

# THE Encourager®

DAVE DRAVECKY'S OUTREACH OF HOPE

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## Walking Weak and WOUNDED

by Kim Jones

### *Adversity introduces us to ourselves.*

**T**he Rocky Mountains were blanketed by their first snowfall and the sky was a brilliant blue. It was a picture-perfect day, unless you were anywhere near the four weary travelers trudging through the economy parking lot at Denver International Airport.

My son led the charge, towing a carry-on with wheels. He, we thought, remembered where our car was parked. I trudged some distance behind with an overstuffed "wheel-less" suitcase, a purse that could be mistaken for a second suitcase, and a carry-on shoulder bag that weighed at least as much as a small child. It felt like we were hiking to Kansas. My husband expressed disappointment with the non-existent shuttle and made ongoing comments about our "wheel-less" luggage. Our children were hungry, tired, and grumpy.

To make matters worse, it was hot. But the outside temperature was mild compared to the steam I was generating, especially when our car's whereabouts came into question. I definitely took the prize for the "most nasty" member of our family that day—just ask anyone within earshot.

We were returning from what was my

fourth trip back "home" in ten months. Two of those trips were for funerals, one for my father and the most recent for my brother-in-law. It has been a year of too many tears, too much pain, and an ever-shortening temper.

Adversity does more than reveal our weaknesses. It also reveals our wounds. Just as heat causes impurities to rise to the surface when refining precious metals, the heat of affliction causes our weaknesses and wounds to surface. It's usually not a pretty picture, nor is it the whole picture.

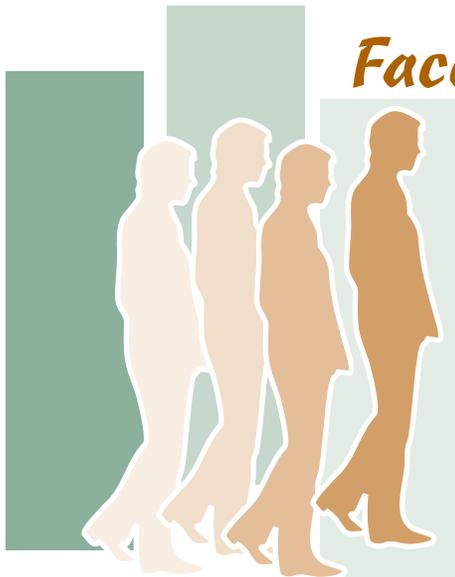
Hidden beneath anger are deeper emotions such as fear, frustration, or, as in my case, emotional pain. Sometimes it's easier to feel anger than it is to feel pain, especially if that pain reveals wounds that we would rather ignore or wounds we thought were healed. As is true for so many who face a season of suffering, the turmoil of the past months had ripped open the scabs of old, unhealed wounds. The infection bubbled to the surface, spilling onto anyone nearby.

Talk about terrible timing! Just when circumstances require us to be strong, we show up weak or wounded. I know I am

not alone in my response to pain, and neither are you. Weakness and wounds are a part of the landscape of human suffering.

Although the landscape of suffering leaves us feeling pretty hopeless at times, we find a strange comfort in knowing that most people who walk through it feel just as weak and wounded as we do. But we can find an even greater comfort in Jesus. He offers hope because He understands our wounds and weaknesses. The Bible says He is "acquainted with them" by virtue of His humanity (Hebrews 4:14-16). He understands the pain of our wounds because He was "wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5). We have a God who not only helps and heals, but one who understands. That's cause for real hope!

If you are among the "walking weak and wounded," or if you know someone who is, read on. This issue of *The Encourager* will offer hope and encouragement along the way. And if you were one of the unfortunate bystanders at the Denver airport that Sunday, please accept my sincerest apologies.



## Face-to-Face

# with Who We Are

by Dave Dravecky

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

HEBREWS 4:15-16 (NIV)

**W**e each have an image of who we want to be, of what we want other people to see in us. We want to look good. We want people to like us and respect us. We can paint a pretty rosy picture of what we want people to see and may be able to live that life fairly successfully. But when adversity and suffering come along, the image changes. Like nothing else can, the environment created by suffering exposes our weaknesses, spotlights our failures, and bares our wounds.

