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More than 12 years ago now I awoke on a Saturday morning deeply burdened for a woman in our church who had lost her mother that week. I remember sitting in bed and typing a letter to her on my laptop. Later that day I dropped it off and she told me later that it brought her great comfort. I never dreamed that her husband would become an elder in our church or that as a couple they would become some of our closest friends. I just wanted to comfort her. I stumbled across this letter looking for something in my computer files. Maybe in God's timing you are in need of comfort. Or maybe you can use some of these words to write your own letter to someone you know who has lost someone they love deeply.

Dear (. . .) :

Today is the day of your mother's funeral. Sunny and bright, crisp and cool, as good as it gets in Chicago in November. When I woke up this morning my thoughts and prayers turned to you and I wanted to jot you a note of encouragement. I know you loved your mother very much and she knew it too. You were a faithful daughter during her final days, caring for her in every way possible, all that a mother hopes her daughter will be.

Your mother is having a day that is very different than yours. As you put on your black dress this morning remember that your mom is dressed in white (Rev. 19:14). As you shed tears of sorrow and separation, remember that your mother is shedding tears of joy. As you think and reflect and ask the questions we all struggle with, remember that all your mom's questions are gone (1Cor. 13:12). As you stand by the casket and drive to the cemetery, remember that your mother is not here. She is in heaven with Christ. She is not watching her funeral, she is not thinking about death, she is more alive than she has ever been before. She has shed the pain and sorrow of this world forever. Just think!

A little bit more about your mom's new home. It is big. The Bible says that just the heavenly city is 1500 miles high and wide and deep (Rev. 21:16). It is beautiful; everything around her is splashed with a display of gold and jewels that will make her mouth drop open and her eyes as wide as a little girl on Christmas morning. The Bible says that she has her own mansion and is probably getting the grand tour as you're reading this (John 14:2). She loves her new role in heaven. She is part of a heavenly symphony where everyone does what they were created to do. Like the final piece in a puzzle, she fits, she is finally doing exactly what Almighty God created her to do. She's really good at it and that feels so good. She is not a newcomer; not a stranger like a new kid in an old neighborhood. They knew she was coming and were excited to welcome

her. She is known and loved and understood and cared for as only Jesus can guarantee (John 14:3).

Your Mom is happy . . . really, really happy, with a bliss beyond what our human minds can comprehend. God's word says that our eyes have never seen and our ears have never heard . . . no one has ever even thought of the surprises your mother is discovering right now (1Cor.2:9)!

Your day will be hard. So many people to greet, so many thoughts racing through your mind; your husband, your daughters, your brothers, your dad. I don't know if your Mom will think of earth today, but if she does she will think of you! You're the human reason she is in heaven today, and she'll want to say thanks:

Thanks . . . for having the courage to tell me the truth, even when I didn't want to hear it.

Thanks for helping me see that religion and good works were not going to get me to heaven.

Thanks for showing me that I had to choose Jesus as my only hope of eternal life.

Thanks for opening the Bible and challenging me to turn from my sin and receive Jesus as my Savior.

Thanks for praying for me, and then with me, as I was born again. What more could a mother ask?

“Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

“Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again” (John 3:7).

Some day you'll meet your Mom again . . . and she will hug you like you've never been hugged before. May we all be as faithful to our parents and loved ones as you were to your Mom, and may you discover the truth of the Apostle Paul's words, “Yes we sorrow, but not as those who have no hope” (1Thess 4:13).

Much love to you and your family,

Pastor James