

Indo Window – Thank You

Stephanie and I want to express our sincere gratitude for all the people who prayed, gave, supported and comforted us when my dad passed away earlier this month and she and I made a hasty trip back to the U.S. to attend the funeral.

We were especially touched at how many people gave so generously and quickly to make this trip possible. Enough came in or was pledged to not only cover our plane flights there and back, but to cover our other travel expenses as well. We felt so deeply grateful for this.

Stephanie was there for one week and then came back to Indonesia to be mommy again (thanks to Leslie Mullen for watching them while she was gone!). I stayed longer to help my mom with lots of details and ease her into her new life as a widow. I got back late Friday night, tired but extremely happy to see my family again. It was a total of 53 hours travel time from Covington, Louisiana to Malang, Indonesia, quite a doozy of a trip!

On the day before the funeral, we had a bit of unwanted excitement. The retreat center my aunt owns in Louisiana, and where we had planned to have the memorial service, flooded due to torrential rains. We had to scramble to find a new place. One of Mark Buckner's pastor friends in Covington reached out to us, helping us to arrange the memorial service at his church on very short notice. The Body of Christ in action is a beautiful thing. Early morning on the day of the funeral it continued to rain and the waters rose, flooding my mom's car and causing my grandmother to have to be evacuated by the sheriff's department out her cabin at the retreat center. My aunt and cousin showed up at the funeral just in the nick of time, still damp from the evacuation. We saved the news that mom's car had flooded until after the funeral was over. That was nice, don't you think? She said afterwards, with her characteristic wit, "I would call this 'not a good day.'"

The funeral itself was so moving and meaningful for our family. Many relatives came out, people from his work place, friends from my sister's church, and even two of my dear friends all the way from Austin who led a large portion of the service (thanks, Dan and Phil!). I loved having all those people there to honor my dad's honorable life. I was able to make it through most of my eulogy for him, with backup help from my brother-in-law and Stephanie, and I also made this slideshow for the service: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZniJvRTsCo>

The wisest man who ever lived, King Solomon, said that the "the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning" (Ecclesiastes 7:4). It is in the experience of grief where we are confronted with our own mortality and where we can reach out for wisdom. I found the experience of grieving my father's death shaking me to the core, helping me to get my mind off today's temporary hassles, deadlines and to-do lists, and asking the deeper questions of life. How is my relationship with God? Am I loving my friends and serving my fellow man? Am I honoring the most important people in life, my family? Grief is the gift that no one wants. But as King Solomon put it, "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart" (Ecclesiastes 7:2). Spoiler Alert: You are not going to live forever!

I hope you can take some time today to pause and find that heart of wisdom.

Thanks again for all your prayers, support and words of comfort. Stephanie and I sure have felt loved by all of you during this season of grief.

Love and our deep down thanks,

Mike and Stephanie

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