

How To Handle Grief & Not Let Grief Handle You



**“Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.”**

Psalm 30:5

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Psalms Of Promise, Hope, and Encouragement

Psalm 23 - The Lord Is My Shepherd

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Psalm 30 - Joy Comes with the Morning

1 I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

2 O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

3 O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

4 Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.

7 Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.

8 I cried to thee, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made supplication.

9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

10 Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me: Lord, be thou my helper.

Introduction

"Nothing that grieves us can be called little: by the eternal laws of proportion a child's loss of a doll and a king's loss of a crown are events of the same size."

Mark Twain

When you turn on the news or read a magazine article that focuses on someone else's tragedy, you may feel guilty because their losses may seem more "important" than yours. How can I be so upset about my situation when others have much more serious ones? You never need to feel that way. You are as justified as anyone else to have the feelings that you do about your loss. It is as personal as a fingerprint, and another person's situation cannot diminish yours.

"You can't rush grief. It has its own timetable. All you can do is make sure there are lots of soft places around -- beds, pillows, arms, laps."

Patti Davis

Show yourself the same patience that you show to everyone else in your life. The key is to believe that you will heal from this. You will be changed, but you will heal nonetheless.

"When someone you love becomes a memory, the memory becomes a treasure."

Author unknown

"If tears could build a stairway, and memories a lane, I'd walk right up to Heaven and bring you home again."

Author unknown

"Although it's difficult today to see beyond the sorrow, May looking back in memory help comfort you tomorrow."

Author unknown

"Grief is itself a medicine."

Author unknown

"Memory is a way of holding on to the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose."

Author unknown

"The risk of love is loss, and the price of loss is grief - But the pain of grief is only a shadow when compared with the pain of never risking love."

Author unknown

How the Power of Grieving Prepares Us to Dance

Death. It is an inescapable fact of life.

Ecclesiastes 3:2,4 (NIV) describes that there is a season for everything, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot... a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. Nothing in life can prepare us for the death of a loved one. Whether death results from a sudden accident or a sustained illness, it always catches us off-guard. Death is so deeply personal and stunningly final, nothing can emotionally prepare us for its arrival.

With every death, there is a loss. And with every loss, there will be grief.

Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary defines "grief" as a, deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement. Its origins from the Middle English and Anglo-French word "gref" denoting injustice or calamity and from the Vulgar Latin word "grevis" or "gravis" meaning heavy.

In essence, grief could be described as a heavy, calamitous injustice to our souls.

Grief doesn't come and go in an orderly, confined timeframe. Just when we think the pangs of anguish have stolen their last breath, another wave sweeps in and we are forced to revisit the memories, the pain, the fear.

Sometimes we try to resist the demands of grieving. We long to avoid this fierce, yet holy pilgrimage. We fight against the currents, terrified of being overwhelmed, of being discovered, of becoming lost in our brokenness.

We feel disconnected from everything around us. Our thoughts scatter like the wind, with little to glue them down. Our emotional skin feels intensely fragile to the touch.

Culture Tells Us To Move Past This Process Quickly

Take a few days, weeks perhaps, to grieve, but don't stay there too long. Grieving can make those around us uncomfortable. Friends sometimes don't know what to do with our pain. Loved ones struggle to find adequate words to comfort our aching wounds.

Yet grief, as painful a season as it is, is a necessary part of our healing. To run from grief is to run from the very thing that can quell the pain of our loss. English poet and hymnodist, William Cowper, described grief itself as medicine. Grief cleanses the anguish from our souls and sets us back up on the path of life so we can dance.

Grieving is the process God uses to bring us to a place of wholeness. Grieving is His great gift to us. It is a necessary part of our journey. Healing.

There are four ways to embrace the power of grieving so that one day you, too, can dance again.

1. Create space to grieve.

Don't hurry past the pain. Don't distract yourself from the sorrow. You will experience strong emotions —anger, depression, fear, and despair— that you may never have experienced before. Allow yourself to feel these emotions in the presence of God. Create intentional space to simply be and trust that is enough.

"The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." -Psalm 34:18

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

-Psalm 147:3

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

-Matt. 5:4

2. Be honest about your emotions.

Being a Christian does not mean that we don't feel negative emotions. God doesn't want us to run from our emotions or hide behind a mask. He wants his children to come to Him with complete honesty. In the Psalms, God invites us to bring our honest grief to Him. In Psalm 34:15, David depicts God as a loving Father who watches over His children and listens for their cries.

