

“HOW CAN I LIVE WITH MY LOSS?”

HEB. 13:5b-8; 15-16; 20-21 - THE WORDS OF GOD ARE MOST COMFORTING AND MOST ASSURING. THE LORD SAYS, “I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU! I WILL NEVER FORSAKE YOU! THE LORD IS MY HELPER! I WILL NOT FEAR! WHAT CAN MAN DO TO ME?”

HOW CAN I LIVE WITH MY LOSS? IT IS THE HARDEST THING YOU WILL EVER TRY TO DO! BUT JUST KNOW THIS... THE GOOD LORD WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS! HE WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU! HE WILL NEVER FORSAKE YOU! HE IS YOUR HELPER! THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD...I SHALL NOT WANT! JUST WHAT CAN MAN DO TO YOU...IF GOD IS WITH YOU?

I. WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF MY LOSS?

1. SOME OF US ARE GRIEVING OVER LOSS OF OUR LOVED ONE. SOMEONE VERY DEAR AND CLOSE TO US HAS PASSED AWAY. SOME OF US HAVE HAD LESSER LOSSES. LEARNING TO DEAL WITH OUR LESSER LOSSES WILL HELP US DEAL AND COPE WITH OUR GREATER LOSSES.

2. WE CAN BUILD UP INNER STRENGTH THAT WILL ENABLE US TO WEATHER THE STORMS OF LIFE!

3. YOU MAY BE STRUGGLING WITH THE LOSS OF:

YOUR MOM OR DAD; YOUR HUSBAND OR WIFE; YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER; YOUR MARRIAGE; YOUR JOB; YOUR FINANCIAL SECURITY; YOUR REPUTATION; YOUR YOUTHFUL VIGOR; AND YOUR USEFULNESS SINCE RETIREMENT.

4. AS WE MOVE THROUGH THE SEA OF LIFE, WE LEAVE BEHIND FAMILIAR WATERS THAT WE'LL NEVER SAIL AGAIN. WE LEAVE BEHIND...OUR CAREFREE DAYS OF CHILDHOOD! THE FEEL OF YOUR FAVORITE DOLL! THE THRILL OF HITTING YOUR FIRST HOME RUN! THE EXCITEMENT OF A FIRST KISS! THE SOUND OF OUR FIRST CAR! OUR PET WE GREW UP WITH! THE JOY OF BRINGING CHILDREN INTO THE WORLD! AND MUCH MORE!

5. AS WE LEAVE THESE THINGS BEHIND...WE GRIEVE OVER THEIR LOSS. IT HURTS TO SAY 'GOODBYE'!

6. WE'RE ALL DEALING WITH LOSS. THE THINGS WE HOLD DEAR ARE TAKEN OUT OF OUR HANDS. SOMETIMES GENTLY ...SOMETIMES HARSHLY! BUT ALWAYS PAINFULLY! I'M PRAYING THAT THE LORD'S MESSAGE TODAY...WILL HELP MAKE YOUR JOURNEY MORE UNDERSTANDABLE...MORE BEARABLE AND MORE HOPEFUL FOR YOU.

II. HOW DOES LOSS AFFECT US?

1. WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR LOSS...IT BRINGS PAIN THAT CAN'T BE IGNORED! IT BRINGS US FACE TO FACE WITH OURSELVES! WITH OUR ENEMY! AND WITH OUR LORD!!!

2. LOSS EXPOSES OUR VULNERABILITY! DEATH OR ANY LOSS ... SHATTERS OUR ILLUSION THAT WE'RE IN FULL CONTROL!!!

3. OUR ILLUSION IS SHATTERED AS VIOLENTLY AS A BULLET SHATTERS A BOTTLE! IT FORCES US TO FACE THE MORTALITY AND VULNERABILITY THAT WE DESPISE!!!

4. YOU MAY BE ABLE TO DENY THE IMPACT OF LESSER LOSSES IN LIFE...BUT THEN COMES DEATH...IT'S THE FINAL ENEMY!!! DEATH WILL NOT BE DENIED!!!

