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## CASUAL CRUELTY

It was someone's idea of a joke.

Beau Duran, a disc jockey for Phoenix radio station KUPD, telephoned a woman named Flynn Kile during his show. As his radio audience listened, Duran asked Ms. Kile whether she had a date to that night's baseball playoff game between the St. Louis Cardinals and the Arizona Diamondbacks. She hung up on him.

*So what?* you ask. *Here's what:* Flynn Kile's husband Darryl died unexpectedly on June 22 — just three and one-half months ago — from a heart attack brought on by a blocked coronary artery.

He was a pitcher for the Cardinals.

KUPD's public statement said Duran's phone prank "was not intended to be hurtful or malicious in any way." Good to know. One wonders what the disc jockey would have needed to do for his employers to consider it "hurtful" or "malicious." Spit in the young widow's face? Spray-paint graffiti on her car?

The public, on-air humiliation of Flynn Kile serves as merely another example of the cruel streak that runs through modern society. We see it on the freeways, on the playgrounds, in homes and

workplaces, in incidents that populate the evening news. "Man's inhumanity to man" is an old phrase, but such humanity is so thoroughly ingrained in our culture that we almost don't notice it anymore.

*"Deliver me, O my God,"* wrote the Psalmist, *"out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man"* (Psalm 71:4). Cruelty is wicked. It is ungodly. It is contrary to righteousness and the spirit of Christ. It is also easy. It takes no effort at all to do or say something that is heartless and insensitive. And, sad as it is to admit it, we're all guilty.

In another passage, Asaph observes that *"the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty"* (Psalm 74:20). Cruelty represents the darkness within each of us; that part of ourselves that we have turned away from the light of God. The more we turn toward darkness, the more

cruelty we are capable of.

Think of an extreme example: Judas the turncoat apostle. We wonder how Judas could casually betray Jesus to His enemies, knowing that they would brutally torture Christ and execute Him. Luke offers this solution: *"Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot"* (Luke 22:3). When Judas opened the door of his heart to the lord of darkness, there was no longer anything he was incapable of doing, no matter how ruthless. The same can happen to any one of us.

*"The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel,"* writes Solomon (Proverbs 12:10). The cruel person can find a way to do harm even while appearing to do good. Perhaps Beau Duran justified his action with the thought, "I'm just entertaining people. I'm only trying to bring a little fun and laughter into the lives of my listeners." The Scriptures, however, tell us that "foolish talking" and "coarse jesting" are "not

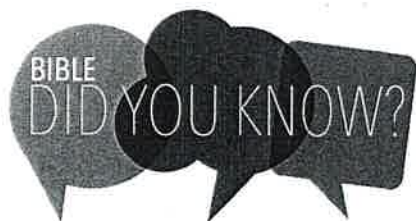
fitting” (Ephesians 5:4). Humor that comes at the expense of another is not really humorous at all.

If we think about it as we ought, it shouldn’t surprise us that God’s word says, *“The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh”* (Proverbs 11:17). One of the Hebrew Old Testament words translated “cruel” literally means “leavened with sourness.” The person who is bitter within lashes out with hateful words and cruel acts, in a desperate effort to assuage his own pain by causing pain to others. This “root of bitterness” can, if allowed to fester, separate us completely from God (Hebrews 12:15; Acts 8:23).

Let’s not be casual about cruelty. Instead, let’s see it for what it is, and resist the impulse to engage in it — even when cruel deeds or words are first directed at us. Remember the example of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-23), and consider

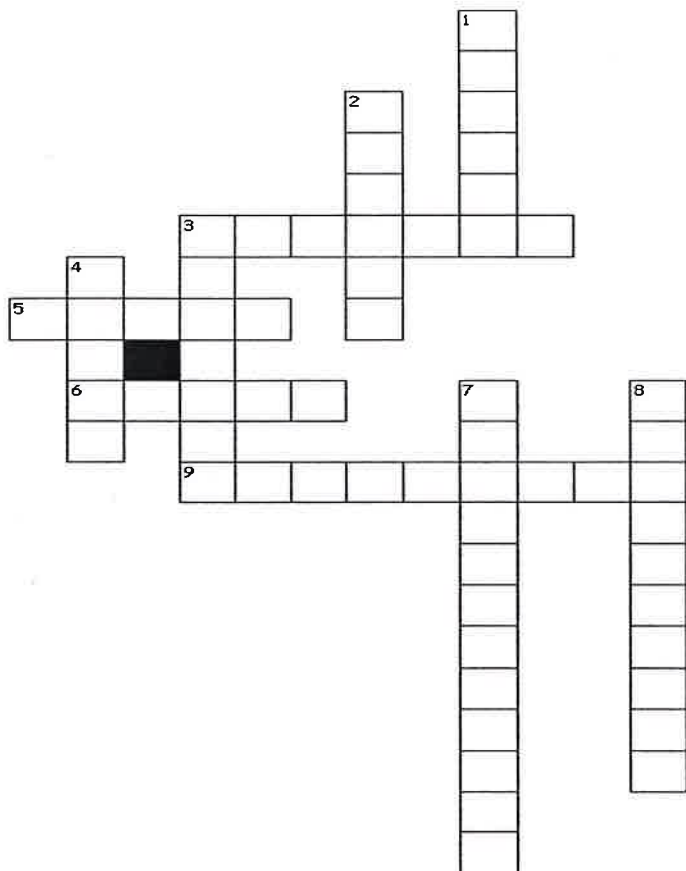
these lines from poet Carol Lynn Pearson:

*“Curse or cry or call it unfair,  
But be thankful to the grave  
That you were the one  
who received the hurt,  
And not the one who  
gave.”* – Michael Rankins



***When Jesus sent out  
the 70 to preach,  
Jesus witnessed  
Satan’s power being  
destroyed!  
“The seventy returned  
with joy, saying,  
‘Lord, even the  
demons are subject to  
us in Your name.’  
And He said to them,  
‘I was watching Satan  
fall from heaven like  
lightning.’”  
Luke 10:17-18***

# The ULTIMATE CROSSWORD



## ACROSS

3. The disciples needed prayer and \_\_\_\_ to cast out a demon (Mt. 17:21)
5. Food can't defile us because it doesn't go into this (Mk. 7:18-19)
6. Jesus set this in front of His disciples to illustrate humility (Mt. 18:2-4)
9. Jesus spoke this Aramaic word to a deaf man to open his ears (Mk. 7:34-35)

## DOWN

1. This tradition was a way to avoid helping parents financially (Mk. 7:11-12)
2. Instead of speaking, God told Peter to do this to His beloved Son (Mt. 17:5)
3. Peter thought he should only do this 7 times to his brother (Mt. 18:21)
4. The one forgiven 10,000 talents had none of this for another (Mt. 18:33)
7. This happened to Jesus on a mountain with 3 disciples (Mt. 17:2)
8. These, handed down by the elders, were observed carefully (Mk. 7:3-5)