

A JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF

by Lelah Feeley

Our hope is in Christ Jesus.

I have known that most of my life but 5 years ago I really learned to embrace His hope and to cling to Him as never before.

Five years ago my husband was diagnosed with a life threatening disease. We both faced the illness with Hope in Christ Jesus and faith that Pat would be healed. Four months after being diagnosed, God took Pat home to be with Him. Pat was totally healed, not the way we both prayed for but, God's will was done. Pat's mission on earth was complete.

Of course I was totally devastated. I was so disappointed that God didn't heal Pat here on earth. My family and friends were so kind and loving but I needed something more. My heart was totally broken, I need answers. Some dear friends led me to the Grief Share group at my church.

Griefshare is a 13 week program to help you in your journey through grief. Everyone who comes has to have lost someone close to them. The facilitators also have lost a loved one. You watch a video every week on a different phase of grief. After the video, you have share time. There is such a bonding with everyone there; at the end of 13 weeks you are usually not through with your grieving but you have a much better understanding of what grief is and are well on your way towards healing.

At the first 3 or 4 sessions of Griefshare all I did was cry but through the Videos which are all led by Christian counselors, pastors and individuals that have suffered the loss of a loved one, I began to see that my hope for a brighter was in Christ Jesus. I began to lean totally on Him to carry me through this pain and suffering that was my constant companion. My fear was that I would hurt like I was hurting forever but slowly and as God does in His timing my broken heart began to heal.

I went through 2 full 13 week sessions and though I still had rocky days, I felt God calling me to this ministry. One of the facilitators was moving so again it was God's perfect timing for me to step in. From the first day I facilitated I knew this was something good happening out of the pain of loosing my precious husband.

I have observed that 75% of the people who come through Griefshare are Christians and almost all of them would tell you that their walk with the Lord has become stronger and that God has been their #1 tool that has helped them in their journey through Grief. We have had some non-Christians or believers that were very weak in their faith. Two of our grievers have accepted Christ through our Griefshare program and joined the church and were baptized. I had the privilege, along with one of the other facilitators of walking down the aisle with a young widower as he gave his life to Christ. Later we were able to witness him being baptized. What a blessing, another one from God that He has given me through my loss.

We had a young widow that was so angry at God and said that she told God that He had made a terrible mistake, not saving her husband from a tragic hunting accident. Two years down the road she has re-claimed her relationship with the Lord. She is allowing Him to comfort her and guide her. Our hope is in Christ Jesus.

God has healed me from my loss. My life is forever changed by my husband's death but God has given me a ministry in which I can reach out to others and share my heart experiences with. We have hope in Christ Jesus.

Grief is the price you pay for loving someone. If there was no love there would be no grief. Grief is disruptive and disorienting. What's worse is that some people will make you feel like you are overreacting to the death of your loved one. Once you have experienced the death of a loved one, you have a much better understanding of how to react to others when they loose someone. You can be there for them in a special way.

Grief is a maddening experience. You have so many emotions. At times you think you are going crazy. Who is this uninvited house guest who has suddenly entered your life? You cannot turn off the experience. If you don't give into it and allow yourself to grieve, it will always be with you. You have to be honest with yourself and express your emotion. The Lord will help you. Knowing the Lord and knowing His comfort does not take away the ache, it supports you in the middle of the ache. Eventually life will get better. There is hope in Christ Jesus. You will feel joy again. Little ounces of joy will return. Follow the ABC's of grief: A- always be true to yourself B- Believe you will make it C- Remember people care - communicate

Even though your heart is breaking and tears are clouding your eyes and staining your cheeks, God does give us something worth trusting in through tough times and that's Him and Him alone,

Jesus tells us He will never leave us or forsake us and I can testify this has been so true in my grieving. Jesus says in Matt 5:4 -Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. I found the Psalms to be very comforting through my journey of grief. Some of my favorites are: Psalms 62: 5&6; 34:17&18; Psalm 139: 1-4 and Psalm 139:16.

God is our comfort. In order to receive God's comfort, you have to place yourself where His comfort is. Find it in prayer, in His word, in time spent with Christians, in His creation, under the mentoring of a mature Christian, in God-pleasing music and in quiet time spent with God.

Grief is unique. No one grieves exactly the same. People around you don't understand grief unless they've been through it themselves. The five tasks of grief: (1) accept (2) release your emotions (3) store memories (4) separate identity (5) reinvest in life

Some of the frequently asked questions of grief (1) Will this pain ever end? It will; takes time and work; prayer; you have to go through it; The Lord will turn your mourning into joy - In His timing. (2) Will my life ever return to normal? A new normal. Does a new normal mean forgetting? No. New traditions. Your life is forever changed. You will

never forget but you will get better. What should I do with his/her belongings? You will know when its time. It's a process.

“Why?” is always the number one question asked. We don't know why God allows pain and suffering through death and we won't know until we get to Heaven and then it really won't matter. Why? When we ask “Why” you are in essence validating your own humanness and realizing you are not in control. We need to delight in God's unpredictability. Secrets of God belong to him, alone. Deut 29:29

The end of the story is a place where there will be no more tears. We don't understand everything, God does, and we have to trust him.

Why people die? Romans 5:12 God's explanation.

Our final destination - Heaven

God has promised a better place for those who trust in Christ as Savior and encourages you to console yourself with that hope. This world is not our true home - Heaven is. What is so exciting to me about heaven is knowing that I will be with Jesus and my loved ones and whatever pain I felt on this earth will be no more. Our loved ones are far better off in the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords than they ever were or will be on this earth.

In John 11: 25-26, Jesus said: I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Two books that helped me - Heaven by Randy Alcorn and 90 minutes in Heaven - Don Piper - ELABORATE

CLOSING - GOING TO THE PARTY (pages 441 & 442 in Heaven by Randy Alcorn)