



Family Meeting
Part 1 – Mourning with Those Who Mourn
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Welcome to Woodland Hills Family Church and over at the Chapel, thank you for joining us today. We want to start by thanking all of those online. We know there are folks watching from all over the country and parts of the world. We just want to say thank you for all of your support and encouragement over the last couple of days, and all of the prayer that you have sent this way, and that you continue to lift us up. We're grateful for that.

Don't feel compelled in our normal way with the offering, but as part of our worship, we take an offering here at Woodland Hills in these baskets. As they come around, we encourage your generosity and we say thank you for it. I'll be honest with you; in June and July this year, your generosity has been overwhelming. So, for the ministries here... The support here and in our community and during this time, around the nation and around the world, you have done so well in your giving and we're just very grateful and want you to know that.

We call something around our home often and it a Family Meeting. Sometimes we need it to realign ourselves. A few months ago, we decided to call a family meeting at Woodland Hills. We had it scheduled for today to get us ready for the fall. There were a lot of decisions that had to be made to prepare for the growth. Even now, as people are standing in the back thinking about finding seats. There are some logistical issues we've had to work through, so we were just calling a family meeting for three week, which we will pick up with again next week, but this still a family meeting.

Thursday, as I came back from dinner with my family, my mom was the one who informed me of the tragedy on Table Rock Lake. I got home and started looking through the news, finding out what was going on. Then Mayor Best called me and asked if I would go to City Hall to be with the families of the victims. Before I left, we had a family meeting and it was for the sole purpose of praying for our community and praying for all of those who lost loved ones. I know you had many family meetings going on around our community as well.

Today, we're talking about *Mourning with Those Who Mourn*. It's still a family meeting. Friends from all over the country have been emailing and calling me and texting. I've asked pastor friends what would be the one thing they would say during a terrible time of tragedy. I got many responses back. One of my friends in marriage and family ministry, Mark Gungor, lost his wife in December. He's been very open and very public in his mourning. I've learned a lot about mourning by mourning with Mark through this time. Usually, Mark responds to texts and stuff with just a sentence or two. When I asked him to tell me one thing he would share with someone who was morning after a tragedy, he sent me a book.

I want to start with it because I think he has much wisdom to share with us before we head into the scripture. He said this... It's a long text, and then he just sent me another one. I'd have to read it to see whether or not I agree with him before I share it with you. I love Mark, we just have differences of opinion, theologically. But with this, he's spot on.

"People often complain about the pain they feel in a loss. I always encourage them that it is good to feel the pain; embrace it. It is not that something is wrong; it is a sign that you are healthy. There is a rare genetic disorder that causes an individual to feel no pain. It sounds good, but it's actually a terrible thing. They never know when something is too hot or too cold. If they break an arm, they don't know it. This leads to terrible consequences. The reason why loss hurts so much is because it's supposed to hurt. The good news is that we heal, and all God's people said... Amen."

Today, as we talk about *Mourning with Those Who Mourn*, I'm going to start with this. If you follow me on social media, I know I've heard from some of you, "Hey, we don't need anymore sunset pictures on Table Rock from you, Ted." You think I post too many, but it's the only thing people don't get mad at me about when I post. Sunsets on Table Rock Lake are healing for me. I love being on Table Rock. Our favorite thing to do as a family is to get on the boat at Long Creek Marina and take our time getting up to the Chateau, playing on the tubes and everything. Then, when the sun is setting, we pull the tubes in. You can't be on the water anyway. Then we turn the navigational lights on and take our time getting back to Long Creek with the sun setting on the starboard side.

Last week, we actually had the opportunity to do this three nights in a row. Some of you are like, "Do you work?" It's at night, okay? I'm doing this at night. I have night time activities like you have night time activities. I could stand up here and show you picture after picture. This is my son on the tube with our dog, looking at yet another sunset. We love it. I love Table Rock Lake. Table Rock Lake is the main reason why I'm still here and that's true for a lot of you. You're like, "It's not the church?" No, it's not the church. I love all of you, but it's the lake that I retreat to. Jesus retreated to lakes. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? It's very biblical and Christlike to go be on a boat on Table Rock Lake.

