



## I'm Going to Stay

*"I pray you would have a rich life of joy and power...a radiant life and a radiant death."*

- Dr. Dallas Willard

My wife and I were witnesses to a "radiant life and radiant death" at a recent memorial service. The service was for Carol Fender, a woman beloved by many because of her ever-present smile and sheer passion and love for people. Carol lived a life of constant energy and movement; she reminded me of the Energizer bunny! Her love for family, patient piano instruction to over 800 students, and service to the Lord by ministering to hundreds of kids were inspirational. My wife and I were one of her many "kids" at this memorial.

Yet the last 26 years of Carol' life had been slowly taken over by the progressive and crippling effects of Multiple Sclerosis (MS). With her daughter Julie's permission, here is a part of her beautiful testimonial to her mother: "When mom first went into the nursing home she was 49 years old. The Medicaid rules at that time required individuals to be in a skilled nursing facility for 30 days before they would pay for home. She said to me, *'There are people here that no one ever comes to visit...I'm going to stay, because I can visit with them.'*"

Carol chose to faithfully serve in the hard places, out of the spotlight, to hundreds of lonely people over her last 26 years in care facilities. She was a woman that always smiled, for she knew her broken body was not the end of her life. Carol learned to trust in the love of God. He was intimately telling His story through her weakened physical life. Her life embodied the words of the Apostle Paul in II Cor. 4:16, "Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." As I heard Julie speak of her mother, I was stunned by her life of courage and sacrificial love. Tears of joy flowed freely by many at the service.

Carol's decision to love in the hard places is convicting: *"I'm going to stay."* Since the memorial, I have been thinking, how would we answer God's call on us? Will we stay in disappointing marriages and continue to trust God is at work despite what we see? Will we stay in hard work environments when everything in us screams for relief? Will we stay in troubled relationships when there is no apparent return on our efforts and care, when no resolution comes? Will we be remembered as living a "radiant life and a radiant death?" Will we stay?