

Dear friends of Vital Signs Ministries,

April 2022



The close of March found us flying to the Gulf coast on Florida's panhandle to conduct a memorial service for our dear friend of nearly 40 years, Carol Coppi. It was a long and divided trip with layovers in New York City and Charlotte, North Carolina before we touched down in Destin. But it was more than worth it when we were finally able to embrace Quint Coppi, Carol's husband of nearly 65 years, and express in person our deep condolences. Quint, as most of you know, has been one of Vital Signs Ministries' most faithful and valuable heroes for some 38 years. He has been a Board member, a sidewalk counseling veteran, a letter-writer, an intercessor, and so much more,

including being a founding member of our Notting Hill Napoleons book club. However, with Carol's homegoing and with him coming up on his 90th birthday, Quint has moved to a beautiful assisted living facility in Destin just a few miles from his son Steve and daughter-in-law Renee. We are going to miss Quint and Carol something terrible.

Presenting the eulogy and sermon at Carol's memorial service was a profound honor not only because of my intense friendship with the Coppis, but because I knew I was serving as a representative of so many other friends back in the Omaha area. We promised Quint we would have another memorial service back in Omaha in order to provide an opportunity for those friends to mourn together, to celebrate Carol's life together, and to record some of our tributes so he and the Coppi family could know just how profound and long-lasting were the blessings from their lives to ours.

As most of you are aware, this wasn't my first funeral service for someone close to me. Indeed, I have presented memorial messages for my father and mother; for Vital Signs colleague Chet Thomas; for our former pastor Darrell Scott; for my Aunt Farris Ellsworth; for Dick Wilson's beloved wife Linda; for Rik Pedersen; and others. But for such dear saints, my sermons follow the same outline. **1)** I make the sermon as personal and celebratory as possible with several stories of the person's life. To do this the best I can, I speak to family and friends beforehand in order to winsomely credit the distinctive character and contributions of the deceased. I also emphasize lessons from the person's life which provide inspiration and spiritual challenge for those gathered at the service.

2) With great confidence and joy I extol the precious realities of eternal life which is the destiny of the Christian. This includes reminding the audience of the Bible's remarkable teachings about the resurrected bodies which will be ours for eternity, the redeemed and harmonious creation which will be given us to steward, the complete absence of sin and all of its effects, and other glorious truths about heaven.

And then **3)** In every funeral sermon I've ever delivered, I take very seriously the responsibility to explain the simple but world-shaking message of Christ's gospel. After all, it is the most crucial fact of history that Jesus died on the cross to pay for man's sins and a humble trust in that astoundingly gracious gift brings total forgiveness, a new life, and adoption into God's forever family. That message is ever relevant, of course, but perhaps it finds a more willing hearing at a funeral than at any other time.

Speaking of these things does not eliminate grief altogether but then that's how it should be. For death isn't something to be sugar-coated. Death is horrid. It is the ugly and tragic end-product of sin. Its effects are devastating in the extreme. Nevertheless, death is an enemy whose end is assured for the Bible teaches that the sovereign and almighty God will throw death into the lake of fire. And a) Christ's triumph over death in His resurrection, b) His promise that all who believe in Him will share in that victory in our own resurrection, and c) the wonderful prediction that the days of death itself are numbered, means that we need not crumble before death now...even at a funeral.

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who [are asleep, so that you will not grieve as indeed the rest of mankind do, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For we say this to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who remain, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

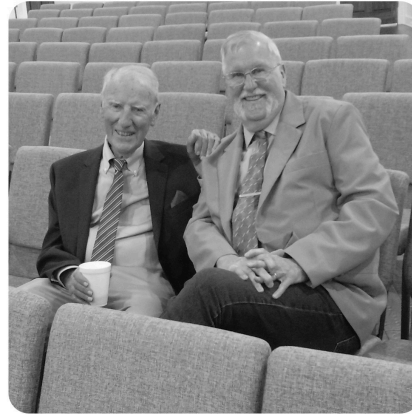
“Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus, and will present us with you...Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer person is decaying, yet our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4: 14-18)

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.’”(John 11:25-26)

And so with Carol's memorial service finished, we stayed a couple of days to help comfort Quint and get him established in his new apartment. ([You can read details of that whole trip on Vital Signs Blog.](#))



But then it was time to head back to Omaha where plenty of things are awaiting our attention. Among them is Claire's hosting of a grand "girls' tea" at the lovely Prairie Creek B&B just east of Lincoln for about 13 members of her family, some coming from as far away as Colorado.



But that's just the beginning. There's the Book Brunch on April 23 that we're hosting to discuss Joni Eareckson Tada's *Heaven: Your Real Home*; making several additions and revisions to the Vital Signs Ministries website; preparing for and hosting Vital Signs' quarterly Board meeting; preaching at a Good Friday service at Herman Community Church; hosting 3 tables at the fund-raising banquet for Assure Women's Services featuring Franklin Graham on April 21; organizing that Carol Coppi memorial for her friends in Omaha that I mentioned earlier; and the resumption of all the regular VSM activities like our "When Swing Was King" shows, the prayers outside the abortion business, and the Sunday afternoon church services at Aksarben Village Senior Living.

All of these things are important responsibilities and we are honored and blessed to serve the Lord in these ways. But, as I write this letter on the airplane taking us home, I will confess that our days in Florida were laced with sadness. Our hearts are still broken over Carol's passing **and also** over leaving our dear brother and colleague behind. So Father, pour out Your comfort, strength, wisdom, and hope to us and to all those reading this who have had to say similar goodbyes due to the passing of loved ones. Remind us all of that brilliant day in our future when "death will be swallowed up in victory" through the power of Jesus Christ **and** of that reunion celebration to come where we will forevermore enjoy the fellowship of the Triune God, the hosts of angels, and all those throughout history who have trusted Christ as Savior. Lord, please hasten that day!

Denny & Claire