

I Should Have Been There

“He said to another man, ‘Follow me.’ But he replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.’ Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’” (Luke 9:59-62)

Everyone knew Dad’s days were numbered — it was just a matter of time. Twice already, you gathered at his bedside, expecting to witness the final moments. Each time Dad somehow pulled through it.

So now, for a third time the call goes out. This time, however, you feel you just can’t get away. In the back of your mind you believe your father is going to pull through as in the past. This time, however, you are wrong. The phone call arrives with news that your father died. Now comes the guilt. “I should have been there!”

Many times a pastor finds himself counseling family and friends who express their feelings of guilt. No clear solution can be found in the deep-seeded feelings of remorse. In some instances, “being there” was not a possibility and was, for the most part, a measure of stewardship.

In your case, perhaps another return trip on short notice would have been too expensive, too troubling for your job or schooling, or too trying on the family. And, sometimes, as you look carefully at the reasons why you didn’t go to your loved one’s bedside, you inescapably conclude, “I really should have been there.”

Yes, maybe you should have. Maybe your reasons were more self-serving than you realized. If so, then approach the cross of Christ and find full, free, and complete forgiveness. If you really should have been there, and you weren’t, then there is no recourse in life than to seek and find that forgiveness in Christ.

Hindsight for people is always much clearer than making decisions in the heat of the moment. Because of our imperfections we invariably make wrong choices. That is why we keep working on learning more about God’s will for our lives and making God-pleasing decisions. But, we make mistakes, and a measure of our faith is our readiness to not only acknowledge the error but to accept the forgiveness earned for us by Christ.

Guilt and regrets are all forgiven in the blood of Christ. His love for you reaches even beyond your poorest judgments and most thoughtless actions. The forgiveness that assures you that your loved one is in heaven is the same forgiveness that sustains you through the guilt and regret.

Only you and God know whether you should have been there. If your conclusion is that you should have, then find and grow in the forgiveness of Christ. He earned that comfort for you with His own blood.

For additional information and resources in dealing with this life topic, visit the Christian Life Resources website at www.ChristianLifeResources.com or call us at 1-800-729-9535.