I absolutely love the lake, and I don't know about you, but I love this town. I love living here. I have a deep sense of ownership over Branson. Does anybody else have that? My favorite thing to do is be a tour guide for family and friends who are coming to Branson for the first time. It's almost comical because I act like I did all of this. Silver Dollar City, "Yeah we..." I use the term "we" when I'm talking about it.

I take people up to Top of the Rock and show them Top of the Rock and they are wowed. I talk about it in a way that they ask me, "Do you work here?" I say, "No, but when we built this..." And, "I know the sink hole happened and that was terrible but look what we've done." I'm even taking credit for things God did. I love this town and I love the sunsets.

Then, Thursday night, about an hour before sunset, tragedy hit our lake. Yeah, and we all just rest in that for a little bit. If you have your Bibles, I want to take you to Ecclesiastes 1 and 7 as our main text.

At the beginning of this book, Solomon paints the picture for us of life upon this earth, life under the sun, life this side of heaven. It's harsh reality. That's what we call Chapter 1; it's harsh reality. It's just right in your face what life is and how we move through life.

It says this in Chapter 1 of Ecclesiastes: ***4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.*** He begins painting this picture of the earth as a grind and you and I are born into it for a very short period of time. Life is short. Life is like a vapor; it's quick. You're here for 70 years, maybe 80 if your strength endures, but then you're gone. Those years are filled with sorrow and anguish. The scripture doesn't protect us from the harsh realities of life. We're not guaranteed no tragedy, we're not guaranteed no troubles or no trials in life, but we are, follower of Jesus, guaranteed the comfort of Christ.

The text for today that we're now going to share next week, as we adjusted the message is 2 Corinthians 1. In the midst of being hard-pressed and harassed and full of troubles and trials and pain, we know that we have the comfort of Christ.

4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. It keeps on going. And in an entertainment town... I think one of the hardest things, when a tragedy like this hits, is the show must go on. But, if I can encourage you, I want to just say this to all my entertainer friends and all of you who have an opportunity to stand in front of people with a microphone. This is your livelihood, this is how you not only provide for your family, but many families in the community. How do I get on stage and do this? I just want to encourage you. This is just from me as your pastor. You are in a moment that God has brought you into. I want to encourage you. Yes, the show must go on, but allow the script to change. When you stand up in front of folks, if a song has new meaning to you, take the time and address it. If there is a song that doesn't fit, just drop it. Some of you have prayed with your crowds and you've prayed with people that you've been in front of. I'm here to tell you that people are expecting that from you. They're okay with you doing that.

I was at a conference yesterday morning in Houston, Texas. I wasn't planning on talking about it, but when I walked in, people knew I was from Branson, and I was overwhelmed with people supporting and encouraging our community. I wasn't going to share anything. They introduced me as being from Branson and then they shared about the tragedy on Table Rock Lake and asked everybody to pray. I was like, *Well I guess we are going to go there at the beginning.* I got up and it was really my first time to mourn this out loud with people. So, I shared with them for about ten minutes through many tears. I'm here to tell you that nothing kills a comedy show faster than crying for the first ten minutes. You're really not going anywhere after that. There are many in here who are comedians. Be okay with the script changing.

The scripture says the earth remains forever; the show goes on. This is why mourning a month from now and two months from now could be even more difficult than what we're going through right now. Why? It's because you go back to work, back to the show, back to family, people leave. I always share with families at funerals. Six weeks from now, eight weeks from now, would you call your loved one, would you tell them a story. When you get together for Thanksgiving and Christmas, have two or three stories of the loved one that you lost ready to go and share it.

That's why mourning can be so painful because the earth remains forever. People come and people go, but this keeps going. There will be moments where you're going through out your day or doing what you're supposed to be doing and providing for your family and you'll have the moment or the thought where you say, "Did I just forget about them? I've been so caught up in this." Mourning takes time.

4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. Then through word pictures, he describes this for us. **5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. 6 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.** Can you think of a passage more fitting for what happened on Thursday night? **7 All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.** The harsh realities in life.

