

Grace To Forgive – Strength To Go On

We turned on our TV and heard that a taxi driver had been murdered. I didn't think it could be anyone who belonged to us or we would have heard. But the news report continued, "Taxi driver, married with one child, wife expecting another baby ..." My wife, Bridie, and I looked at each other in cold denial. Then the next sentence came, "He just graduated from university on Friday." **It was our son.**

Desperate measures

We rushed out the door of our house. I hit the ground on my knees and in desperation started pounding my fists. I looked up and cried, "Hanging on a cross is nothing compared to what we are going through!"

Then I looked to my wife and said, "We'll never smile again."

The next day, Bridie and I made the decision to take our own lives because Michael was everything we had. Bridie suffers from arthritis and had plenty of tablets to use for overdose. But as I went to the kitchen to get the pills, a picture of the crucified Christ came into my mind. It hit me that God's Son too had been murdered - for us. I knew that what we planned to do was wrong. It still amazes me how God intervened in such a miraculous way to change our minds.

A message of peace and forgiveness

Before they closed my son's coffin, I laid my hands on his and said, "Goodbye, son, I'll see you in heaven." At that very moment I felt a great sense of joy and confidence. **I had never felt so strong in my whole life.**

On the morning of the funeral, I wrote on the back of an envelope a word which came to me so calm and clear, referring to those who had murdered Michael: "Bury your pride with my son." At the bottom I wrote: "Forgive them." I felt that, despite the agony we were going through, **God had given me a message of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation.** I spoke that message in front of the TV cameras that morning, and I still stand by it. Every morning I ask God to continue to give me the grace to forgive those who murdered my child.

Giving up the burden of grief

The power and grace I experienced to forgive from my heart was such a freedom and release. I know that resentment and bitterness would have killed me. After my son's murder, **God gave me a clear grasp of the horror of sin.** I remember

saying to God: "These hands will never do any evil again." I realized that in the same way I had offered forgiveness to those who killed my son, God had forgiven me my sin.

Sometimes it is impossible for us to carry alone the burden of grief thrust upon us. We have to give it up. I have discovered that the best person to give it to is God. He takes it off your shoulders and points you in a different direction.

Since Michael's death, I have been a changed man. Along with Bridie, I started a relief ministry to orphanages in Romania. I feel as if Christ has taken hold of my life and I now want to take hold of Christ and give my life to loving God and serving people.

Credit – Michael McGoldrick