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[我快要受不了了,我不知道該怎樣下走去……小李,我可不可以馬上過來一下?] 電話掛斷之後,妳還弄不清楚怎麼回事,耳中還響著小張那痛苦與無奈的語氣…..就準備小張的來到. 還好今晚沒有聚會,妳可以不必如此匆忙.

小張是妳在University of Chicago Law School認識 的同學. 妳出生於雲南,自高中一年級就隨父母遷來美國. 大學一年級信主,畢業後就直接唸法學院. 妳與小張四年法學院畢業之後,妳考完BAR Exam之後,先在Boston任執業律師三年,而小張畢業之後就與她在Westminster Seminary畢業的未婚夫Rodney結婚.婚後就搬到Syracuse NY近郊一間傳統美國教會擔任助理牧師.這樣就服事了七年,他們生下三個孩子,兩女一男. 妳則在執業律師三年之後與妳作傳道人的先生結婚,也搬到在Syracuse近郊的華人教會牧會. 這樣,妳與小張都身為師母,雖然在不同教會服事,但卻成為更無話不談的屬靈朋友. 妳們兩家相離不遠,開車只要五分鐘的路程.所以,妳與小張多半有空就會聚聚聊聊.

小張的美籍先生Rodney生長於南方的基督徒家庭,他的父親原來也是一鄉村教會的牧師.他們父母教養兒女凡事都要尊主為大,並且服事第一. Rodney畢業後即與小張結婚就搬到這教會開始他們第一個服事的教會. 可能也是個性與受教的關係,Rodney有一個十分親切,又善解人意的個性與脾氣.所以在這教會裡幾乎是男女老幼的最愛. Rodney 是關懷,探訪與家庭小組的牧師.他的天性與恩賜讓他十分稱職,大家都喜歡找Rodney聊天談心.還有的是,教會有很多人喜歡沒事就往他家走,沒有事先通知或約好就直接按鈴敲門. 有時候Rodney不在家,他們也會寧可在牧師家等,或是找師母聊聊.

原本Rodney還可以每週一休息,現在連這唯一的一天自己的時間也都淪陷了.有的人還明知道這是他們休息的日子,特別選這天來訪或是來他家裡坐坐. 小張自己也不介意她的Rodney是一個如此人見人愛的牧者.她自己本人也還好,是來自於一個台灣鄉下的基督徒家庭.從小就算很安靜地成長,家中雖不常高朋滿座,但因為也在教會中長大,她的人際人緣都算還不錯的.幾年當律師所見過的場面還是有的.然而自從與Rodney來此牧會後,家中的訪客如流水,有時正在吃飯,正在洗澡或是正想休息一下,就不時有人出現.不但個人的時間沒有了,就是連生氣與疲倦的時間都找不到.經常累得說不出話來,也得等送孩子們上床才可以自己享受疲乏的感覺. 更絕的是,有時候已經都快半夜了,還有人打電話來說,他們家有急事需要找牧師談談. 如果這是一家人或夫妻的事來的,那也還好.遇到的是經常有姊妹單獨來家裡.小張就覺得有責任陪在Rodney身邊,能給他一點Support與保護.

不到十分鐘小張抓著她的三個孩子就在門口出現了.她的三個孩子都還很貼心,聽話,也能夠自己玩.倒是小張滿臉淚痕,眼神疲憊與困惑. 妳給小張泡好一壺她最喜歡的龍井,看著她雙手緊抱著熱茶杯還微微地顫抖,身為同樣師母的妳,看得妳十分心疼. 沒急著問啥事,讓她先坐穩,只見她喝的茶好像都變成兩排淚水,讓妳的視線也不由地模糊起來一面聽小張細述…

[小李,對不起我又來打攪妳了,我實在是快走不下去了. 我們家Rodney實在太忙了. 教會中需要探訪的家庭永遠作不完,我又不能每一次都陪著他,因為三個孩子還小,家裡的客人也沒斷,Rodney還要準備教主日學,寫輔導報告.他自己的靈修及進修的.前幾年他都還可以有一天休息,陪陪孩子們與我.這兩年,我們都忙翻了,到我們可以講講話時,與其說我們是睏倒了,還不如說我們都昏倒了…]

[昨天晚上他拖著疲憊的身子回家時,我們家三歲半的老二Judy一聽到是她爸爸回來就跑去為他開門,抱住她Daddy要告訴他她一天所發生的事.其實三個孩子就算她每一天都一定會要這樣做. Judy很興奮又開心地向她爸爸細述她想說的,Rodney也放下他手上的東西專心要聽Judy所要說的時,Rodney的手機響起來.可能又是那一個家庭出了甚麼事,需要Rodney馬上處理,但是他拿起電話,遲疑了一下,還是沒有接那電話.因為Judy在他耳邊輕輕地說了一句話: “You used to look at me when I talked with you, and you would say to me that I am so pretty….But you don’t do that anymore….”]

