

Dear Crossview Family,

Life is filled with ebbs and flows. There are constantly changing circumstances in life that bring emotional lows and highs. Some of those factors can be on a personal level... “first-person” experience. This has been the case for me as I have experienced one of my cyclic episodes with back pain (that would be much less likely to occur if I was more diligent with regular exercise with a focus of core strength... so that is on me). By the way I am feeling much better this week. But then, I think of others in our congregation who have circumstance that are worse, by magnitudes, than my comparatively small pains. As I spent time lying flat on my back, my prayers for many of you... in the pains and discouragements that I know you are experiencing, my prayers were coming from a deeper place of experiential empathy. While empathy is not the sharing of an exact experience or level of intensity, it is a place of understanding that is step closer in connection than sympathy... which is also a good and appropriate response. Sympathy is a response of trying to place yourself, for the purpose of better understanding, in a context that you have not experienced.

Other factors that can impact those emotional ebbs and flows spring forth from interpersonal relationships. Those lows and highs can be mourned or celebrated because of what is happening in the lives of those close to you... parents, children, close friends, or even acquaintances. When someone in your life is suffering, in a very real way, YOU are also suffering. When something wonderful happens in the life of someone close to you, you too feel the vicarious satisfaction of the good that they have experienced. Life and death, pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow, all impact us because of love. This might be described as a “second-person” experience. I know that many of you are currently riding that emotional roller coaster because of what your loved ones are having to endure.

In our culture today, with the flood of information that we can access 24/7 if desired, even a “third-person” experience can impact us emotionally. Events in the world around us, whether it occurs in our locality of Fayetteville, our state of North Carolina, our nation, or even the world can evoke a visceral response even if we have never experienced anything similar or know anyone who has experienced something similar. Why? Because, as Christ-followers, we see these events through the eyes of Jesus. So, when students in a Catholic school are murdered by a mentally ill transgender person, we grieve. When peace between warring nations is brokered, or progress in finding cures for cancer is announced, or when average individuals step in and step up as heroes to protect strangers from becoming another crime victim statistic, we rejoice.

Whether you are on an emotional roller coaster due to first-person, second-person, or third-person factors, it is my prayer that you will find a stabilizing peace that comes from the real and present presence of Jesus. He promised the disciples, and us by extension, when He gave them, and us, the Great Commission, that He would be with us always.

I want to give a shout-out and word of thanks to everyone who participated at any level for your contribution to the success of our Back to School Bash. Many hands, working behind the scenes as well as on the day of the event, were a joy to observe.

Blessings!

Jeff