In Ecclesiastes 7, we learn how to be wise as we mourn. **1 A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth.** Why is the day of death better than the day of birth? It says, "A good name is better than fine perfume." At a funeral, we would call this a eulogy. For me, it's always sad at a funeral to think about it. As I listen to people stand up and share words that they've written down. Sometimes, it's page after page. They share words of the loved one that has passed away. I have this thought at almost every funeral I do. I'm sitting there thinking to myself *I hope they didn't wait until now to share these words. I hope the one they lost knew this and heard these words.*

2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting... It's better to go to a funeral than to go to a party. Why? It's because a funeral is a recalibrating event and it should change the way you think. It should change the way you live. And it should get you asking questions. The most important question I'm going to have you ask today is this. "Am I ready for heaven?" "Do I know the Lord?" But then you should be asking questions at a funeral like, "How and I living?" "How am I loving?" This is an important question to ask. "What's really important?"

After tragedy strikes, I don't know about you, but things that were important on Wednesday were no longer important on Friday and Saturday. I'm in the middle of preparing a family meeting talk for this church family where decisions had to be made. We made them and we're going to announce them. It's nothing life-altering or shattering. It's moving service times 30 minutes and adding this. I'll talk about that next week. I'm sitting there the whole time praying and asking the Lord to give me wisdom to share it with the congregation in a way that they will receive it and that will minimize the "Have you thought about this?" "What about this?" "Why don't you do a Saturday night service?" "Why don't we do a Monday, 3:00 pm matinee?" My mind was just running. We're at 2,000 people. That's a lot of people with opinions.

The whole time, I was sitting there thinking about service times and how to share it with you, and on Thursday night, it didn't matter. If we have a 6:00 am service or a 6:00 pm service, it doesn't matter. And the things that are working you up in life... Thursday night, as you enter into a time of mourning, it doesn't matter anymore because you are gripped with what does matter: life and death. We were about decisions of life and death. That's why it's better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting. Parties are great. I love parties. But you never leave a party going, "That changed my life." That's not the purpose of a party.

...for death is the destiny of everyone... Here we go back to generations come and generations go. It's the destiny of every single person in here, if the Lord does not return first. That's why **the living should take this to heart**. When you go to a funeral, you are taking to heart your death. It is better to go to a house of mourning, the recalibrating event, than it is to go to a house of feasting.

3 Frustration is better than laughter... Now, as a comedian, I want to explain this to you. Because some will see this and say laughter is a bad thing. That's not what it's teaching. According to the scripture, and we'll see it here in a second, there is an appointed time to laugh. Laughter is good. Laughter is a good medicine. It helps hard truth go down. Laughter is a medicine; it can alleviate tensions for a little bit. Laughter helps you breathe in oxygen rich air. There are a lot of benefits with laughter. But when it comes to your life changing or making life-changing decisions, frustration is better. Sadness is better. We always try to run from this to this, but I just want to encourage you as mourn as a community, don't rush out of it. Allow it to be used to change you.

3 Frustration is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart. Now watch this in Verse 4. My kids are constantly on me. "Dad, you think about death too much." It's because it's all around us. And it's not because I'm morbid or suicidal. The scripture says **4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning...** A person who thinks about death often... Again, not morbid, not suicidal, a person who thinks about death often is wise because they are constantly recalibrating their life to what really matters. Some of you are headed toward divorce over stuff that doesn't matter. You're picky about dumb stuff. May this time of mourning remind you of what's really important. May it take you into a house of mourning.

Be wise, don't be a fool. **...but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.** I can go either way and as your pastor, if you've been here for any period of time, you've seen this. When a hard truth is delivered, or something hard has to be shared and I see you sitting in it, I want to rescue you from it. I want to tell a joke and get you out of that as quickly as possible when it's best for you to sit in it because that's what's going to change you. The fool wants to rush to pleasure and just keep away from the mourning, keep away from the hard stuff, keep away from the painful conversations. No, I want a heart of wisdom, so I'm not rushing out of here.

Two weeks ago, I had lunch after Alex Himaya spoke. Alex is an evangelist and his message here was incredible. God is doing something in his heart. I told him I could just see he was on fire and there was a fresh wind in him and new wine flowing through him. I love what God is doing in him. I said, "Alex, I'm going to just share an outline that I know God has placed in my heart and I don't know what to do with it yet. I don't know when I'm going to share it, but I've just been experiencing this through the death of Amy's grandfather a couple of weeks ago, through the death of Bob Copeland, through coming alongside families in our church."