5. DEATH IS THE “FATHER OF ALL LOSSES”! IT WILL NOT BE HUSHED! IT DEMANDS TO BE RECKONED WITH!!!

6. PERSONAL, PAINFUL LOSS FORCES A DOOR OPEN INTO THE DEEP PARTS OF OUR SOUL!
WE DON'T WANT TO ADMIT THAT IT EXISTS!

7. NO ONE WANTS TO DEAL WITH LONELINESS, VULNERABILITY, INSECURITY, AND UNMET
LONGINGS THAT LOSS CAUSES US TO FACE!!!

LISTEN TO THE PROVERBS WRITER, "THERE IS A WAY THAT SEEMS RIGHT TO A MAN, BUT ITS
END IS THE WAY OF DEATH." IT SEEMS RIGHT TO AVOID PAIN IN OUR LIVES, BUT BY FAILING
TO FACE THE PAIN WE LOSE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE THE JOY THAT CAN BE
OURS!

8. LOSS WILL EVENTUALLY MAKE YOU BETTER...OR BITTER!!!

9. LOSING YOUR LOVED ONE...CAN MAKE YOU ANGRY! AT GOD! AT SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY!
CAN MAKE YOU FEEL ABANDONED! IT CAN LEAVE YOU FEELING LOW FROM FINANCIAL LOSS!

10. WE NEED TO LEARN TO PUT OUR PAIN TO WORK FOR US. WE SHOULD USE OUR LOSS TO
GENERATE A FORCE AND MOMENTUM TO DRIVE US TO GOD ... GOD WILL BE WITH US IN OUR
MOST LONELY MOMENTS! WE'LL DISCOVER THAT THERE IS A SAFE HAVEN OF REST IN A
PAINFUL WORLD!

11. LEARNING TO HAVE FAITH IN GOD...WILL NOT EXEMPT US FROM THE STING OF OUR LOSS!
BUT IT WILL PROVIDE US WITH THE RESOURCES WE NEED TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH
GRIEF! IT WILL FREE US TO LOVE AGAIN! YES WE KNOW THE MEANING OF SADNESS AND
DISAPPOINTMENT...BUT IT WILL FREE US TO BE ABLE REMAIN JOYFULLY ALIVE!!!

III. WHAT IS GRIEF?

1. GRIEF IS A UNIVERSAL, COMPLEX AND PAINFUL PROCESS OF DEALING WITH AND
ADJUSTING TO LOSS!

2. EVEN ANIMALS WILL GRIEVE THE LOSS OF A MATE OR MASTER!

3. GRIEF IS NORMAL! IT IS UNAVOIDABLE!

4. WE NOT ONLY GRIEVE THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE IN DEATH...WE ALSO GRIEVE THE LOSS
OF SUCH TROUBLING THING AS A DIVORCE! WE GRIEVE THE FAILURE TO GET A DESIRED
JOB...A DESIRED PROMOTION...TURNING 30 OR 40! WE GRIEVE LEAVING HOME...THE EMPTY
NEST...OR WHEN WE GET WINED CLIMBING THE STAIRS AND REALIZING WE'RE NOT AS
YOUNG AS WE USED TO BE!!!

5. WE GRIEVE THE LOSS OF CHERISHED RELATIONSHIPS! THE MORE YOU HAVE INVESTED IN
YOUR RELATIONSHIP...THE MORE YOU WILL GRIEVE YOUR LOSS!

IV. WHY DO WE GRIEVE?

1. WE GRIEVE BECAUSE WE LIVE IN A WORLD PLAGUED BY SIN AND DEATH!

2. WE GRIEVE BECAUSE WE WERE NOT CREATED TO HANDLE LOSS!

3. GOD CREATED ADAM AND EVE...HE MADE THEM IN HIS OWN IMAGE...TO FINITELY MIRROR
HIS INFINITE CAPACITIES OF PERSONHOOD! (GEN. 1:26-27)

4. ONE OF THOSE DIVINE REFLECTIONS IS...MAN'S INNATE CAPACITY FOR ENJOYING A
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND OTHER HUMAN BEINGS!

