

Matthew 10: 29



Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.

THE DUO

Karen & Dottie's Story

Matthew 12: 48-50

***He replied to him, "Who is my mother,
and who are my brothers?"***

***Pointing to his disciples, he
said, "Here are my mother and my
brothers.***

***For whoever does the will of my
Father in heaven is my brother and
sister and mother."***



It is during the freshness of the evening, when the colorful landscape appears so perfect in fragrance and form, that the Great Creator seems to beckon his children to observe his handiwork; a time when each icy green blade of grass looks like it has been painted with such liquid greenness that it will last for all eternity.

Yet, Isaiah 40:8 sets us straight with the words, **“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever”**; a message that doesn't appear to strike a chord with man until he suddenly finds himself residing in the winter season of life.

Thus, having reached the point when the rear-view mirror shows only a landscape of distant memories, a decision must be made regarding the road to be traveled the rest of the way home. Will it be to journey down the highway of regrets, spewing anger and bitterness daily, or coming to the realization that the passing of one life makes room for another?

Certainly, the book for all ages titled, **“The Giving Tree”**, written and illustrated by Shel Silverstein, demonstrates this so poignantly that one could label it as a parable; meaning that it leaves you puzzling over various ways it applies to all of us today. Although described as a touching interpretation of the gift of giving and a serene acceptance of another's capacity to love in return, it also vividly shows the seasons of life; when finally, the cold winter winds suddenly materialize and the things that used to matter are replaced with a prayer for daily manna from the Father; a time when layers have been stripped, needs are simple, and clarity reins.

You see, in the story, a little boy has bonded with a tree and is so connected that it actually records his development from childhood forward; either through interactions or carvings such as a heart containing his own name and that of a girlfriend. Then, as time goes on, the tree is left behind due to the little boy sprouting wings and flying far away from his nest called home. Yet, the tree stands firm, remembers, and waits.

However, the emotional ending to the story is when the personage of an old man, once that of the little boy, feels led to connect again to his friend the tree. However, rather than the tall stately tree coming into view as remembered, he is warmly welcomed by an old rugged stump; all that remains of the tree's former glory. Thus, both realizing their needs are few these days, on the last page, the visual image the reader sees is that of the old man quietly sitting on the stump as both thoroughly enjoy one another's company; a final dramatic ending that shows how we all return to our simplistic roots where we were cherished, understood, and unconditionally loved.

Ladies and gentlemen, the old folks that are in need of assistance with their daily care and find themselves as residents in a nursing home, can easily identify with the final scene in the story just summarized. You see, upon arrival to the facility, physical issues brought on by the aging process are responsible for quickly stripping away their independence with such force that a time of grieving is automatically a part of the adjustment process for each individual.

As a volunteer with the elderly at a nursing home, it is truly astounding to hear many of the residents expressing a desperate longing to return to their days of yore; so much that adjusting to the stage in life where they now find themselves, seems to present a hardship so grave that deep grief sets in for some.

On the other hand, there are those that are realistic and still possess an optimism that is truly remarkable; so much that staff and fellow residents are drawn to them like magnets. Although they are clearly cognizant of the assistance they require regarding their daily care, they find ways everyday to make people laugh. In addition, they are acutely aware of each caretaker's needs and offer encouragement in facing the challenges incurred; a description of the duo you are about to meet. Somehow, both Karen and Dottie, like all residents, navigated the rough waters of old age when arriving, but miraculously found their footing on solid ground. Folks, it is now time to hear the amazing story of two friends that figured out the important things in life, and in the process, impacted many hearts in an enormous manner.

Karen & Dottie's Story

Although the writer can tell you little about the former lives of the two fascinating ladies whose names were Karen and Dottie, their departure from this earth was one of a kind; with an extraordinary ending that will present to you, dear reader, more questions than answers.

First, meet Karen; a nurse by profession who still, in her winter season of life, demonstrated the traits of being able to easily identify the needs of others; even though she was struggling physically with her own daily challenges.

