

“...even in his death, Ben is going to have a very good effect on the Family. I think it's going to have wonderful repercussions with our Teens being very greatly strengthened by this.”

--Karen Zerby (Maria), commenting on the suicide of teen former Family member Ben Farnsworth

Introduction

In 1992, Ben Farnsworth, a teen boy raised in the Family, jumped from a building to his death in Hong Kong. Ben's mother was not in the Family, and his father, Tom Farnsworth (aka Enoch Cameron, Blake, Timmy), was a long time World Services staff member, working closely with Berg and Zerby. In order to devote himself to his work, Farnsworth gave permission for another Family couple to become foster parents of Ben. This couple eventually separated, and Ben ended up in a Family retraining center in Macau for kids who would not fit into the Family mold. He finally left the center and The Family and went to Hong Kong, where he allegedly got involved in some criminal activity. A few months later, he committed suicide.

Shortly after hearing of Ben's death, Zerby sent the following message to Tom Farnsworth, who lived a few miles from her.

TIMMY, REGARDING BEN 5/2/92

We were saddened to hear about Ben, especially for the effect that it will probably have on you. But I'd like to admonish you not to be condemned about this or feel that you've failed or that you didn't do enough. You have done everything you possibly could do! You've given your life to the Lord & His Service. And you have had many more spiritual children than could have ever ever been possible if you'd stayed & taken care of that one child. Besides, he probably had a lot of other adults taking care of him much better than you could have. The Lord had a certain ministry for you that He knew you were an expert at. And so He gave Ben good teachers & good substitute parents. Ben had a lot of the very best of everything as far as we're concerned.

But even in his death, Ben is going to have a very good effect on the Family. I think it's going to have wonderful repercussions with our Teens being very greatly strengthened by this.

I'm sorry Ben had to be a dandy bad example, but the Lord allowed it. And maybe one had to be lost that many others could be saved. And of course we don't mean "lost" in the sense of going to Hell. I think we should feel very happy for Ben that he is now where the Lord can directly control him, & he'll have to do what he is supposed to do now. And he can get the training that he refused to get here.

I think it was really the Lord's mercy that He allowed him to do what he did because he was so immersed in that problem & so caught in the trap of those criminals, that they probably wouldn't have let him get away with joining the Family again. And even if he had, I don't know if he could have made it. So the Lord knowing he was weak, had mercy on him & let him go

Home to be with Him.--Just as He has done with several of our TRF Supporters [associate Family Members] now, almost five I think we've heard about, & we don't know how many we haven't heard about. They were just a little too weak & the Lord allowed them to take their own lives in order that He could then start working on them over There.

But we think this is going to have a tremendous powerful effect on our Teens worldwide. So even if Ben's life wasn't a very good example, maybe even his death wasn't either, the result of that is going to be tremendous. I'm sure that's probably one of the big reasons why the Lord allowed it--to help all of our other Teens worldwide be warned & be shaken & be in fear of ever going to the System & getting involved with its evil. I think you can really be relieved that now the Lord is really able to control him, & that he is in very good hands & well taken care of & you don't have to worry about him anymore.

Personally, in some ways, about the suicide question, well, I think maybe from Ben's point of view, if I might to presume to think the way he was thinking, that he probably felt that he wasn't strong enough to make it in the Family. He was too scared to stay in the System & he didn't want to anyway. He knew he had found that that wasn't where it was at. So his escape was to go to be with the Lord, even though he knew that he might show up there pretty ashamed; still, that was the only way he could see as a way out of his entire situation.

So in some ways it shows a real trust in the mercy & love of the Lord, I would say. That in spite of the fact that he knew he was probably going to get spanked for doing it, still, he knew that the Lord wouldn't forsake him & that the Lord still loved him in spite of everything. And he wanted to go where he thought, he probably thought the same thing & thought where they could control him, & where they could get him straightened out.

What would you think if you had tried for years in the Family & you figure you'd muffed it so many times, been given so many chances, that to come back again & blow it again, that would just be almost too much to take. And then you knew you couldn't take it in the System anymore, & you'd found how absolutely intolerable & wicked & evil & impossible it was, so you knew you couldn't stay there. So what he did was in a way was to throw himself on the mercy of the Lord & just figure, well, the only way out was Up. And that with all we know of the Heavenly World & the Love & the mercy of the Lord, then there was going to be some hope for him. And he was going to be forgiven & have some way of repenting & still doing something for the Lord, maybe after he had learned his lessons, helping others that needed help in the same way.

Well, it doesn't excuse him, of course, but that's not the worst thing in the world. And especially if you're a Christian & love Jesus, I suppose you could conclude that it would be better to sin by taking your life & going to be with the Lord than sin by working against the Lord & in such a horrible hellhole of the System. And as far as going back to the Family, I think he probably just figured he couldn't do it & he couldn't take it, & he already had failed so often.

The question came up the other day, Tessy [*aka* Tech, Zerby's young daughter] said in effect, "Do you think suicide is really any worse than throwing your life away with drugs? Or throwing your life away in some other way?" Well, I don't have the answer to that yet. I don't know, of course it is taking your life in your own hands, not letting the Lord decide your destiny ... but I mean in sinning in all the other ways that you can sin, you're doing the same thing. Taking your life in your hands & not letting the Lord control it. So really it doesn't seem like it's that much worse than some other things.

And anyway, personally I even feel that in some ways he'll be better off & the Lord can take care of him now. We tried, the Family tried & you tried & it just didn't work very well.

And the Lord tried to show him by allowing him to see what the System was like. I guess Ben certainly learned some lessons from that. But I'm pretty happy & relieved in a way that that is what happened because now we know that he is in good hands, & he'll be learning his lessons & not getting more & more involved in the terrible horrible sin & evil that the poor boy had never seen or experienced before. It must have been quite a shock for him.

It's probably what happened with D_____ [another teen boy who left The Family]. And I must say, I think I almost would have rather seen D_____ do the same thing than all the years he's wasted just in riotous living. At least if he had gone Home to be with the Lord at least he would have started getting some retraining.