5. GOD SAW ... IT WAS NOT GOOD FOR ADAM TO LIVE ALONE! HE THEN CREATED EVE...SO THAT THE TWO COULD ENJOY A RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH OTHER.

6. IN THAT PERFECT GARDEN ENVIRONMENT ... THERE WAS NO GRIEF...BECAUSE DEATH AND LOSS WERE NON-EXISTENT! SIN HAD NOT YET POLLUTED THE WORLD!!!

7. BUT ADAM AND EVE HAD CHOICE...THEY MISUSED THEIR CHOICE...HE CHOSE TO SIN AND DISOBEY GOD!!! THE BITTER CONSEQUENCE...WAS DEATH! SEPARATION AND LOSS OF THEIR CHERISHED RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CREATOR!!!

8. GOD WAS THEIR ONLY SECURITY! WHEN THEY CHOSE SIN...THEY LOST THEIR ONLY SECURITY...BIG TIME!!! YOU KNOW WHAT? WE DO TOO...WHEN WE CHOSE SIN INSTEAD OF GOD!!!

LISTEN TO THE GREAT APOSTLE PAUL..."THEREFORE, JUST AS THROUGH ONE MAN SIN ENTERED THE WORLD, AND DEATH THROUGH SIN, AND THUS DEATH SPREAD TO ALL MEN, BECAUSE ALL SINNED!" (Rom. 5:12)

9. THE ENTRANCE OF SIN INTO THE WORLD...PRODUCED A GROANING IN GRIEF! NOW ALL CREATION GROANS!!!

10. YOU KNOW WHY WE GRIEVE? WE HAVE AN INNATE LONGING TO RESTORE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, OUR CREATOR! WE HAVE AN AWARENESS THAT HAS NOT BEEN FULFILLED YET!!! THIS IS AT THE HEART OF OUR GRIEF!!!

11. THIS RAW NERVE IS TOUCHED EVERY TIME WE SUFFER A LOSS!!! EVERY TIME WE SUFFER DEATH!!!

12. CHRISTIANS AREN'T EXEMPT FROM THIS GRIEF! WE HAVE THE H.S. RESIDING W/IN US WHO GROANS INTERNALLY (ROM. 8:23).

13. THIS GROANING IS A DEEP ANGUISH & MOURNING. IT'S A CONSCIOUS INTERNAL KNOWLEDGE THAT SALVATION DOESN'T ALLEVIATE NOR DIMINISH THE AWFUL AFFECTS OF SIN IN OUR LIFE!

14. IT'S A GROANING THAT PUSHES US TO ANTICIPATE & LONG FOR THE DAY WHEN SIN WILL BE ABOLISHED PERMANENTLY IN HEAVEN! MEANWHILE, ON EARTH, WE'LL STRUGGLE!

V. CAN ANYTHING GOOD COME FROM OUR LOSS?

JESUS ASSURES US, "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED". (MT. 5:4) JESUS WAS TALKING ABOUT A GRIEF THAT IS IN RESPONSE TO EXPOSURE TO ONE'S SINFULNESS!

THE GREAT APOSTLE PAUL ASSURES US, "GODLY SORROW PRODUCES REPENTANCE LEADING TO SALIVATION, NOT TO BE REGRETTED." (2 COR. 7:10)

1. NOW HEAR THIS...THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT....GRIEF OVER ANY LOSS CAN HAVE A HEALTHY EFFECT IF IT BRINGS US TO THE FEET OF THE SAVIOR!!!