No matter how flawless a picture of ourselves we have created, the truth is, we know there's another not-quite-so-nice picture behind the scenes. Whether we like it or not, we are weak people. There are areas of life that are hard for us. We face situations we fear we can't handle. We respond in ways we wish we didn't. We protect areas of woundedness. And because it's painful to face the real person behind the scenes, most of us won't do it until adversity or suffering strips away the image and forces us to be honest about who we are.

Without a doubt, adversity and suffering played a role in causing me to look at the image I had built of myself. When I first began pitching in the major leagues, it was tough. I had painted a picture of Dave Dravecky as the tough guy who could deal with any amount of pressure and pitch under any circumstances, but those first days were awful. I didn't do well. I was scared to death that I wouldn't cut it.

When I battled cancer, I was again forced to look honestly at the person behind the image. I was a Christian and truly wanted to live according to the

Golden Rule. I wanted to be good to others. I wanted to be kind. I wanted to be selfless instead of selfish. But what I saw of myself during that time of suffering wasn't nearly as kind or as good or as thoughtful as I wanted to be. In fact, for a time I was downright angry.

I eventually realized that much of my anger was caused by fear. I was sure of my eternal destiny, but I was afraid of my own mortality. Like so many other cancer patients, I didn't want to deal with that fear face to face. So I tried to hide it, to escape it, to maintain the tough-guy image. I wasn't going to let any weakness or fear show.



*It is amazing how strong we can become when we begin to realize what weaklings we are. It is in weakness that we can admit our mistakes and correct ourselves by confessing them. It is in weakness that our minds are open to enlightenment from others. It is in weakness that we are authoritative in nothing and say the most clear-cut things with simplicity and consideration for others.*

FRANÇOIS FÉNELON

But the demons of fear, weakness, failure, and woundedness don't go away. They

merely fester deep inside. We may think we escape them for a time, but during our quiet moments they're right there, consuming us and paralyzing us. Then we have to muster up the energy to go back into the real world and fake it. But it's too exhausting to do that indefinitely.

I share about these two experiences from my life because in both cases I was pushed to face who I really was, and it was scary. I couldn't tell anybody what I was feeling because I was afraid to expose the real me. What I've learned since is that sooner or later, whether we face a cancer diagnosis or another kind of adversity, every one of us has to face being real and honest about who we are.

We can try to escape, hide from, or ignore who we really are. We can bolster up what we know is a false image. But there is a better way to deal with our weaknesses, failures, and wounds. That better way is to face honestly who we are and to share that truth with God and others who are close to us. It begins when we accept the truth and admit that we are weak when all along we thought we were strong.

Once we come face to face with our failures, we have to deal with them before God. If we need forgiveness or need to make changes, we need to ask God for forgiveness and for the strength to change. He understands and is eager to help us in our time of need.

When we want to honor God with our lives, our image—how we look to other people—loses its importance. When I choose first and foremost to honor God with my life, He becomes the only one I'm

playing for. As I live life, I am convicted by the things I do that don't please God. That failure hurts, but I deal with it then and there, saying "God, I'm sorry." And when I've hurt someone, I go to that person and seek forgiveness. I live this way because I want people to see the real me, not a false image. I don't want to live with the weight of my failures and weaknesses on my shoulders. I don't want to carry the heaviness of deep wounds in my heart.

It isn't easy to take these steps. It is difficult to admit who we really are to ourselves much less to anyone else. We have a built-in aversion to crying out for help because we're afraid to let anyone know we can't deal with what we face by ourselves. I still remember how hard it was to look my wife in the eye and tell her I was scared to death. It was so hard to admit my fear to her because I didn't want to let her down.