The outline is this simple. Being prepared for heaven, being prepared for death, being prepared for mourning. I said, "Alex, just give me your thoughts on this. I feel the church... And church leaders do a great job, by and large, preparing people for heaven. I think where we struggle through is preparing people for death and mourning."

The church needs to be equipping the saints for the work of ministry, we need to be better equipped with helping people around times of death and in mourning with those who mourn.

So, let's start with this today. We're going to cover heaven and death, but then we'll spend the most time with mourning because that's appropriate for us this morning. I want you asking the question today, "Am I prepared to die, and do I know heaven is my home."

To take you into Romans, this is the beginning of what we call the Roman's road. It says in Romans 3, **23 ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...** Don't believe the new country song by Luke Bryan that says, "I believe most people are good." Wrong. I sing that song now, "I believe Luke Bryan is wrong." That's a theology that can creep up... "Mostly, they are a good-natured person." At your core, you're evil. Scripture says it. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There is nothing you can do in and of yourself to make heaven your home. You can't. There's none righteous, no not one. Most people are good? The scripture says there is none righteous. Not some are righteous; there's none righteous, no not one.

Romans 6 says, **23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Confessing his name, Jesus is Lord, and believing in your heart that Christ has been raised from the dead, you shall be saved. That is your salvation. Faith alone is Christ alone.

How a person dies does not guarantee heaven is their home. Christians, can you get this please? In our times of helping people through tragedy, understand this. Soldiers who die in battle are not guaranteed heaven is their home. Born again soldiers are guaranteed heaven as their home. Those who die in tragedy are not guaranteed heaven is their home. Those who are born again and die in tragedy are guaranteed heaven is their home. How you die is not the issue; it's placing faith in Jesus Christ, your Lord. That's the decision for you to make.

Jesus, as he was comforting his disciples, said this in John 14, **1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going."** He's saying, "Believe in me." That's the first question you should ask in the house of mourning. Are you prepared for heaven? Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Get that settled before all these other questions that we're going to talk about today. If the Holy Spirit is calling you by name, pause right now. Don't listen to me for the next several minutes and place faith in Jesus.

As we talk about death and the Apostle Paul, a sacred echo in my life has been Philippians 1. **23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far...** And all God's people said... Amen. But, here's the tension. It's the tension every follower of Jesus should have in life. **24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.** I want to go and be with the Lord, enter into his presence, however, it is better for you that I remain here in ministry to you. This is why all the great hymns of our faith... This tension is in so many hymns. It's one eye on heaven, but still one eye here on earth under the sun.

I want to depart and be with Christ, but I'm still here and I have work to do while I am here. If you don't have that tension, right now go back to asking the question, "Am I prepared for heaven?" You should have that tension. I desire to depart and be with the Lord. I'm not asking for death any time soon or like "Bring it on" but I ain't scared of it. The reason I talk about it so often with my kids is I want them to have a heart of wisdom.

I've told you that Carson is going to lead out my funeral. He's 13 now and I don't know how old he'll be when he does my funeral, but he's prepared to stand up at a microphone and go, "The day my dad has been waiting for is finally here. The day my dad has talked about my entire life is finally here." I don't know what the worship music will be at the time, but every now and then I look at Amy while we're driving and listening to music and say "I want that one." She knows exactly what I mean. I want it at my funeral. "Oh, I want that one." "Okay, Dad, we got it. How long is this funeral going to be?" Don't make me the headline at my funeral; make it be the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May that be the headline on the day of your death and may people mourn you with hope, as we are told in 1 Thessalonians 4.

Now we get to another tension we deal with in the church. Romans 12 says, ***15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*** This tension for me... In a church, this is every single Sunday. The prayer team will tell you this is a tension they should feel because they're rejoicing with people and mourning with people, rejoicing with people and mourning with people over and over again. We come in to church on Sunday and someone got married. Congratulations! Someone had a baby, Congratulations! We're excited for you. You got a new job... I just met people today that it's their first time at Woodland Hills and they are new to the area. You just retired. Congratulations! We're rejoicing with you.