Don't hide your emotions. Don't ignore your pain. Cry. Laugh. Scream, knowing that God is right there with you. He will hold you in His arms while you heal. He loves and cares for you.

3. Don't grieve alone.

We need support while we grieve. Find individuals to walk with you. Whether it's a loved-one, a friend, a therapist, or a support group, we need the ministry of compassion that can only come as we walk in community with others.

Don't isolate. Find people who can be there for you. Look around for those God has put in your path to support you and encourage you on your journey. Grieving is one of the most difficult seasons – don't walk this season alone.

4. Don't lose hope.

Trust that this season won't last forever. There will be other seasons to come. 1 Thess. 4:13 (NIV) encourages, Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

We have hope. We not only have the hope that this season of mourning will end, we have the hope that as Believers, only a thin veil separates us from our ultimate destiny with Christ in heaven for eternity. There is no greater hope! Rev. 21:4 (NIV) tells us that, 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

He will turn your mourning into dancing. (Psalm 30:11-12, AMP)

You will breathe again. You will live again. You will dance again!

How to Survive the First Year of Grieving a Loved One

This chapter is based on the book, Hurricane of Love written by Dan Wheeler.

My two daughters were hugging my wife, Beth, and I was holding all three of them in my arms, when Beth took her last breath on October 30, 2015 at 2:40p.m. We had three years to consider the possibility that this day would come. Still, there was no way to totally prepare for it.

Even though I was relieved that Beth was finally out of her pain from battling stage 4 cancer, my heart ached from the realization that after spending 37 years with her, I would never see her again – this side of heaven.

I had no idea that this was just the beginning of my grieving process. The year of firsts was coming.

For the next five weeks:

- 1. I had trouble getting out of bed in the morning.**
- 2. Taking a shower, shaving and getting dressed just seemed like too much work.**
- 3. I didn't want to leave my house.**
- 4. I spent my days looking at photos and watching videos of my late wife.**
- 5. I didn't really want to see anyone other than my daughters and my grandchildren.**

Before long, Thanksgiving arrived. This was the first holiday without Beth. It was the "first" in my "year of firsts," and I didn't realize how gut-wrenching every first holiday, anniversary, and

birthday was going to be without her. Recognize these will be tough days.

Recognize these will be tough days.

My family had celebrated every holiday since 2010 with my oldest daughter's family and her in-laws. We usually had Thanksgiving dinner at her in-law's home. Her father-in-law, Ed, did all of the cooking. All I had to do was show up and eat. When Beth was alive, I always looked forward to having Thanksgiving dinner with them. But now that she was gone, I didn't feel very thankful, and I didn't feel like pretending that I was. Everyone was understanding and caring, but I just wanted to eat and go back home.

When we sat down for dinner, I realized they had a place setting and a chair at the table for Beth. It was a nice gesture, but it felt like a dagger to my heart. I kept looking at the chair, and I kept thinking she should have been there.

"I begged God to give me the strength..."

I remember when I crawled into bed that night, I cried myself to sleep. I begged God to give me the strength to make it through Christmas. I knew it would be brutal, and I had no idea how I would survive. I had no desire and no intention to put up a tree and decorate. In fact, I didn't want to celebrate Christmas at all, but my daughters wanted me to. "Mom would want us to celebrate Christmas," my youngest said.

I knew that every ornament and every Christmas song would bring me to tears. I finally carried the tree and the ornaments up from the basement and began what turned out to be one of the hardest tasks I have ever done.

Express how you feel.

My second “first” came just days before Christmas on December 22nd. It would have been our 31st wedding anniversary. My daughter very wisely suggested we all go to New York City for two days, so I wouldn’t just sit in the house and cry. I bought tickets to “The Lion King” on Broadway, figuring it would be entertaining for everyone including my two grandsons. It was good that we stayed busy as a family. While we were all thinking about Beth, the change of scenery helped.

Christmas Eve came and we all went to church together. This was always Beth’s favorite service. She loved the end of the service when the congregation lights each other’s candles and the sanctuary is slowly transformed from complete darkness to light as we sing “Silent Night.” I always loved this tradition when Beth was standing next to me, but this year it was just another event to endure without her. My eyes opened up into a river of tears.

Celebrate holidays. It honors their memory.