But what a relief it is to get these burdens out in the open. What an encouragement it is to have even one trustworthy person with whom we can share the deep down wounds and weaknesses that gnaw at us as a result of adversity or tragedy. When we are willing to let people know how we feel, what our fears and hopes are, and what help we need, it is so much easier to deal with both the difficulties we face and the wounds from the past that have a way of rising to the surface when we face adversity.

If we cannot share our weaknesses, failures, feelings, and wounds, we will continue to be eaten alive by them. There's no question about that in my mind. We are all afraid to do that. I am. Jan was. Deep down inside, we want to please other people, so we paint a phony picture. But God wants us to see who we really are. He wants us to come to Him for the help we need so that we can be the men and women He wants us to be.



## Weakness – The Gateway to Strength

*But he [God] said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10

**W**e humans loathe weakness. We like to think of ourselves as strong, secure, and capable of managing our lives on our own. Yet when we look at ourselves honestly and objectively, our weaknesses glare back at us. Although that appears from our perspective to be a dismal state of affairs, 2 Corinthians 12 paints quite a different picture. It says that when we are weak, we actually have the potential to be strong.

How is it possible to be strong when we are weak? How does our weakness display God's power? Not long ago I caught a glimpse of God's perspective on weakness that helped broaden my understanding of this seemingly contradictory statement. That glimpse came from my garden.

The blooms stop even the most harried dead in their tracks. The bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies can't resist them. Despite being surrounded by nearly an acre of blooming competition, my sole purple rhododendron steals the garden show. Passing motorists have even stopped to admire and inquire about this rare sight.

In my home state of Oregon, "rhodies," as we call them, are as plentiful as rain. But in semi-arid Colorado, at 7,500 feet elevation, they are rare indeed. When we transplanted to Colorado years ago, we left behind a yard full of rhodies. Spring never felt the same until I found a mismarked rhodie at a local hardware store and took it home.

For the past five years, my rhodie, the weakest member of my garden ensemble, has received the most attention and special care. When the "Arctic Express" threatens to freeze its branches, I wrap it in burlap. When the frozen ground locks out all moisture, I water it. Every fall I spray each leaf with an expensive spray that protects against moisture loss. No other plant receives this much attention. No other plant needs it.

Why do I bother? Why do I spend so much time and energy? I do it simply because I love rhodies. It's a labor of love.

As I mulched my rhodie in preparation for the coming winter, I realized that in God's eyes I'm a lot like my garden treasure—weak, needy, requiring constant attention and protection. But God gladly cares for me because He loves me beyond comprehension. For Him, I'm a labor of love. When I am at my weakest, He gladly does the most for me. When I am the most vulnerable, He eagerly becomes my sole protector. He knows that in due time, like my prized rhodie, I will display a beauty that brings Him great joy and glory and will amaze even the heavenly hosts.

That is why the apostle Paul could actually boast in his weakness. That is why Joni Eareckson Tada, a 30-year quadriplegic can say, "Lean on Jesus. Lean hard! When you do, you'll find yourself growing stronger than you ever dreamed possible."



## Wounds & Weaknesses

# Under Pressure

by Jan Dravecky

Suffering has a way of bringing our weaknesses, failures, and unhealed wounds to light. Whatever wounds we may have been able to ignore or cover up seem to come to the surface and demand attention at the very moment we feel least able to deal with them. That's what happened to me when Dave was battling cancer. Since then, I've learned that it's perfectly normal to have to deal with difficult emotional and character issues when we're going through a time of suffering or adversity.

Just as the heat of the refining process brings the impurities in gold to the surface, the heat of suffering brings the impurities of our character to the surface. Even though the Bible tells us that suffering brings about changes in our character (see Romans 5), most of us aren't prepared to make those changes—especially when we are suffering. In my case, Dave's cancer was a monumental thing in my life. That alone was more than enough for me to handle. But what happened? All of a sudden the wounds of my mother's death rose to the surface. I remember feeling all of that pain and thinking, *Gosh, Lord, I can't be dealing with this now. It's too much. Can't I just deal with what's front and center?*

The answer was "No." My mother's death had left a deep, unattended wound in my heart because I never allowed myself to grieve. I didn't grieve because I didn't want to impose on anyone. I felt I needed to be strong and that I shouldn't feel the way I did, so I stuffed the pain of losing her. The truth is, God created us with the need to mourn deep losses. It's a fact of our humanity. When I was under the pressure of dealing with my husband's cancer, that old, unhealed wound rose up to demand my attention.

