

Solid Truths to Remember as You Process the Death of a Loved One

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It was a day many of us will never forget. On this day, I got up as usual to take my daughter to school before heading back home to get ready for work. Upon arriving back home and sitting down in front of the television, just before getting ready, my son, just home from basic training in the Navy, tells me to change the television station. What I saw would be the beginning of a journey that I'm still travelling. The day I'm speaking of is September 11, 2001. My twenty-year-old son would eventually be deployed off the coast of Afghanistan.

The phone call came near the end of my work day, on December 4, 2001. My co-worker took the call and handed the phone to me. Out of nowhere the words came to me softly from my wife at home, "Jamel is dead." I had just spoken to him just three days before this; he told me that he was coming home, so I had to ask her to repeat herself. She told me that two soldiers showed up at our door with the news. I then proceeded to take the longest subway ride of my life to go home. What I walked into I will never forget: media waiting outside, with friends and family on the inside. I will never forget the sight of my then ten-year-old daughter, curled up in a corner crying over the death of her big brother. I went to console her first. Of the thousands of lives lost in Afghanistan, our son was the eighth casualty of the war.

Ten months later, to the day, on October 4, 2002, I was awakened early in the morning by my oldest daughter. She informed me that my youngest daughter, now eleven, was having difficulty breathing. When I reached her, and put her in my arms, she went to be with the Lord. Her name was Charis Annette. I chose her name very carefully. Her name literally means, "Grace Grace." Over the years, we have come to cherish *His* grace. Ten months. Two children. Two deaths. Both unexpectedly. What do you do? How do you cope? I've not spoken any these words to illicit any type of pity; but only to make real to

you that *death is no respecter of persons*. I know that my story is not unique; but it is *my story*.

When it comes to death, age or status does not matter. After all, death is an enemy. We read these simple, but powerful words from [Scripture](#):

“The last enemy that will be destroyed is death” ([1 Corinthians 15:26](#)).

But the question remains: How do we deal with the death of a loved one? In spite of death’s inevitability, you would think we would be prepared for it; but this is not always the case. The loss of a loved one can be a harrowing experience. And while this is a most difficult question to answer, through the grieving process, there are three things which are divinely contained within it. They are: provisions, promises, and preparation. I believe that through these, we will see several solid and basic truths that we need to remember in these times of grief.

The Provision of His Power and Grace

When the apostle Paul was dealing with his self-described, “thorn in the flesh,” he asked the Lord for relief. The Lord’s response was such that we can take with us, and apply to every situation which finds us in need; whether that need be physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual.

“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My [strength](#) is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” ([2 Corinthians 12:9](#)).

What this means is that through His grace, He supplies an ample measure of His strength; just what we need to endure the circumstance. I can remember hearing this question constantly during those days, “How are you holding up?” My answer would almost always be, “Fine, by God’s grace.” His power finds its perfection when I am at my weakest point. When I am overwhelmed, I look to the Rock that is higher than I am, and that is stronger than I am. This measure of grace *sustains* us by keeping us from “falling over the edge,” so to speak, and keeps us from attempting to rely upon ourselves.

The Promise of His Peace

Throughout Paul’s letters we read the phrase, “Grace to you, and peace, from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” But it was more than just a greeting to open a particular letter — it was both God’s and his own desire that grace and peace would be something that they could be assured of having. And while His grace is guaranteed during dark times of grief, peace can flee from us. If we begin to give ear to the devil’s lies concerning our plight, such as, “Why has this happened to you?,” or “Why has God allowed this to happen?,” we will find peace ebbing from us. We need His peace because

it comforts us with the truth that God is *sovereign*; He has all things under control. Peace also declares that God *regulates*; He never puts more on us than we can bear. Finally, peace provides us the opportunity to *praise* Him. We read:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” ([Philippians 4:6-7](#)).

During times of grief, we are not to worry, but rather to pray — with a measure of thanks. We are to thank Him, not for the circumstance in itself, but for who He is. The psalmist said, “I will yet praise Him.” This is the most difficult thing to do during times of grief, but it is necessary, because it shifts our focus from ourselves, to the Lord. When this takes place, something wonderful happens:

“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You” ([Isaiah 26:3](#)).

Perfect peace! This is that same peace spoken of in [Philippians 4](#), that passes all understanding. This peace will surround us as we bless His name, and trust Him that He alone knows what is best. In this world that is filled with confusion and fear, He gives us His peace. Jesus Himself spoke of this peace:

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” ([John 14:27](#)).



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The Promise of His Presence

In our times of grief, the Lord does not stand aloof, wondering what it feels like to grieve. Scripture tells us otherwise when it states:

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” ([Hebrews 4:14-15](#)).

While in the throes of sorrow and devastation we can rest assured that He is close by our side. His promise to Israel is easily applied to us as well:

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you” ([Isaiah 43:2](#)).

You will note the words, “when you pass through,” and “when you walk through.” These words not only tell us that he will be with us, but they also clearly indicate that He will see us through to the other side.

There is another side to grief. It’s a side that continues to remember, but where the pain and hurt has *subsided*. Does time heal? While we are yet in these mortal and decaying bodies, it may be very difficult to entirely alleviate all the pain associated with the passing of a loved one, but time does have a way of suppressing some of the anguish. Yes, the pain and hurt does subside, for I have experienced it myself.

His Precious Preparation

From our perspective, we don’t always understand what God is doing. This stems from the fact that His ways and thoughts are far above ours. We read:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts” ([Isaiah 55:8-9](#)).

For this reason, we at times are perplexed within ourselves, with no help from the enemy of souls, as to why God allows what He does. But from God’s perspective, He always has a plan and a purpose for everything. One of the greatest purposes God has for grief is so that we can become *ambassadors of His comfort*. Watch this because this is powerful:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” ([2 Corinthians 1:3-4](#)).

The value in all that we experience is that God is equipping and preparing us to bring comfort to others in need with the very same comfort He provided for us. This is glorious! We definitely do see this at the time of our grief, but without question, as the Lord carries us through, He gives us a testimony that speaks only of Him, and who He is, and what He is able to do.

His grace, His peace, His power, and His presence — all provided by the finished work of the cross, prepare me to advance in life, in ministry, and in support of others along the way in need of comfort. It's all about Him!

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