

My Brother, David

My wife and I are in Oklahoma City this weekend with what may be the final moments of my brother's life on this side of eternity. I am very thankful for the good hands our church is in, even when I'm gone. I am reminded that Christchurch Baptist Fellowship is Christ's Church. I love our motto: "His Love; His grace; His Church." And there is no place like this place, anywhere near this place. This must be the place!

I wanted to write you a personal letter about my brother, David, and our shared history. Before Mom and Dad had children, my father was in love with the story of grace illustrated in the life of David and Jonathan. He loved the way that David showed the lame Prince Mephibosheth lovingkindness for his father, Jonathan's sake. Dad named my oldest sister, Julia Grace (in honor of the covenant of grace between Jonathan and David), then he named my brother David, and he named me Jonathan. Dad's goal was that we would love each other like David and Jonathan and show the world the grace of God. Dad's life verse reflected his passion exemplified in the naming of his children. It reads, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (II Corinthians 8:9).

Shortly before David was born, Mom was very sick and given one out of ten chances to live. Miraculously Mom and her baby lived. Our older sister was five years old and got on her knees with Dad and together they prayed for my mom and baby David with Central Baptist Church of Shreveport, LA (Dad's pastorate) claiming Psalm 30:5b: "...in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." And had that miracle never happened, I would have never been around to be your pastor. Seventeen months after David was born, Jonathan was born. I have never been in the earth without my brother.

Because we moved so many times growing up, David and I never had an opportunity to have lasting friends of a lifetime. So we were best of friends by default. I wanted to be like him in every way. When he was saved at six, I wanted to be saved at four. I did end up getting saved at six as well. David was the consummate big brother to me. Once we were riding our sleds down a steep snowy hill at the elementary school across the street in Hyattsville, Maryland. I was going so fast I could not stop the sled and unfortunately, I hit the community bully and flipped him high over my head, landing on his backside behind me. He immediately got up and punched me hard and that started repeated bullying until one day after school, my brother saw him start beating me and I'll never forget what happened next. David threw his books

down and the bully began to run, and David caught him and whipped him from hill to hill in our community. The bully never bullied me or anybody again. There is a great verse that goes with my brother's heroic act. Hebrews 2:18: "For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." The word succour comes to us from the Greek word *boētheō* which means "run to the rescue."

David and I went to every church service in our church, every youth meeting, every revival meeting and every Fifth Saturday Meeting in Central Florida. We attended Vacation Bible School and went to Youth Camp every summer. There were thirty-four lakes in Lakeland, and we swam in many of those lakes and water skied with my brother-in-law in Lake Hollingsworth. We fished in Lake Morton and played until it was dark. We played baseball in the sand lots and in Little League and Pony League. We walked to the library and checked out great books, mostly biographies, and shared the adventures with those whom we read after. The crowning moment of youth together came when I began preaching at eighteen. Soon afterwards, the David and Jonathan and Evangelistic Team was launched. David led the music, organized the finances and I preached. Sometimes David would teach some classes as well. Alas, David married and became a youth pastor and I continued to preach my way through college. David had a successful career as a banker, his last position being that of a bank president. I married, did the work of an evangelist, college teacher and then settled into the pastorate in Houston. But Dad said on his death bed, "One day your brother will preach." Dad was right; when I was fifty-nine and David was sixty-one, I had the privilege of preaching his ordination.

I introduced David to his wife at a meeting our fathers were attending. Derlyn (his wife) died on their fifty-second anniversary. David began to slip away from us soon afterwards. They have a daughter, Davida named after her dad; she is the darling of their life together. David was the pastor of the Penn West Baptist Church in Holdenville, Oklahoma for ten wonderful years.

For a few years in our youth, David and I were paper boys delivering the news on our respective routes. Then we became preachers, delivering the good news on our respective routes. Although our routes were different, we had the same news, the same Bible and thankfully the same dad and mom who showed us how to do it. To say I will miss him is quite an understatement. What a friend he was to me. And what a Friend we both had in Jesus!

Thank you for your prayers for our family at this time. I love you all.
Your Pastor and Forever Friend,
Johnny Pope