Old wounds and weaknesses weren't just rising to the surface in me, they were

rising to the surface in Dave, too. As a by-product of what he had to face in his battle with cancer, Dave had to deal with his anger. Dave's anger led me to shift into overdrive to try to make him happy because my way of dealing with wounds and weaknesses was to try to fix everything and please everyone around me. You can just imagine the state we were in.

It's frightening to say this, and I don't want to scare people because we also have great hope, but my experience, our experience, is not abnormal. It's not abnormal for these kinds of things to occur when we suffer. If the only thing we had to deal with was the crisis itself, it wouldn't be that difficult, but it usually doesn't happen that way. We have the main crisis to deal with and the stress of that crisis radiates out and has an impact wherever there are underlying wounds or weaknesses.

It's a bit like an earthquake that shatters what was once a calm, peaceful landscape. The ground tears apart in one place leaving a gaping hole in a road, it shifts in another place causing the side of a building to collapse, and somewhere else it leaves a visible fissure on the surface of the ground. The underlying weaknesses existed all along, but they did not become visible until the earthquake hit.

So what do you do when a crisis shatters the landscape of your life? First, don't try to patch over the surface. Second, dig deep, go to the root cause. Of course this is easier said than done.

My first instinct was to patch the cracks. Being Jan, I tried to keep everything under control. I felt secure when things were under control. When I could keep everything together and keep everyone happy, I didn't have to deal with my own wounds and inadequacy. So I tried to fix it all. But long before I could patch up

the surface, I ran out of energy. I literally wore myself out trying to smooth over the shattered landscape of our lives and ended up in depression.

I was beside myself. I'd always been able to handle my life. I'd always been able to patch up the surface, but there were so many fissures and holes and tears I couldn't take care of them all. It drove me nuts that I didn't have the energy to take care of everything the way I always had. I felt guilty, which caused me to go deeper into depression.

I even thought God was punishing me because everything around me was falling apart and I was unable to do a thing about it. But the truth is, my need to please everyone was sick and needed to be changed. There was no way to control or patch over the situation we faced. When it became obvious that I wasn't going to be able to fix anything, I couldn't run anymore. I finally got to the point where I had to face my weaknesses and deal with the wounds inside.

Although that was a terribly painful place to be, it was also a very good place. It got me to the point where I was willing to deal with the wounds and weaknesses that were at the root of the disaster on the surface. When I reached that point of total weakness, I made a conscious choice to surrender to God and began to seek answers from the Scriptures.

The healing process began as I started to learn the truth from God's Word. The Holy Spirit started showing me the delusions I lived under, which included believing that I was responsible for everyone and everything around me. (No wonder I was exhausted!) Through His Word, God showed me that while I'm supposed to help others, we are each responsible to carry our own load (Galatians 6:5). I also believed that I needed to earn God's love, but through His Word, He showed me that

*We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.*

ROMANS 5:3-5

He loved me because of who I am, not because of what I do (1 John 3:1).

As I started healing, I became receptive to investigating the root cause of each crack. You see, the surface crack is a symptom that reveals a point of weakness, but it is not the root cause. The root cause has to do with our sin, weaknesses, and wounds, and we need to deal with those.

Although the midst of a crisis may not be the best time to address the root causes, the cracks in the surface reveal an underlying weakness or wound that needs attention. As I started seeing the different areas of my life that needed to be changed, that difficult time turned out to be a positive experience instead of a negative one. I still walk with weaknesses and wounds. I still tend to want to please people. But I know how to address the root causes and I know I can trust God to strengthen me and see me through whatever adversity I may face.