[然後,我們家六歲的大女兒Jessica就來把Judy帶開,還不悅地對她說: “Don’t you know that daddy is already too tired?”留下她爸爸那張呆滯無神的臉坐在地板上,一個人在那裡流淚.這一切看在我的眼裡更是難受. 其實Rodney知道他對家庭很虧欠,他也知道照顧這三個孩子及我們家這樣沒停止的客人對我來說是太辛苦了. 我們夫妻的生活已經蕩然無存,好像能把一天度過就算一天,雖然睡同一張床,住同一間屋,但我們沒有時間與體力有任何溝通了.]

[Rodney也為無力照顧到自己的婚姻與家庭感到十分歉疚,但是同時又對於不能及時幫助教會有需要的家庭而有無比的自責. 每一次我向他提起應該要有休假或度假,可以一家人在一起…他總是說他也很想要這樣作,但是身為一個牧者,他相信上帝應該是他生命中的首位與優先,並且我們今生的服事將要大大影響許多人的生命與這個世代.將來有一天等我們有時間時可以安排休息與度假.]

[我們的生活越來越忙,家裡也一直有人來訪.我們一家已經越來越少在一起了. Rodney的壓力越來越大,他已經開始考慮離開這裡的服事,而我只想要離開他…]

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那一天晚上,小張繼續跟妳講到一些有關於Rodney家的一些事,也是從Rodney聽來的.你們一起禱告後小張就帶著孩子們回家了.

大約一個月之後,有一天妳與你先生在街上無意中遇見Rodney,才知道小張已經在兩週前帶著最小的孩子回娘家了.從Rodney的口氣聽來,好像他也不確定小張有沒有要回來的意思. 因為是在街上,也不便深談.當天回家之後,妳與妳先生一起為小張禱告的時候,妳們都意識到情況很嚴重.並且應該主動去關心Rodney及兩個在他身邊的孩子.

說時急,那時快,隔一天一早Rodney就打電話來說: “I really didn’t mean to trouble you for this, but I have to make a quick visit to one of church families who is in such crisis and they need me so badly. I wonder if I could ask you to babysit my two kids for this afternoon. I knew Chang has been fairly close to you since in law school and ever since you have moved to Webster NY, I could sense you have been such supportive to both Chang and our family. In that nature, I really could not see finding someone else where my kids would feel more comfortable staying with. It’s so ironic that I want to help people in crisis when I myself am in such huge trouble… ”

經過妳生生的理解,妳推遲了下午原來與幾位姊妹的約會,留在家裡照顧他兩個孩子. 到了約晚上七點半,Rodney 才拖著疲憊的臉來到家裡接孩子,妳知道他還沒有吃晚飯,就簡單地為他預備一點. Rodney很感激你們的幫助.他一面吃一面說道:

“I am leaving CMAS(Rodney’s church)!” “I have resigned from my ministry here in this church and I will need sometimes to rebuild my own home before I ever enter pastorate again. But I never thought this doing would bring such deep hurt to many church families whom I have loved so dearly. When I announced my resignation a week ago, many families thought I did not like them and I just want to give up on them. Some people even came to my home crying and were angry at me and many of them claimed if I take off from this ministry, they will never come to church again. I have been hurt by their response to my resignation….”

我的先生因為也同樣是牧者,更能體會他的心境,就問Rodney說: “Did you talked with your senior pastor about this at all before you made this announcement?”

“We both first felt the coming crisis of our home about seven months ago, when Chang insisted that we should discuss this concern with our senior pastor, Rodney said. But that conversation with our senior pastor turned Chang into deeper despair because Pastor Longernecker thought that was an overstatement she made. And to say that my wife had been too sensitive and private in personality, she needs to realize that in order to support the ministry; she needs to be ready to give up everything even personal comfort and family.”

“I did discuss my resignation with pastor Longernecker before I made that announcement. But he said that he was so disappointed with me about that decision. His concern was that I never had my first love for God and suggested that I should make a public confession. I was so discouraged after that.” “I have also heard many speculations about me being so selfish and not care for their need first….and pastor Longernecker said that I would be making a huge mistake to leave that ministry and will be guilty of making many people leave the church…”

Rodney 面色沉重,錯亂與灰心.看在你們的眼中十分心痛. 妳示意要妳先生為Rodney 禱告. 妳想你生生Pastor X應該怎樣禱告呢? (Please use the space below to sketch a prayer outline. Make it simple討論並做出一個簡明的禱告大綱)

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