Then I go over to a family that earlier this week lost a loved one and we're going back and forth from rejoicing to mourning. We're called to mourn with those who mourn. I just want to encourage us today how to do this well. I've written down some thoughts that I've collected this week from friends and just what I've seen. Just watch your words when people are mourning. As I walked into City Hall, there was a family of nine. The entire family of nine survived the accident. I heard someone tell them, in the presence of those who lost loved ones, "This is a God thing." Can we be very, very careful with the words we use because we believe in the sovereignty of God over all. We believe Thursday did not take him by, shake him, remove any bit of sovereignty from him.

The scripture says it this way, if I can give you Ecclesiastes 3 again. ***1 There is a time for everything...*** This is God's sovereignty over your life and God's sovereignty over my life. You have to read Ecclesiastes 3 that way. So when you read there is a time, read it as there is an appointed time. There is a God appointed time. ***...and a season for every activity under the heavens: 2 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, 3 a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, 4 a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, 5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, 6 a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, 7 a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, 8 a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.*** These are all appointed times as we watch our words.

Can we also know that mourning is different for every single person in here? There is not one way to mourn. I grew up with fundamentalist preaching. I just remember the fundamentalist preacher saying, "Don't waste your time going to a cemetery; you don't need to go be with loved ones; they're not there anyway." I get that, but if you need that for mourning, go. I'm not going there to speak to a loved one. I don't pray for or to those who have passed on, but I can go to remember. Every time I go back to Naperville, Illinois, I go visit my grandma and grandpa's grave. Just to remember, to mourn. I'm not there to chit chat it up with them. Be careful with what you've been taught about mourning to say this is how it's done. No. it's different for everyone.

On that same subject, the timing for everyone is different. Some people need more time to mourn than others. There is not a schedule or a guide that we have in scripture with how long we should mourn. That's actually Pastor Mark's story. He lost his wife in December. He took a month off... He was a tourist in Israel for the month of January. He needed time away from everyone and just needed some healing time. One Sunday, I went to Celebration Church to preach in his stead. So, I've been mourning with him the loss of his wife.

Christians have not only been ignorant, but they've been mean. They're thinking Pastor Mark needs more time to mourn. If you think I don't hold back enough, Mark Gungor doesn't hold back anything, and he let's you know, "Shut up." He's 65 though. I feel I'll be there when I'm 65. At 45, you've still got to refrain a little bit. Here's what he told people. He said, "My wife struggled with cancer for 20 years and the last two years were brutal. In other words, for two years, I was able to mourn with my wife her death." By the time they got to the funeral, the heavy mourning was over. They had been through the season of heavy mourning and now he was relieved. You're like, "You can't feel that." Of course you can. He was relieved. He was rejoicing that his wife was in no more pain. He was rejoicing that his wife was now in the presence of the Lord. Did he still mourn? Of course he did. Has he moved on in life? Yes, but does he still mourn? Of course he mourns. Let us be cautious with how we tell people to move through mourning and how long they should take. You don't rush it, but you also know it's different for everyone.

Can I also encourage you with this? Again, we're talking now about being ministers, mourning with those who mourn. How do we minister to one another? Can I encourage you that with someone who's experiencing great loss, do not make your experience the headline. Just be very cautious with this.

I share this passage with you because a friend of ours shared something with us last year that was profound, and I want to tie in the mourning with those who mourn out of Romans and what Paul says about it in Galatians 6. **2 Carry each other's burdens...** That's part of mourning. Say someone's working, someone's providing for a family, and they experience a tragedy or a loss. We come alongside them to help them carry that burden, **and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.** Sometimes when a family member is experiencing loss and they have to make arrangement, they have to bury a loved one, we even come alongside them financial, as a church, to say, we know you're missing work and all that; let us provide some meals for you. We have benevolence for that. We're carrying their burden.

5 for each one should carry their own load. We are also carrying our own loads. These are the loads we can carry, and I don't need help carrying it, you don't need help carrying it, but when we mourn,

there are times when this is just too much for us. I'm out of capacity to do anything else, would you come alongside me and help me with this? This is where the follower of Jesus needs to be very careful with how you do this.

Last year, close friends of ours miscarried a child. It was a very difficult time. As we were mourning that with them, she said something very profound. Amy and I both looked at each other when she said it. We were like, "Well, this is simple, but so profound." The church needs to hear it. I believe it's a message that our friend now has for the church that needs to be heeded. She said, "As I'm in my hospital room grieving with my husband, well intentioned individual after well intentioned individual walked into the room to share their story of great loss. I finally put up my hands and said, 'Please stop. I know you're trying to help, but I'm carrying such a burden right now that I don't have anything in me to help you carry your load.'" She said, "They were placing more on me and I just didn't have any capacity to carry that with them right then."

