

“Grief is the price you pay for love. So the grief that you feel is the love that you feel”.

These were the words spoken by Billy Burch; youth pastor at Christ Community Church during the memorial service of Andrew Leonard Hicks, Jr. Andrew was 17 years old and active in the community, involved in soccer, hockey and his church youth group. A tragic accident took his life while vacationing with his family in California this summer. Andrew is one of two young people who have lost their lives in a tragic way in 2010.

Back in January, Ian Joshua Miller, a 12 year old student at West-Mont Christian Academy lost his life while sledding during a Boy Scout retreat in Ski Denton in Condersport, Pennsylvania. In the emergency room, doctors found this scripture verse in one of his boots. James 1:2-4 *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.* His death and the message found in his boot, affected many young lives as well. Those left behind remain with questions, sadness and shock. For those of us, it is just the beginning of working through the pain and sadness. This process that is both long and exhausting is called mourning. However, even with Christ as the core of one’s being and spiritual belief, sadness is an emotion that must be felt and experienced. We experience it because we love. We love because God first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Sadness is only one of a plethora of feelings that one experiences when losing a loved one. A loss brings about grief. Within grief there are overlapping stages that are experienced. It’s important for one to understand that grief can present in many different forms; sadness, anger, denial, isolation, detachment and acceptance. Sadness experienced is healthy. If it is not allowed, it will be repressed and will resurface at one point. Repressed sadness is a form of denial. Think of the many emotions that one individual can experience, now add to that the fact that every human being is uniquely and wonderfully made. Adding them together brings a vast amount of emotions in addition to each person experiencing them in unique ways. Therefore, there is no “correct” way to handle loss and grief. There are only unique responses.

Tragic losses experienced by both families have been transformed into something good. What Satan intended for evil, God will use to bring to His good. Both families have started foundations and memorials in the names of their beloved sons. The Andrew L Hicks, Jr., Foundation raises funds for Chester missions in Chester, PA. Andrew

participated in missions' trips to Chester to minister to the inner city children. In addition, the hockey and soccer teams at his high school will receive funds to support these programs. In Ian's Boots, Inc., provides shoes and boots to those in need. Ian's parents created this memorial to help those less fortunate. These two families have chosen to celebrate the lives of these amazing individuals, and in turn keep their memories alive as they continue to serve others in the community.

God's word expresses hope to those who mourn. Matthew 5:4 tells us, "Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted." And, in Isaiah 60:20 "Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end." It is difficult for the surviving family members and friends to understand such tragedies. Hurt and confusion sets in for a time. However, in the midst of it, we must remember that a joyous resurrection is coming. What was lost, God will restore upon Christ's return. If you are experiencing a loss and would like to talk with someone about it, I would be honored to walk along side and help you with your journey. ~Peggy MacQueen, LPC