Consequently, since she looked outward, rather than inward, it was a common occurrence to see her perusing her fellow residents in a manner that only a nurse would have used when being responsible for the care of patients; to the extent that it was easy for the onlooker to draw a visual image of the checklist recorded in her mind. Having been an outstanding healthcare professional, it was a conditioned process for her to understand the suffering each resident faced due to the physical decline of their body.

Therefore, when she spotted an individual that needed special attention, Karen would park her wheelchair right beside the person, and simply offer her company and wonderful sense of humor as comfort. Having not the ability to use the medical supplies she once handled so efficiently, the only thing she had remaining to give was her presence. Folks, even if the resident was unaware of her surroundings, this beautiful lady named Karen would simply wile away many long moments at the person's side; a behavior that was repeated with one resident after another, thus, when one passed away, she quickly found another downtrodden soul to comfort.

Additionally, the relationship Karen had formed with Nurse Cindy was extraordinary, to say the least. Knowing the disease with which she dwelt, having a nursing background, she oversaw

each test result with expert efficiency; meaning she fully understood its progression, along with what awaited her in the future. Yet, as her condition worsened, no complaining or negative words crossed her lips. Instead, Nurse Cindy and Karen conducted themselves admirably, always sweetly interacting with professionalism and humor; behavior that resembled the connection between the tree and the little boy in the story above.

Another trait everyone loved about Karen was the teasing manner she displayed toward others. Whether staff members, or volunteers, when either strolled by her wheelchair, it was a common occurrence to feel a soft tiny pinch from her fingers; her way of saying, "I love you"; behavior always accompanied by her dancing eyes; perhaps a way of dealing with the fact she was almost deaf, and incapable of carrying on a back and forth conversation with others.

Yes, folks, strong willed Karen was one of a kind, a former nurse that any patient would have welcomed in his/her life. Everyone fortunate enough to make her acquaintance would have been absolutely certain this fine lady would have gone to extremes to make each patient feel important, special, and truly loved. Using her compassionate heart, professional manner, and love for her fellow man, not a stone would have been left unturned on her watch.

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32) is a great Scripture that depicted Karen's behavior.

And now, dear readers, it is time to meet the other half of the duo; a lady named Dottie who was born with a will that matched that of her roommate Karen's in equal portions. You see, when Dottie entered a room pushing her own wheelchair, her bubbly personality filled every space. Laughter, sparkling eyes, and a big smile were associated with her grandiose presence; all accompaniments to jokes or retorts she contributed to the activities. Simply stated, gregarious Dottie was the life of the party. She never took herself seriously, and would poke fun at her inability to accomplish a task, but would try it anyway. Case in point was singing in the nursing home choir. It was during the first practice session that she called the volunteer over and stated while wearing a mischievous expression, "Kid, I can't sing worth a darn but I am going to do it anyway." Then, she would bellow out with her alto voice, singing notes that were totally off tune; all the while laughing hardily.

Consequently, when later asked to be the model for the front cover of a collection called "Gramme Rocks" that is now on devotionalembbers.com, her acceptance was immediate. Then when in front of the camera, she smiled, cut up, batted her eyes, and found extraordinary mannerisms that caused photographers to laugh uncontrollably. Dottie so thoroughly enjoyed the experience that when spotting a camera within her vicinity, she would break into a show stopping pose that would entertain all those in her presence. Even when she wasn't feeling well physically, the sparkling eyes and sense of humor never left her being. No matter the day, the love she shared for others was always visible.

Dottie Posing



Clash of Wills

Certainly, by now, you have drawn a visual image of these two strong willed people that formed the duo of Karen & Dottie; one that would pose trouble on “the old river front” when learning to be roommates. Folks, just think about one room with only a curtain in between; a thin partition that separated these two unbelievable characters.

Given what you have read, are you picturing the dark storm clouds that quickly filled the space above both beds? Have you covered your ears to block out the thunder? Are you shielding your eyes to avoid seeing two compassionate hearts be replaced with fiery anger? If so, you are getting the picture. Simply stated, these two clashed like gigantic cymbals.

Consequently, at first, the staff spent a great deal of time settling disagreements and counseling two lovely ladies that knew better but were simply dealing with the consequences of getting old and needing the assistance of others to survive each day. Not fun! Immensely challenging! Independence gone! My way or the highway! This is my room, not yours!

