



Issues -10-20

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Check out our updated website:

www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com

The Bereavement Link has all the past Touchstone Issues...you can download and send to a friend.

Quotes of the Month

"Blessed are those who mourn: for they shall be comforted." —
Matthew 5:4

"To share your weakness is to make yourself vulnerable; to make yourself vulnerable is to show your strength." —
Criss Jami

"A faithful friend is the medicine of life." —
THE APOCRYPHA

Touchstone

Many bereaved people report that their loss forced them into a serious crisis of faith. They found themselves questioning their most basic beliefs about life and spirituality. The shocking loss of a loved one may well raise the following questions in your mind: *Is the world a good place, or is it really evil? *Am I being punished for something? *If God is good, why did he allow this to happen? *Is there a God, after all? *Is there any sense or balance in the world or is it all random? *Why did (s)he have to die? *Am I worthy enough to keep on living? The death of a loved one can shake the very foundation of your basic philosophical beliefs and fundamental life values. You may feel that you are left without direction. You may feel helpless and grope to regain some control over your life. As a bereaved person, you may find yourself looking for meaning in the loss, trying to make some sense of it. This is especially true when the death was sudden, unexpected and senseless. You may try to find a reason or lay unwarranted blame as to why this terrible tragedy occurred. It is also very common for bereavement to cause you to question your religious or spiritual beliefs. Although this may be understandable and even expected, there is no easy answer to this problem. Spiritual, religious and philosophical beliefs are so individual, so unique to each soul, that it would be impossible for us to offer a generic solution to your dilemma. Just know that your crisis of faith should fade in intensity as your grief does. You will eventually come to a belief system that works for you, just as you find a more comfortable place in your new life for your grief. You will emerge with a new-found respect for the fragility of life and the limits of control that you actually have over it. Some people find much comfort in the beliefs and rituals of their church, while others have their faith shaken to the core. Anger at God is a typical and common response to the loss of a beloved person. Express the anger. It is not necessarily a bad thing, and it will fade with time if you are allowed to express it while it is hot.



Compassion is always here for you, waiting to be awoken.

BACK TO LIFE ! YOUR PERSONAL GUIDEBOOK TO GRIEF RECOVERY

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Postcards-by-Deacon Dan McGrath

(Note: My wife died Oct. 23, 2015 these postcard reflection were written following her death)

“I used to think that because life is short. I should do more...be more...squeeze more into each and every day. Maybe the idea is to swim slower...surfer. Dive deeper and really look around. There is a difference between a life of width and a life of depth.”

--Carrie Newcomer, “A Permeable Life”

Not long after Carol died I was asked occasionally by well-meaning folks, “*What are you going to do now?*” Appreciating their concern, I decided to rest and slow down, making no major decisions for at least the first year after Carol died. That decision was a beautiful gift that I gave to myself and has subsequently turned into more than two years. During this time, I have had the occasion to “go deeper.”

” Looking back on my life, asking the proverbial question, “who am I?” now that Carol is no longer physically by my side.

As I have shared in past postcards, after Carol died, I felt like my life was a scattering of jigsaw puzzles on the floor in front of me.

Having lost my sense of purpose, I felt almost completely unable to figure out what pieces I wanted to attempt to pick back up—let alone how to even begin to move forward.

Taking time to look at the many puzzle pieces of my life, I began to see some of those pieces as real negatives in relationship to my life choices. I knew that before I began to put my puzzle back together, I needed to address those demons in my life.

Let me share with you what I discovered. There’s a gospel story where Jesus says, “*The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well.*”

To paraphrase Jesus here, we cannot run or hide from our demons or “weeds.” No matter how hard I tried to pull or ignore them, they always managed to work their way back into my thoughts.

Steven Campbell, M.S.I.S., shares in his book, “*Making Your Mind Magnificent,*” “*We behave and act not according to the truth, but the truth as we believe it to be.*”

When I went back and visited my demons, or weeds, they revealed to me that much of what I thought was true about them was based on misperceptions, confusions and misunderstandings.

But here’s the rub. The gospel story says that the weeds are part of the kingdom as well as the wheat. So, in reality, the demons or weeds of my life are just as important as the wheat. In fact, in some ways they are more valuable, because they have helped me answer the question, “Who am I?” more honestly. So, as I move forward, I really don’t want to leave those pieces behind.

“The best chance to be whole is to love whatever gets in the way, until it ceases to be an obstacle.” Mark Nepo Resting, slowing down and going deeper have placed some beautiful puzzle pieces before me, as well...real angels, or wheat, to continue the gospel metaphor. Two of those angel pieces are “Wonder” and “Live Gratefully.”

