her way home.

The Prophet Jeremiah [31:34] records the words of God which say, “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know ME, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Jeremiah records God's gift of love and forgiveness for all of us to learn. To the extent Jackie and I had an endless love for one another, it is only because we reflected God's love back to each other. “For I will forgive Ed or Jackie's iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” God's love is at the heart of every enduring love affair. That was the secret of our long marriage.

The nature of God's love for all of us has some imprints. We cannot escape what God has imprinted on our minds and hearts. We cannot escape what God has imprinted on all of HIS creation. These imprints are a witness to all human flesh and they cannot be denied. All of us must acknowledge that God does exist at some point. Sooner, rather than later, we need to choose to be the good person that God expects us to be. Jackie understood these basic Bible teachings and she took them to heart and obeyed God.

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“For God so loved the world that HE gave HIS only human begotten Son, that whoever believes in HIM should not perish but have everlasting life.” If you want to understand John 3:16, you only have to understand the love that Jackie was able to reflect into this world. In the simplest terms, Jackie was like Jesus. She was an instrument of God used to reflect HIS love into our lives. The love she reflected from God has many seeds that will operate throughout our lives for generations to come. That is the legacy of her life.

Jesus said in John 14:28, “If you loved me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the FATHER,’ for my FATHER is greater than I.” Indeed, Jackie has now gone to the same place and we should all rejoice. This doesn't happen fast, because sorrow comes first. Sirach 38:16-21 teaches:

My child let your tears fall for the dead,
 And as one in great pain begin the lament.
 Lay out the body with due ceremony,
 And do not neglect the burial.
 Let your weeping be bitter and your wailing fervent;
 Make your mourning worthy of the departed,
 For one day, or two, to avoid criticism;
 Then be comforted for your grief.
 For grief may result in death,
 And a sorrowful heart saps one's strength.
 When a person is taken away, sorrow is over;
 But the life of the poor weighs down the heart.
 Do not give your heart to grief;
 Drive it away, and remember your own end.
 Do not forget, there is no coming back;
 You do the dead no good, and you injure yourself.”

If you believe in the God that Jackie believed in, you will understand that there is a time to mourn and a time to rejoice. I will focus on the good times I had with Jackie. I will remember her love and the instructions from God not to weigh my heart down with grief. Jackie has gone to a great place of joy. Likewise, I ask all my children, grandchildren, family and all who loved Jackie to remember her with the fullness of your joy. Do not be sad

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for long because it would make Jackie sad. Hers was a specialty aimed at making our hearts glad. Let us live up to the joy she sought for our lives.

All of us can celebrate the joys of her life and the lovely memories Jackie gave to us. Memories. Wow. I have 43 years of them and I will cherish every one. Yet I know that Jackie would want me to continue on with my own life. God knows what the next phase will be. I don't. I can only yield to HIS direction and take comfort in the fact that Jackie is now watching to see if I too will be faithful to our God even unto my own death.

This life is but a speck of dust in all of eternity. I know it in the core of my soul that I will see Jackie very soon. In the blink of an eye from our FATHER in Heaven, I will see her again in the glory of her eternal life with Jesus.

I can say goodbye to Jackie after loving her for 43 years because I know where Jackie has gone. Indeed, she is now in an eternal place of joy, peace and understanding where there is no more pain and sorrow. She is now surrounded by love in its purest form and love from those in her family that preceded her. Jackie now sees the big picture of her life and ours. I imagine that Baby Glen is updating her on family events and showing her the ropes.

Enoch writes, "For in [Jesus] name they are saved, and according to his good pleasure hath it been in regard to their life." [48:7]. He also writes, "And the righteous shall be victorious in the name of the LORD of Spirits: And HE will cause the others to witness this that they may repent and forgo the works of their hands" [50:2]. Jackie's life was a witness for God to us.

It is written in Enoch 81:4, "Blessed is the man [or woman] who dies in righteousness and goodness, concerning whom there is no book of unrighteousness written, and against whom no day of judgment shall be found." God doesn't care how rotten your life has already been. It only matters what your choice is now, before your death. It is never too late to experience the joy of knowing what Jackie knew about God's salvation.

If you do not have the peace of eternal life that Jackie had, please take time to talk to Chaplain Dale Swan or myself. We will help you understand what Jackie knew about life after death.

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When Jackie and I lost our first son Glen back in 1965, it took God and time to heal our broken hearts. The following song by the Christian group Newsong, titled “God and Time,” tells the story of how our hearts got over our grief and got healed.

Reverend Edward G. Palmer
Husband and Friend

The Apostle Edward delivered the above eulogy on June 7, 2003.