

Can Florence Come Out and Play?

It had been a week since my dear mother passed away at the age of 89. As a minister and follower of Jesus Christ, I knew Mother had gone home to be with the Lord. God's Word had promised heaven for all believers in Jesus (see Rom. 10:9,13). Hours before her death, I had even witnessed the miracle of my blind mother waking up from her coma, to see again—and to see a glimpse of heaven.

However, a week later, as I walked through the rooms of her house, I was sorrowful.

Would this sadness ever lift? As Mother's unofficial caregivers, my husband, Terry, and I, had come to stay with her—personally and painfully witnessing Mother, the picture of “spit and spunk”—her term for “full of life”—decline to the picture of a jaundiced corpse. Whenever I thought of Mother, it was this picture of death that would come to mind. It was so sad a picture, so unlike Mother, that it overpowered me, making me sorrowful.

On this day of visiting Mother's house, I finally cried out to the Lord: “Lord, give me a new picture of Mother I can live with—one that assures me You have restored her to joy again!”

My brief prayer request was cut short by the ringing of the front doorbell. It was Pat, a neighbor who had known Mother for years.

Pat offered her condolences about Mother's illness and death. Then, without skipping a beat, she looked me squarely in the eye and announced: “I must tell you something about your mom—or Florence, as all the kids on the block called her. Did

you know that the young kids, my son included, liked to knock on her door and say, 'We're here by special invitation—can Florence come out and play?' And she always did!"

A new picture was forming in my mind—Florence, just one of the kids, full of life stepping out to play. By special invitation, mind you!

Then a curious thing happened. My jaw suddenly began to drop and quiver, not from fighting off any more tears of mourning—but from fighting a good belly laugh that was greater than the tears. I could just see it now! "Can Florence come out and play?"

Like a dam bursting, I gushed out a laugh that took me to the ground. I grabbed Pat's shoulders for support, but ended up taking her with me. Picture two mature ladies in white polyester leisure pants rolling around in raucous holy laughter on the wet green grass—in broad daylight. I'm sure this wasn't a pretty sight. But something beautiful was happening. The Lord was showing a daughter in mourning a new picture. Her mother, Florence, stepping joyously into eternity—by special invitation.

God understands our sorrow, and He can give us joy in the midst of it. He also wants to lift the burden of sadness. When we simply ask, He will turn our mourning into joy—and sometimes even laughter in a white leisure suit.