



A Healthy Attitude About our Aging Bodies

LifeCare Memos® - Messages of Compassion

Our Body – A Tent

Did you know that the Bible likens our physical bodies to a tent? Just before he died, the Apostle Peter wrote,

“I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the TENT of this body...” (II Peter 1:13).

The Apostle Paul shared that same perspective:

*“Now we know that if the earthly TENT we live in is destroyed, we have a building from **GOD**, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands”* (II Corinthians 5:1).

Paul spoke with first-hand knowledge because he was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). It is quite probable that Paul learned his craft as a lad from his father, just as Jesus learned carpentry from Joseph. Tentmaking in the Apostle’s day was hard work and it was smelly work. Tents were originally made from skins; only later were the skins replaced with goat’s hair. The smell of the work was so bad that the tentmaker had to work outside of town, and it sometimes became grounds for divorce.

One author observes, *“A tent is a temporary place to dwell. It’s fun to camp in a tent, but let’s face it, it’s not home. There is no fireplace, no cozy chair, no soft bed. It’s cold in the winter, hot in the summer, and leaky when it rains. And the older it gets, the more it sags. Eventually it frays and tears and finally rots. No wonder Paul says we ‘groan’ in our earthly tents. Physicians make their living by listening to, and repairing, groaning tents. We groan because we are weary, rain-soaked campers longing for home!”*

In his book *Do Not Lose Heart*, Dave Dravecky shares a powerful example that illustrates a healthy attitude toward our aging bodies. The piece reminds us that our focus must be on the building to come, not the “tent” we have now. An anonymous author entitled the piece, *“O Mr. Tentmaker.”*

O Mr. Tentmaker

It was nice living in this tent when it was strong and secure and the sun was shining and the air warm. But Mr. Tentmaker, it's scary now. You see, my tent is acting like it is not going to hold together; the poles seem weak and they shift with the wind. A couple of stakes have wiggled loose from the sand; and worst of all, the canvas has a rip. It no longer protects me from beating rain or stinging fly. It's scary in here, Mr. Tentmaker.

Last week I went to the repair shop and some repairman tried to patch the rip in my canvas. It didn't help much, though, because the patch pulled away from the edges and now the tear is worse. What troubled me most, Mr. Tentmaker, is that the repairman didn't seem to notice I was still in the tent; he just worked on the canvas while I shivered inside. I cried out once, but no one heard me.

I guess my first real question is: Why did you give me such a flimsy tent? I can see by looking around the campground that some of the tents are much stronger and more stable than mine. Why, Mr. Tentmaker, did you pick a tent of such poor quality for me? And even more important, what do you intend to do about it?

O little tent dweller, as the Creator and Provider of tents, I know all about you and your tent, and I love you both. I made a tent for Myself once, and lived in it in your campground. My tent was vulnerable, too, and some vicious attackers ripped it to pieces while I was still in it...on a cross. It was a terrible experience, but you will be glad to know they couldn't hurt me. In fact, the whole experience was a tremendous advantage because it is this very victory over my enemy that frees me to be a present help to you.

O little tent dweller, I am now prepared to come and live in your tent with you, if you'll invite me. You'll learn as we dwell together that real security comes from My being in your tent with you. When the storms come, you can huddle in my arms and I'll hold you. When the canvas rips, we'll go to the repair shop together.

Some day, little tent dweller, some day your tent is going to collapse. You see, I've designed it only for temporary use. But when it does you and I are going to leave together. I promise not to leave before you do. And then, free of all that would hinder or restrict, we will move to our permanent home and together, forever, we will rejoice and be glad.

Comfort in the Tent

Our “earthly tents” will soon be replaced with an “eternal house!” A healthy attitude toward our aging bodies should bring us great comfort, and that obviously is God’s intent. He does not want us to focus our attention on every rip and tear of the tent because that only leads to discouragement and despair. It is only natural for us to long for freedom from pain and suffering. We can all relate to Paul the “tentmaker’s” words:

“...we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:23).

Our focus, however, must be on the “building” to come, not the “tent” we have now!

Dave Dravecky wrote, *“This is the one message that helped me get through my ordeal with cancer. In the midst of tremendous fear and doubt and worry, I laid hold of God’s promise of a heavenly dwelling. I took my disintegrating tent and I camped on the deed God had given me for a new home. I knew the Spirit lived within me, and I knew the Bible likens the Spirit to a guarantee of what is to come. As hard as it was to face the very real possibility of my imminent death, this was a great comfort to me!”*

D. L. Moody, often described as the greatest evangelist of the nineteenth century, had a healthy attitude toward his aging body, enabling him to write, *“Someday you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody is dead. Don’t you believe a word of it. At that moment I shall have gone up higher; that is all; out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal—a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint; a body fashioned like unto His glorious body. I was born in the spirit in 1856. That which is born of the flesh may die. That which is born of the spirit will live forever!”*

Have you invited “the tentmaker,” who took a tent for Himself and died on the cross for you, to come and live with you in your tent? He’s just waiting to be asked.

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LifeCare Memos®

When experiencing the stresses of life, people need support. The Psalmist needed that support and found it when he turned to God. He said, *“Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life. I cry to you, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living’”* (Psalm 142:4-5).

LifeCare Memos are designed as messages of compassion that integrate biblical guidelines for emotional and spiritual well-being. Topics focus on various life-care issues and address them from the perspective of Scripture.