Wonders have blessed my life. I have watched my sunflowers growing from the tiniest of seeds to stalks over ten feet tall, their flowery blooms turning to the morning sun and following its rise and set each day.

I’ve been grateful to share summer days with our two children and our three beloved grandchildren. Being with them, I am reminded how blessed Carol and I are to have shared in the formation of their life, watching them grow into healthy, mature, kind, caring and compassionate human beings. Finally, resting and slowing down has given me this insight: “*It’s all grace.*” Life and death and all that lies in between—angels or demons, wheat or weeds—**it’s all grace.**

The gospel story ends with Jesus saying, “*They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.*” At first that’s a scary proposition. But I believe the message here is that only the weeds or demons in our lives will be left behind to wither away. All we will carry with us into the next life is the love in our hearts, to the place where love meets love and is harmoniously integrated into one.

“Deacon Dan and a “Postcard” from Carol

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FIND INNER PEACE In order to cope with the emotional stresses of bereavement and the life changes it brings, you must learn how to relinquish control. You cannot control who lives or dies, and when and how such events occur. You do not have power over how other people choose to live their lives and interact with you, either. The only thing you do have control over is your own reaction to these situations. When things seem bleak and hopeless, you can make your own inner peace. This is an important skill to learn for your own emotional survival. When you are thick in the midst of the turmoil and desolation known as grieving, you might forget that there is a source of inner peace and strength deep inside you. Everyone has it, and the lucky ones learn to get in touch with it in times of need. Prioritize! You are going to get in touch with yours! Get off by yourself and take the time to quiet your mind in the way that works best for you. Some people use meditation or yoga. Others pray to their God. Still others commune with nature or find peace in certain music that they love. Your inner core of strength will help you survive the storm. Visit your special inner place as often as you need to in order to revitalize yourself. For a free and easy-to-follow guide to get you started on meditation (it's simple and quite refreshing), visit: www.findlove-keeplove.com/learn-meditate.html

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PRAY FOR HELP You may just try praying to your God for help. Your burden of grief may be so heavy that this is the only option left. Surrender to God, or simply pray to any higher being for help. Chances are very good that in giving up control, surrendering to whatever comes next, you may well find the comfort you seek. All I can say about prayer is that it helped me climb out of a black hole. I had never been a very religious person before I lost my loved one. But in the depths of my misery, I felt like I had reached the bottom of my soul. There were no options left to me. None. So I prayed to a God who I wasn't even sure existed. I simply prayed for help. No one can ever take this secret resource, this wellspring of strength and peace, from you. How to pray? However you please. Keep it simple and uncluttered. Simply ask and you will be blessed with help. It's that simple. That, I truly believe, is the reason and the

purpose that all religious practices came to be. Prayer worked for me. Although it did not magically take away all my pain, it helped me grope my way out of the darkness and back to life. I was never totally alone in my grief again.

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POSTPONE DECISIONS It is a wisely accepted recommendation that people who have lost a significant loved one should not make any major decisions or life-altering changes for the first year after the loss. While newly bereaved, it is hard to think straight and make important decisions without emotions interfering. Decisions you should postpone for a while might include: *Selling or buying property *Moving from current home, unless absolutely necessary *Adopting a child or choosing to get pregnant *Changing jobs or careers *Making major decisions about your life partner (marriage, divorce) If you sell belongings or plan to move, you may just be running away from the situation instead of meeting grief head-on. Don't make decisions just to try to avoid the pain. "Work through grief where things are familiar", advised one widow from a support group

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WE STARE WHEREVER WE ARE Whether you are having the best New Year ever or you are struggling right now, the essence of spiritual life, in my experience, is to always begin again—again and again—from wherever we find ourselves. Each new moment is a chance to open our hearts and to turn an affectionate gaze on ourselves, others, and our surroundings. Each new moment is a chance to say something true and vulnerable and meet someone in a deeper way. Each new moment is a chance to start again and take some type of action that feels loving and life-giving.

In whatever place this finds you, this moment is sacred. The Irish poet John O'Donohue described the spiritual journey as the shortest journey we would ever take, one that requires not a change of location but instead a shift of view. When we can see ourselves as sacred—in whatever condition we are in, without any sense of degradation—we have discovered the sacred world, which is this world, the world that holds us, gives us our life, and expresses through us.

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Book Suggestions

- ⇒ Many Lives, Many Masters-Brian L. Weiss
- ⇒ Creative Visualization-Shakti Gawain
- ⇒ Love Poems from God-Daniel Ladinsky

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Website Suggestions

- ⇒ www.postcardreflection.blogspot.com
- ⇒ www.seniorsolutionsmontana.com
- ⇒ www.griefwatch.com

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