As strange as it may seem, I am thankful to this very day that so much of my life fell apart when it did. Although it felt horrible and frightening at the time, it really wasn't a bad thing. The foundation I had for dealing with life was very weak, and when the first major crisis hit, it started to crack. My foundation was weak because my trust was in me rather than in God. Through our time of suffering, terrible as it was, I experienced the transformation Romans 5 talks about. God started strengthening my character and giving me a new foundation—a new trust and hope in Him.



## NOT-So-Great Escapes

**“I** hate pain!” We’ve all expressed this all-too-human sentiment. Unfortunately, that loathing can lead us to deny our pain or devise elaborate coping mechanisms to avoid our hurts and wounds. Sometimes our coping mechanisms are so effective that we don’t recognize them for what they are—a not-so-great escape.

Before we can begin to respond to our wounds and weaknesses in healthier ways, we have to recognize and deal with our unhealthy responses. So we asked a number of self-confessed escape artists how they run from their wounds and weaknesses. Below is a sampling of their tactics. Even if you don’t run at the first hint of pain, you may recognize some familiar coping mechanisms used by those you love.

- u* I cry, then I start cleaning the house from top to bottom. I keep my mind busy on something else so it doesn’t hurt as bad. -Nancee
- u* I would get angry (and sometimes still do). My anger was like a shield that kept me from dealing with the root problem. -Dave
- u* I used to try to fix everything, to control the circumstances around me so things appeared normal and under control. I still struggle not to respond that way. -Jan
- u* I put my nose to the grindstone and work—and not just any small task. I paint the whole house, rebuild a retaining wall, plant a lawn, etc. It’s a great distraction because I can always say, “After I finish this, then I’ll deal with \_\_\_\_\_.” -Bev
- u* I tend to clam up. I get quiet. I sleep a lot more than normal. -Dick
- u* I try to make light of it so I don’t have to deal with it right then. It’s a release and keeps me from feeling the immediate pain. -Connie
- u* I read because it’s a great distraction. There are also lots of diversions (work, home projects, hobbies) that can occupy your mind so you don’t think about it. -Tom
- u* I try to not be alone, at all. When you’re alone, you think about it. -Isaac
- u* I do anything I can so I don’t have to think about it. It’s not that I’m ashamed of my weaknesses and wounds, it’s just that they are so hard to deal with, to know how to fix. -Danielle

If you relate to any of these escape artist’s tactics, then you’ve taken the first step toward developing a healthy response—recognition. In some cases, our responses are so well ingrained they become like reflexes. We need help even to recognize them.

Since all true and lasting change begins with God, pray and ask God to help you know when you deploy your particular escape tactic. If we ask, God will give us the strength and wisdom to acknowledge and face our pain. Then He can begin the work of repairing our wounds and providing His strength to address our weaknesses.

God is delighted to help us. As our loving Father, He knows that untended wounds leave scars, and scars immobilize and disfigure. No one wants us to walk in emotional and spiritual wholeness more than God. He knows that weaknesses rob us of our potential, the chance to become all that we were created to be. He wants more for us than that, much more. He wants to make us whole. That’s God’s great escape plan!

***He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds***

PSALM 147:3



# Walking Beside the Weak & Wounded

*I sought my soul, but my soul I could not see.  
I sought my God, but my God eluded me.  
I sought my brother, and I found all three.*

*Author Unknown*

**P**eople in pain often live a roller-coaster existence. They may appear fine one day and be totally withdrawn the next. So walking beside a family member or friend who is weak or wounded is a challenge. Identifying a suffering person's greatest needs can seem almost impossible because so many clamor for their attention. To make things more difficult, hurting people sometimes attempt to quiet their inner turmoil by shifting into autopilot. With a seemingly impenetrable focus, they deal primarily with tasks that require little or no emotional output. They may not even notice other people or responsibilities. No wonder it can be difficult to know how to help!

Although it's difficult to walk beside a hurting person, God doesn't want any of us to walk alone. Our presence can be God's gift of grace and comfort to a friend or family member who is suffering. But in order to be vessels of God's grace and comfort, we need to have the right perspective and the right heart attitude. When we cultivate the perspectives and attitudes described below, we are better equipped to walk beside the weak and wounded. We are better equipped to offer the hope and encouragement they so desperately need.

