

WSS, Part 12
Week 5
Wednesday

Community
Sherry Kendrick, Guest Writer

Today's Treasure

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
John 13:34-36

In these five years of grieving, experiencing God's steadfast love and recognizing evidence of the Holy Spirit working has shown me God's presence. Another way I have known God's presence is through His people. My immediate and extended family, my church family, and my friends have cared for me.

In the beginning, my church family was there to worship with me at Mike's funeral. They provided meals and helped do practical things as we planned the funeral. They served food to the guests who came. In the weeks after, my children had to return to their homes and the deacons made sure my home was secure for me to live in by myself. Someone with expertise helped me figure out where to go for all the financial questions. Others helped me find a yard service, a water service, and an air conditioning service. The first time I had to have my car repaired someone picked me up and took me back to get it. I joined a small group of couples who included me warmly and easily even though I was a widow. People sat with me in worship – especially communion – where I heaved and cried for months. Their physical presence and willingness to be with me was a tangible reminder that God had not abandoned me.

My children call to talk to me regularly. It has helped me to know exactly when I am going to see them again, so we always plan the next visit as the current visit ends. My sister got me a puppy to keep me company! Mike's mom and I spent lots of time on the phone especially as Mike's dad's health declined and he eventually joined Mike in Heaven. Our shared widowhood has given us a glimpse into each other's hearts. Immediate and extended family have been part of my healing process. They reflect God's goodness to me in their care for me.

Friends are available to have meals and to celebrate milestones with me. They have invited me into their homes for the holidays when I will not have immediate family with me. They join me in my home when I ask them to come. For my 60th birthday, I threw myself a “child” birthday party complete with a bounce house and water slide and invited all the families from our church. My children helped do all the decorations, food, and parking. We had 150 people come!! I have promised them I would never do it again, but it was perfect for my heart at that time, and they were willing to care for me in this way. Family and friends being willing to include me and celebrate with me show me their love as an extension of God’s love poured out through them.

In John 13:34-36, the scripture says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.” In this space between, I have known the love of God’s people. I have also watched how this has been a testimony to the world around me. God’s presence and love shines forth when we care for one another.

The sweetest gift of the community is prayer. For months after Mike died, I received notes from people telling me they continued to pray for me, or they would ask me how they could pray. Because I am alone, having a few close friends who pray about more specific needs has been another blessing. As I write this, I am scheduled for a right hip replacement. My need of prayer will go out on our church prayer chain and my church family will cover me in prayer as I have surgery and recover.

Dear sister, if you have a beautiful community around you, rejoice in this good gift to you. If you lack community, I encourage you to seek it within a healthy church. Community has been the arms and feet of Jesus to me where I have seen and known His love and care.

To think about: How have you seen God’s presence in how others care for you? If care is missing, pray for the Lord to provide it! If it is present, thank both the community and your Heavenly Father.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for showing Yourself through the love of others. Thank you for the community that I have and help me be a blessing to them and to serve them even as they care for me.