



Lent Week Three

Barry Steiner Ball interviews Rev. Melissa White

This week's What If? interview is with Rev. Melissa White. Melissa is a West Virginia conference pastor whose daughter is 15 months into a 10-year prison term. Melissa and her husband adopted their 6-year-old granddaughter when she was about two because of their daughter's struggles with substance use disorder. Melissa shares her experiences as a parent, a pastor and now an adoptive parent.

1. Some people claim (usually in court) that substance abuse is a "victimless crime." After listening to Melissa's story, how wide spread is the pain and brokenness felt when a family member suffers from substance abuse disorder?
2. Last week we heard Ann Hammond speak of the person God had created her to be being lost during her battle with addiction. This week we hear Melissa speak of her child whom she nurtured and raised being, "so far removed" that "only the shell was left." It is easy to judge the stranger but try to imagine your own child in this situation. How does a parent survive that hurt? Who else would understand that hurt? How can the church help a parent survive this?
3. What are some of the struggles that grandparents who unexpectedly become parents again face?
4. Melissa's daughter is getting out of prison in ten months. What types of stress does this put on a family? What joys might Melissa and her extended family feel? What fears might they feel? If you were in Melissa's church family how would you offer your support? How can you support families in your local community who are going through the same situation?
5. If an unknown person came into your worship service and during joys and concerns told a story like Melissa's, how would you respond? How would your congregation respond?
6. Melissa speaks of the stigma attached to substance abuse disorder (some still believe it is a moral choice and not a disease). What has your congregation done to help get rid of the stigma?