## The Best Gift

God alone knows our thoughts and hearts. Psalm 139:1-2 says, "O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar." So God knows best what our hurting friend needs at any given time.

Time after time during His earthly ministry, Jesus saw beyond the most obvious needs of hurting people to the most important ones. He was able to do this because He viewed people through the eyes of the Holy Spirit. As we allow the

Holy Spirit to guide us and prompt us, He will faithfully reveal the deepest needs of those who hurt. The single most important expression of love and concern we can show our friend, then, is to walk with God, to be in tune with His Spirit. Jesus expressed this truth when he said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

## The Source of True Love

First Corinthians 13:8 tells us "love never fails." Of course the love that never fails is God's love, not ours. Our love is too weak, too fickle. It is dependent on moods, schedules, and imperfect hearts. But God's love is sincere, life-giving, and powerful. And it's there for the asking. So when we find ourselves needing to love those who are hard to love or needing to love when we feel weak and overwhelmed, we can ask God to fill us with His love so that we have love to give.

Without God's love, whatever we do for the weak and wounded falls short. First Corinthians 13:3 is crystal clear: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." Ouch! If we truly want to be God's gift to a weak or wounded friend, we need to ask Him to fill us with His love.

## Pray First, Act Second

As Jesus went about His ministry on earth, His sole agenda was to do the will of God: "I do not seek my own will, but the will of Him who sent me" (John 5:30 NASB). Our agenda should be the same, and we can discover God's will through prayer. Everything we do for someone who is in pain is done best when it's bathed in prayer first.

That is why prayer is such an impor-

tant aspect of the ministry of the Outreach of Hope. The only way our ministry staff can walk beside those in pain on a daily basis is through prayer. Every call our staff makes to a cancer patient or family member begins with prayer. Sometimes these prayers lead us to postpone a call. Only later do we learn that the person was out of town or unable to talk. At other times, God burdens us to call someone else instead. Almost without fail, that "unplanned" call results in an expression of thanks. Often the recipients needed at that very moment assurance, encouragement, or a reminder that they were not alone in their pain. God knew their need and expressed it to a listening heart through the avenue of prayer.

When we walk beside those who are in pain, the emotional weight of their situation is sometimes overwhelming. We can't carry it alone, but God can. When we release our friend's burdens to God through prayer, He is faithful to follow through. We can then rest in the peace of knowing that God is carrying these burdens in His capable hands. What a great exchange program—problems for peace!

## Two Ears, One Mouth

When a family member or friend is hurting, our ears are needed at least twice as much as our mouths! Perhaps that's why Scripture encourages us to listen and urges caution when we speak. James 1:19 says to "be quick to listen" and "slow to speak." Ecclesiastes 3:7 reminds us there is "a time to be silent."

Hurting family members and friends need a listening heart, someone before whom they can be totally honest. We don't heal from wounds we can't identify, and we can't address weaknesses we can't explore. We each need a safe place to uncover our pain so that healing can begin.



## When Wounds and Weakness Overwhelm Us

When we have to deal with a serious illness, trauma, or loss most of us feel weak or wounded to some degree. But sometimes, despite our best efforts, the emotional pain refuses to go away. If you are experiencing the following symptoms on a consistent basis, your emotional health may be at risk.

- o People who know you express their concern and notice that you have changed or are behaving differently.
- o Your close relationships—family, God, friends—have changed, and not in a positive way.
- o Your work is suffering either in terms of productivity or in relationship to your coworkers.
- o You have difficulty concentrating or finishing tasks.
- o You feel out of touch with your emotions, the feelings of your heart.
- o You experience inappropriate outbursts of anger and rage.
- o Your sleeping and eating patterns are disrupted or have changed.
- o You have feelings of hopelessness and despair.
- o You have withdrawn from activities that used to bring you pleasure (hobbies, sports, church, etc.).
- o You entertain self-destructive thoughts or think about hurting others.