After the Christmas Eve service, we went out to dinner as we always did and then came back to my house. Beth would always buy everyone new pajamas to wear on Christmas Eve. That was the one gift we opened at night, saving the rest for Christmas morning. When we came back to my house, my daughters looked in Beth’s closet and were shocked to discover that their mom somehow managed to order each of them pajamas during her final days.

We took a picture of them wearing those pajamas in front of the Christmas tree. They posted on social media that their mom was still sending them gifts from heaven. This tore me up emotionally, but it also brought me some comfort.

The pajamas made me realize that I was being selfish wallowing in my sorrow. I thought maybe this was a sign that Beth wanted us to celebrate Christmas in a way that honored her memory. I tried really hard to enjoy Christmas day. It was emotionally draining, but I tried to picture her being there with us encouraging us to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Live in the moments you have.

The next “first” was Beth’s birthday on February 3rd. We got together as a family and decided that we would celebrate the day together. We started a tradition that would be a meaningful for us all. We went to her favorite restaurant for breakfast. We have gone there for years and all of the waitresses and cashiers know us. They loved Beth and sent a beautiful bouquet of flowers to our home five days before she passed into heaven.

We all ordered what Beth always ordered: two eggs over easy, bacon, rye toast and coffee. After breakfast we got purple helium balloons (Beth’s favorite color) and sharpies. All of us, including our grandsons, wrote messages to her and let them go into the sky. We have continued this tradition on her birthday and the anniversary of her passing.

Hold on to hope.

While her first birthday was very tough, I began to feel hope that it wouldn’t always be this difficult.

I was seeing a Christian counselor at the time to help me work through my grief. I knew in my heart that God was in control, but I was struggling with Romans 8:28 which says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God....” Really? Even my wife’s stage 4 cancer?

I'm told that the surviving spouse often has a great deal of guilt. I certainly did. I wondered why I was still strong and healthy, but Beth had to go through stage 4 cancer. I kept asking myself if I was a good enough husband.

“...I still have a race to run...”

When I told my counselor what I was wrestling with, she looked me in the eye and said, “Dan, do you really think Beth is in heaven judging you? No! She is cheering you on! She is telling you to finish your race and to take care of your daughters and grandchildren!” That really connected with me. I realized that I still have a race to run and that Beth was cheering me on!

The “firsts” kept coming, and it seemed like they would never end.

Lean on your family and friends.

Easter was yet another difficult “first,” but it wasn't as bad as her birthday. The summer holidays were hard because we always had the family over to our house on Memorial Day, the 4th of July, and Labor Day. Beth loved being the host, and she loved being by the pool. We all talked about her, and we realized that we were all in the grieving process together. It is vitally important to lean on your family and friends during those “firsts.”

Finally, the one-year anniversary of Beth's entrance into heaven arrived, and we all went to the cemetery and released the purple helium balloons with messages to her. We did the same thing on the second and will do it again on the third.

Remember God will never leave you.

I wrote about my wife and how I made it through the grieving process and the “year of firsts” in my new book, *Hurricane of Love* published by WestBow Press.

My prayer is that our story will help to calm your fears, strengthen your faith and inspire your hope. God will never leave you, even in your darkest hour. Hold on to the hope that you will see your loved one again in heaven.

For those grieving:

If you are grieving, or caring for someone who is terminally ill, just know that “the year of firsts” is coming. But have hope that you will make it through. The year of seconds will be a little bit easier. What’s important now is to live “in the moment.” Pour your love into your loved one. Don’t hold back in expressing how you feel through your words and your actions. And as you go through the year of “firsts,” recognize that those are going to be very tough days. Try to use them to honor your loved one’s memory and draw on the strength of your family and friends.

About The Author

Dan Wheeler was a popular host on QVC for twenty-nine years. He has interviewed countless celebrities and entrepreneurs including Joe DiMaggio, Bob Hope, Joan Rivers and Willie Nelson. Mr. Wheeler is a highly sought after public speaker and the co-founder of Fearless Faith Ministries. He has two daughters and three grandchildren.

As a successful host on QVC for many years, Dan Wheeler had it all. But his world was rocked in 2012, when his beautiful wife, Beth, was diagnosed with Stage IV cancer. Beth Wheeler’s tremendous capacity to love and her strong faith in the Lord enabled her to face death with grace, dignity and courage. Beth

Wheeler's love is like a hurricane. It hits everyone in it's path so be prepared!