However, given time, along with wisdom, common sense replaced accusations and harsh words, and were substituted with enlightenment and an appreciation for one another's uniqueness.

Folks, given the fact that both ladies' next of kin lived in other states, perhaps, acted as the motivation for negotiating. In other words, when you find yourself literally, "between a rock and a hard place", it is time to bargain, and cast the sin call "pride" into the nearest receptacle. Otherwise, seconds will become hours of chaos, accompanied by a miserable existence.

Consequently, cool heads prevailed to the point that disagreements became a thing of the past, and peace caused storm clouds to float away just like the morning mist. Instead of unkind words, glares, and hissing being the rule of thumb, laughter suddenly began to travel from their room, winding its way down the corridor.

In fact, the duo became known for sitting side by side in their wheelchairs like two little sparrows, holding hands, as they enjoyed their favorite TV shows together. Folks, these two ladies had bonded and become so close that their hearts beat as one; that of soul mates for all eternity. Two hearts literally had fused so completely that looking after each other's needs became as natural to them as breathing.

Then, as the aging process continued its usual course; resulting in their physical bodies breaking down at a rapid pace, they both were acutely cognizant that separation from one another was a given reality that must be accepted. Thus, the hard conversation of dealing with the act of dying, prompted them to sit quietly one evening discussing the gravity of the future together.

Thus, after solemnly contemplating their circumstances, they made a covenant with one another that caused all who knew them to be absolutely baffled. Ladies and gentlemen, this duo, so well-known for strength and courage in facing life, had promised one another that when it came time for the good Lord to call them home, "THEY SIMPLY WOULD GO TOGETHER"!

Upon hearing the news of their bazaar decision, the staff and friends that so intimately knew them, were not only mystified, but also at a loss for words. What was one to say? Did they know something that was only their secret? Had they received a vision from the Holy Spirit? Everyone was so baffled; they were rendered speechless.

Then, one Thursday, when the writer arrived to volunteer, Nurse Cindy, with salty tears running down her face, delivered the sad news that Karen had just flown home on the wings of glory; and... that her soulmate, Dottie, was expected to follow at any moment.

Folks, after hearing about the remaining little sparrow named Dottie's passing labeled as eminent, staff members from all over the facility began their journey toward her bedside. One after another hugged and kissed their dear sweet friend good-by; a total team approach led by the administrator, Keith, who chose to sit at her bedside for two hours as a demonstration of compassion and tender love.

Then, a mere four days after Karen's passing, the writer received a call informing her that Dottie's breathing was extremely labored; a notification that prompted her to rush to the nursing home to say a last farewell. Thus, softly touching Dottie's forehead, and whispering, "Sweet friend, you are going to soon see Jesus", she squinted her eyelids and gently smiled. Finally, after saying a departing prayer of thanksgiving to God for the blessing of getting to know his wonderful child, the writer quietly and reverently left the room.

Ladies and gentlemen, exactly four days after her friend Karen entered the gates of heaven, Dottie was received in the arms of Jesus. Can you only imagine the rejoicing that ensued? Two little sparrows that learned to love each other unconditionally, were now at home in glory land. God had provided their every need; from beginning to end. Halleluiah!

"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? (Matthew 6:26)



As closure to Karen & Dottie's story, the writer invites you to return to the devotionalembassadors.com home page and open the hymnal filled with beautiful songs performed by organist Brad Jent, and scroll down to his glorious arrangement of "His Eye Is on A Sparrow". (# 7) Open it and allow its magnificent strains to fill the space all around as praise to the Master for feeding his two sparrows with manna from his gentle hand each and every day. Raise your voice in jubilation by singing the lyrics on the following page as a way of praising the Father for never taking his eyes off his children; meaning you, dear one.

HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,

Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home,

When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He:

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

(Chorus)

I sing because I'm happy,

I sing because I'm free,

For His eye is on the sparrow,

And I know He watches me.

"Let not your heart be troubled," His tender word I hear,

And resting on His goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

(Chorus)

Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,

When songs give place to sighing, when hope within me dies,

I draw the closer to Him, from care He sets me free;

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

(Chorus)