Just as there are professionals who deal with physical health, there are professionals who specialize in emotional health. If items on the list above describe you, you may benefit by consulting such a professional. For free information regarding counseling, visit the resource section of [www.OutreachOfHope.org](http://www.OutreachOfHope.org) or request the “Seeking Wise Counsel” guidesheet from the Outreach of Hope office.

A safe listener gives a hurting person complete freedom to express whatever is needed—good, bad, or indifferent. A safe listener isn’t there to judge or offer solutions; he or she is there to offer a sanctuary.

A safe listener is also a wise, active listener. When a hurting family member or friend needs help expressing their feelings, a good listener asks the right questions—ones that delve beneath the surface:

- u We have talked about everyone else, but how are you doing?
- u What are you doing to cope? What are you doing for yourself?
- u Is this . . . what you are feeling?
- u Do you understand why you feel that way?
- u That seems difficult for you. Would you like to talk about it more?

### Laying Rubber

Scripture describes the way of encouragement that will never fail: “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18). This verse graces the wall of the Outreach of Hope reception area. It permeates every policy and program. It is, as Dave is fond of saying, “where the rubber meets the road.” Here are some of our favorite tried and true actions of love that help us walk beside those who are weak and wounded:

- u Send a note card when you pray for hurting friends or family members so they know you prayed.
- u Call before any potentially difficult milestone such as the anniversary of a loved one’s death or an important appointment and offer to pray.
- u Send chocolate—anytime.

u Give carefully selected books (or audio books), especially if your friend mentions a particular author or topic of interest.

u Send more chocolate.

u Because music touches our soul in a way words cannot, send recorded praise and worship music, praise videos, or recordings of your friend’s favorite musical artist.

u Send flowers or a favorite meal.

u Ask, “How can I be praying for you?” and always offer to pray with your hurting friend.

Those who are experiencing a season of adversity often hesitate to share their needs and pain with others. One reason is that they don’t want to be a “burden” to others. While that perspective is understandable, it doesn’t line up with God’s perspective. God’s perspective is expressed in Galatians 6:2: “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” We need to carry each other’s burdens out of obedience to God and as His ambassadors on earth. We need to carry each other’s burdens so that our friend’s pain is lessened and our selfish nature is challenged. Walking beside those who are weak or wounded, then, blesses both our friend and ourselves. As if that weren’t enough, it blesses God, too.

For more helpful ways to encourage a friend who is hurting, consider ordering *Stand By Me* by Dave and Jan Dravecky, \$8.00. Or request the “Walking The Path of Encouragement” issue of *The Encourager*, free. For details, see order envelope, resource catalog, [www.OutreachOfHope.org](http://www.OutreachOfHope.org) or call the office at (719) 481-3528.

**God chooses carefully those who would bring His message of hope, comfort and love to His suffering children. If you have been chosen to be God’s hands, mouth or feet for your friend, God will bless you richly as you let Him teach you His gentle ways and how to walk in His strength.**

DAVE AND JAN DRAVECKY  
*The Encouragement Bible*

*Dear Father of humanity,  
 Maker of heaven and earth,  
 None of us alive on September 11, 2001  
 can ever forget the overwhelming losses of that day.  
 They stand before us as a monumental reminder  
 of how weak and wounded we are.  
 Lift us up, Lord.  
 Help us to stand tall in Your strength.  
 Bind our wounded hearts with Your love  
 so that we have grace, comfort, and compassion  
 to offer as a healing balm to others.  
 In the precious name of Jesus,  
 our Redeemer and Lord,  
 Amen.*

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*Hope*

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**Our mission** is to serve individuals and their families, especially those who are suffering from cancer or amputation, by offering comfort, encouragement and hope through Jesus Christ. We accomplish this mission by offering prayer support and non-medical referral services and resources for cancer patients, amputees, and their families. We also provide support materials for churches, healthcare professionals, and individuals who work with those who are battling cancer.

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