2. OUR LOSS CAN BE GOOD FOR US IF...IT PUTS US AMONG THE MANY POOR PEOPLE WHO CAME TO JESUS OUT OF A NEED FOR COMFORT, RESCUE AND BLESSING!!! (MT. 4:23; 5:1) LET'S HEAR THE GREAT APOSTLE PAUL AGAIN, "WE REJOICE IN THE HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD! NOT ONLY SO, BUT WE ALSO REJOICE IN OUR SUFFERINGS, BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT SUFFERING PRODUCES PERSEVERANCE! PERSEVERANCE, CHARACTER! AND CHARACTER,

HOPE!!! AND HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT US, BECAUSE GOD HAS Poured OUT HIS LOVE INTO OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHOM HE HAS GIVEN US." (ROM. 5:2-5)

3. WE'RE TO REJOICE IN SUFFERING, NOT BECAUSE WE'RE GLUTTONS FOR PUNISHMENT...BUT BECAUSE IT'S IN OUR STRUGGLES & PAIN THAT CHARACTER IS INVITED TO MATURE!

4. GRIEF OVER A LOSS IS PROFOUNDLY COMPLICATED!!! THIS CAUSES US TO MAKE HUGE CHANGES IN OUR LIVES!!! THESE CHANGES WILL EITHER ENRICH OR IMPOVERISH US!!!

5. LOSS WILL CAUSE YOU TO FEEL UNNERVED! PARALYZED BY YOUR PAIN!!!

5. BUT YOUR LOSS...IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A POSITIVE CHANGE! IT'S TRUE...CHANGE AND LOSS ARE LINKED TOGETHER...AND THEY ARE UNAVOIDABLE!!!

7. YES, LOSS & PAIN...WILL MAKE YOU EITHER BITTER OR BETTER!!! 7. CHARACTER IS FORGED IN THE CRUCIBLE OF GRIEF& LOSS!

8. GOD CALLS US TO USE OUR PAINFUL CIRCUMSTANCES TO DEEPEN OUR RELIANCE ON HIM!!!

9. IT'S DURING OUR DARKEST TIMES...AND OUR MOST PAINFUL LOSSES...THAT THE GOODNESS OF OUR GREAT GOD IS REVEALED! GOD COMES THROUGH FOR US...IN HIS GREAT TIMING...BUT YES...HE ALWAYS COME THROUGH FOR US... GOD'S TIMING IS ALWAYS PERFECT!!!

CONCL.: HERE ARE SOME THINGS WE CAN DO TO HELP US DEAL WITH OUR LOSS.

1. ACCEPT THE REALITY OF OUR LOSS. JUST KNOW, GOD UNDERSTANDS. GOD'S LOVE IS UNFAILING AND UNCEASING! GOD'S PRESENCE IS ALWAYS THERE!

2. LET YOURSELF FEEL THE LOSS!

GRIEF IS UNIVERSAL. JESUS EXPERIENCED GRIEF TOO. EXPECT A VARIETY OF FEELINGS.

3. LEARN TO LIVE WITH YOUR LOSS!

ACCEPT YOUR NEW SITUATION. ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN LIFE AGAIN. MAINTAIN YOUR FRIENDSHIPS. REINVEST IN LOVE. SHARE YOUR COMFORT WITH OTHERS. ENJOY LIVING TODAY.

DON'T BE INSENSITIVE TO A PERSON'S LOSS! THEY NEED TO FEEL...DO NOT ENCOURAGE DENIAL OF THE PAIN THE PERSON IS FEELING.

WE TEND TO INSULATE OURSELVES FROM PAIN. WE TRY TO KEEP OUR OWN PAIN TO A MINIMUM. WE SOMETIMES TRY TO DISTRACT THE MOURNER FROM GRIEF...TO AVOID OUR OWN DISCOMFORT.

AVOIDING OR SUPPRESSING OUR PAIN AND LOSS...JUST PROLONGS THE MOURNING PROCESS. THIS KIND OF COMFORT DOES MORE HARM THAN GOOD!!!

OUR CHURCH FAMILY SHOULD ENCOURAGE FOLKS TO DEAL WITH THEIR GRIEF ...IN A WAY THAT ACCEPTS THE PAINFUL REALITY OF LOSS...AND ENCOURAGES DEEPER DEPENDENCE ON CHRIST!!!

