

I'm doing my best!

My heart went out to the patient in the hospital bed.

His situation was clearly hopeless and yet the family was encouraging him to beat the disease.

They talked incessantly about when he would be coming home to celebrate the birthday in a couple of months. Certainly they meant well but they only added to the suffering of the already exhausted man. He was trying his best to cooperate with the hospital staff but it was not helping.

The doctors had told the family that he only had a few days to live and when they were out of the room they acknowledged to us the reality quite readily, but when with the patient they spoke as though he was going to get better.

Of course, they were between a rock and a hard place. They did not want the patient to give up hope and they did not wish to acknowledge to him that the end was near. But, in trying to keep his spirits up they were denying the reality he needed to face.

When do you stop offering false hope to the person and come to terms with the situation as it really is? Some people never do. They go on to the end offering what is not there.

Meanwhile the ill person feels guilty about the fact they are not getting better as their relatives expect. They feel they are letting everyone down because the disease is progressing and they are losing the battle.

It does not seem fair to the person to push them to keep fighting when there is really no hope at all. It is far better to gently acknowledge to the person that the disease is winning and that they need to face the real situation with the resources at hand.

In this situation the family had little to offer their loved one as comfort and strength in their final days. Hence the need to deny the reality as long as possible. After all what was left to say if they confessed the truth? They did not know the Good News in Jesus and so were at a loss to say anything positive.

Susan and I seek to help families like this come to terms with the real situation and offer them comfort from the Scriptures. We must act gently and not force the facts on them, but we do urge them to consider the alternatives they are avoiding.

Sometimes they will let their guard down and then we can do something positive. Other times it appears they are unwilling to face the certain future and we must leave them

to their chosen way.

When reality is faced then we can speak about One who suffered greatly and the fact He is near to comfort them. We quote promises in Scripture that urge the weary to come and lay their burdens down at His feet. We speak of the gentle nature of the Saviour and give illustrations from the Gospels of His care of needy people.

If they respond positively we go on to speak of the biblical view of death and how to be victorious through the Resurrected One who died and rose again for us.

If there is time we will go on to share some of the glimpses we have in the Bible of heaven and what it is like to be there in the presence of Jesus. How thankful we are that we have the Good News, the Gospel, to share with people who suffer. What a glorious hope is spread out before us in the message of the Bible.

All who are "in Christ" are to be excited and eagerly looking forward to the glory that shall be revealed in us when our great Lord comes to gather us home.

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