You say then what do I do then? I talked to a lady yesterday in Houston. She said, "We had friends that just lost a seven-year-old from Brittle Bone Disease. When my husband called me and told me the tragic news, he said, 'Can you come home and we're going over.' On the way over we're wondering what we were going to say or how to approach it. As we walked in the house, the husband was in the family room and his wife was back in the bedroom, lying on the bed weeping. My husband stayed with him and I went back there. All I did Ted was lie down on the bed next to her for three hours." That's called the ministry of presence. "I didn't say anything. I didn't need to give her any Christian clichés. I just sat there with her." I told her, "You ministered deeply to her. You were there for her."

Can we just be cautious to not add to another person's burden, thinking we're helping, but just be there. Be someone who walks alongside and carries the burden.

The show must go on, but right now, as a community and a town, as the grind goes on, as the earth remains forever and continues on, as the sun continues to rise and as it continues to set, as the winds blow from the north and from the south, and as the rivers still flow to the sea, and as we go on with life, minister. You've done this so well.

The first service was... If I can just say thank you to the prayer team. They did a wonderful job. The captain of the boat that made it out was here and he needed ministry. You all were here for him. Hospital workers were here. First responders were here. Listen, our first responders are fantastic. You guys do a great job. You ladies do a great job. I know you're well trained to do what you're doing. I was proud of one first responder that came up to me in the first service. He is well trained, you know it, you see them; they're professional. If you've been around our first responders here... and I find it everywhere in the country. They're just very professional, well trained, they know what they're doing. They're supposed to respond, and they have to leave emotion aside for a little bit, but right now, for some of our first responders, the burden is just a little too much and they just need someone to come alongside them. We want to do that.

We want to come alongside parents. I'm thankful for our family ministries team here at this church. When it comes to logistics on how a church should run, our family ministries team has a huge burden

week after week to minister to 500 children. It's a lot of work. We're going to pick this up next week with the Family Meeting. Their first heart though is truly for the heart of the parent, helping you be the primary author of your child's heart. These are conversations for Mom and Dad to have with children. We want to help you have those conversations.

The best thing I ever heard from a chaplain was after Amy's grandpa died in 2012, and then she lost another one a couple of weeks ago. He told me as we were walking down the hall... Carson was seven at the time. He goes, "I see your son loves Legos. You know you are going to have so many great conversations with him while he's playing Legos about what happen to Grandpa Lloyd. And you know with kids you get like 20 second, maybe 10. He's going to be playing Legos and in the middle of playing Legos, he going to look up at you and go, 'Dad, where did Grandpa's body go?'"

There's just the pressure that we parents feel to have an answer ready to go. That's what our team did. They've got these Parent Conversation Guides to discuss tragedy with children. They have one for pre-school, elementary, and then one to talk to your students, so they are based on age. They are out in the lobby here and they're in the lobby at the Chapel. They are going to be wherever you pick up your kids or your students today. We want you to grab these.

I'm going to invite our prayer team to just scatter out all long the front. I'm going to invite you to stand with us this morning. I'm going to begin us today in prayer. I usually ask you to come forward, but some of you just need the gentle instruction to come forward. Our first responders, those who work at the hospital, those who work on the lake, many in the first service who were there Thursday night helping and jumping in the water would you please come down. The prayer team is well trained and ready to encourage you and pray with you today. They are ready to mourn with you. Please, as we worship together, come down and invite someone to help you carry the emotional burden that you're carrying today.

Father, this morning we pray for the families of the Colemans, the Williams, the Ashers, the Hammonds, the Brights, the Denisons, and the Smiths, as they have experienced great loss. I pray for the comfort of Christ around them. We've seen so many ministering to families this week. We, as a church, want to be one to come alongside and carry the burdens of others with them and thus fulfilling the law of Christ. So, today, we pray and seek the comfort of Christ as close out our time today. I pray that many will come forward to be encouraged through prayer, inviting others to come alongside them as we mourn with those who mourn. It's in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.