

Stories of Healing

How God has worked in our Church Family

Week 4

We Lost Our Ministry and Found New Hope at Cornerstone

Matthew and Becky Allen's Story

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Matthew 6.25-34

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

1 Peter 5.10

Matthew and Becky Allen are a ministry family. They met in their hometown in Arkansas where they started dating. Almost like a military family, they've moved around quite a bit through their service in the kingdom. They have lived and worked in churches of Christ in Arkansas, Kentucky, South Dakota, Indiana and Ohio just to name a few. They have two children together, Emilea and Zack—and way too many dogs. Matthew's preaching is not just spiritually moving, he has also literally moved probably half of the congregation from one house to another. They are a huge 'rock' at Cornerstone.

They had no starry-eyed ambitions to move to Dayton, Ohio. In fact their plan was to continue for a long time at the congregation where they were previously in Indiana—at

least until the kids were finished with school. All seemed well, until everything changed for Matthew and Becky when Matthew was suddenly asked to resign from the pulpit without any notice or room for negotiation. It was no doubt a shock to the entire family. For a minister, the work is not just a career. Over and above being a source of income, a preaching work involves relationships, family, spirituality and a whole lot of emotions. Now, it was suddenly over.

Matthew thought his life in ministry might just be over for good... but God wasn't finished with him yet.

Several good friends reached out to him, perhaps guided or nudged by God's providential hand. Through a series of events, the couple heard of a church in Kettering, Ohio that was looking for a minister. They chose prayerfully to step back into ministry at the Kettering Church of Christ. Good people came alongside them and showed them grace and patience. As a result, Matthew and Becky have healed from the pain of the dark period that came after the firing.

Now, Matthew and Becky have served at what is now the Cornerstone Church of Christ for more than eleven years. They credit the elders and all the members at the church as those who helped to create a place to heal for them. Matthew and Becky came to work at Cornerstone, but no doubt Cornerstone has worked on them, too.

Matthew and Becky's story is a powerful reminder that even though Jeremiah 29.11 was written to the people of Israel about the coming hope and future promised to them, we have the same expectation. Our God is working for our ultimate good, even when we might not understand what he is up to. Our God will bring us into a brighter day, even to a heavenly plane where there will be no more pain from the past or fear for the future.

Applications and Takeaways

- **Church should not be a place of hurt.** It can be, but let's all make sure that we are careful with the hearts and souls of our brothers and sisters, even the deacons, teachers, ministers and elders. *But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another* (Galatians 5.15).
- **The Church is meant to be a place to heal.** It's what it should be. We are meant to be a sanctuary from the selfishness and empty purposes that the world offers. A spiritually mature congregation should be a place where the general spirit is grace. The Spirit of Christ should guide us through all our relationships. Churches like Cornerstone can be a safe place for people to heal from hurts in the past. We should continue to lean into this culture! *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden* (Matthew 5.14).
- **It doesn't always make sense in the middle of the mess.** Matthew and Becky were self-admittedly caught flat-footed when they were let go suddenly. Matthew will tell you that he was extremely disillusioned during this time, but that looking back, he can see what

God was doing. It is important for all of us not to give up on God in the middle of a trial. We never know what he could be teaching us or leading us into through the suffering. *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing* (James 1.2-4).

- **Trust in God that he will bring you to where you need to be.** We can trust that God will bring us to the next place where we can serve out our purpose here on earth of loving him and loving our neighbor. He makes a way for us. He has always done this for his people. *Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert* (Isaiah 43.19).
- **Grace changes things.** When Matthew and Becky came to Kettering, they admit they were jaded and a bit guarded. That feeling has been beaten back into submission and brought under the reign of Christ. How was this possible? They credit the grace, love and mercy shown to them by the members here. Grace is what can heal a broken heart. *We are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* (Romans 3.23-24).

1. What do you think of the story?

2. How can God use difficult situations like this to reveal himself?

3. Have you ever been fired suddenly? How did God help you through that situation?

4. What are some of the struggles that ministers and their families face silently?

5. When the future is uncertain, where can we find hope?