TEARS ARE AN INDICATION OF ONE'S HUMANNESS... NOT AN INDICATION OF WEAKNESS OR LACK OF FAITH!!!

NEGOTIATING OUR STEEP AND PERILOUS TERRAIN OF OUR OWN GRIEF...WILL GREATLY IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO HELP OTHERS WHO ARE GRIEVING! THE APOSTLE PAUL IDENTIFIED

THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN COMFORTED BY GOD... AS THE ONES WHO ARE QUALIFIED TO COMFORT OTHERS!

THE APOSTLE PAUL SAID, "WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP!" JESUS WEPT WHEN HE VISITED MARY AND MARTHA AFTER THE DEATH OF THEIR BROTHER LAZARUS. JESUS GROANED IN THE SPIRIT AND WAS TROUBLED! (JN. 11:23)

MARY AND MARTHA WERE MOVED BY JESUS' POWER TO RAISE THEIR BROTHER FROM THE DEAD...BUT THEY WERE ALSO VERY IMPRESSED BY JESUS' POWER OF HIS PRESENCE WITH THEM AND HIS LOVE FOR THEM!!!

JUST THINK...GOD WEEPING WITH YOU OVER THE LOSS OF YOUR LOVED ONE!!! YOU HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH A GREAT PRIVILEGE..

YOU ARE THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST...WITH THOSE WHO'RE GRIEVING! WORDS ARE INADEQUATE TO EXPRESS WHAT THE GRIEVER NEEDS. YOU ARE THE SHOULDER TO CRY ON. YOU ARE THE WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN. YOU ARE THE COMMIT-MENT TO SIT IN SILENCE THAT COMMUNICATES THE MOST!

FOLKS GRIEVING...WANT TO BE ASSURED..."WILL YOU WALK WITH ME...ALONG THIS PAINFUL PATH THAT I MUST TRAVEL?"

THEY FEEL ABANDONED OVER THE LOSS OF THEIR LOVED ONE...THE LAST THING THEY NEED IS TO FEEL ABANDONED BY OTHERS AROUND THEM.

THEY NEED TRUE FRIENDS WHO WILL LISTEN...NOT JUST WITH YOUR EARS...BUT WITH YOUR HEARTS!

FOLKS WHO'RE GRIEVING...NEED YOU AND ME TO REACH OUT WITH THE LOVE AND COMFORT OF CHRIST. PRACTICAL SUPPORT IS ALSO NEEDED.

THEY NEED SOMEONE TO BE WITH WHEN THEY EAT MEALS...THEY NEED SOMEONE TO BE THERE WHEN THEY CHANGE THE OIL IN THEIR CAR...WHEN THEIR HOUSE NEEDS CLEANING...THEY NEED A NIGHT OUT TO DINNER SOMETIMES. THEY MAY NEED A BABYSITTER ...ADVICE ON FINANCES...AND THEY ESPECIALLY NEED PRAYER SUPPORT FOR RECOVERY FROM A DEVASTATING LOSS!!!

IT'S OK TO REMEMBER YOUR LOVED ONE...BUT DON'T TRY TO FORGET THEM. YOU HAVE LOTS OF GOOD AND FOND MEMORIES OF YOUR LOVED ONE...IT'S OK TO THINK ABOUT THEM. HOW CAN I LIVE WITH MY LOSS? YOU CAN...LET THE LORD HELP YOU. YOU CAN...LET YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR CHURCH FAMILY HELP YOU. YOU CAN...NEVER GIVE UP... KEEP TRYING...KEEP GOING ... KEEP BUSY....AND GOD WILL HELP YOU THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH...HE WILL HELP YOU KEEP GOING...AND BRING YOU TO HEAVEN...WHEN IT'S YOUR TIME TO GO.

GOD BLESS YOU...AND HELP YOU TO LIVE WITH YOUR LOSS...NO MATTER WHAT YOUR LOSS IS...GOD WILL HELP YOU LIVE WITH YOUR LOSS.