

# Daily Meditation

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## When Your Loss Becomes Your Boss

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*The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is perhaps the most loved and the least believed Psalm in the Bible. This scripture says because God is the Shepherd of Shepherds, His sheep do not have to want. However, how many believe this to be true?*



Revisit the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and you will find that seventeen (17) times in six (6) verses, the words “I”, “my” or “me” are used. This is an intensely personal psalm. The word “you”—talking about God—is used five (5) times, “He” or “His” is used about seven (7) times. This psalm is concerning a relationship with God. Religion will not rid you of stress, strains or sorrow. When adversity visits or death knocks at the door of your house, you do not need religion; you need a relationship. You need a Shepherd, one who provides, protects, guides and corrects. Could we be over laid with undue stress because we have not truly made the Lord our Shepherd and the Shepherd our Lord?

The one thing that will help you pass the dark place in your life called grief is to realize that while death is an enemy, it does not have the last say, especially for the believer. Death is a fact, but it is not final.

DEATH is:

The last enemy of human kind.

The inevitable irrefutable destiny of all human beings.

The most tragic certainty of life.

The incredible intruder upon all of our plans.

The barrier to progress, the shatterer of hope, the  
devourer of families, the smasher of dreams, and the  
delay of love's fulfillment.

Write in bold letters on the focus screen of your mental awareness, "Death for the believer is not a stepping down; it's a stepping up! It is not failure; it is fruition. It is not destruction; it is a positive change. It is not a deep sleep; it is a great awakening. It is not just pulling off something; it is putting on something better."

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality." Take comfort in the fact the Shepherd of life is also the Shepherd of death.

Life is a mixture of pain and pleasure, of victory and defeat, of success and failure, of mountaintops and valleys. But even in our darkest valley, we must always remember that God is the Shepherd, even of the valleys.

People begin to realize just how uninformed they are when they begin to deal with the reality of grief in their lives. They can read the best books, they can talk with those who have experienced a loss in their lives and still realize how ignorant they are on this important subject. This is the case because grief cannot be totally learned until it is experienced. I have been on both sides of the spectrum as I experienced the death of my maternal grandfather and grandmother, who for the most part raised me. Recently, my mother-in-law and two of my family's closest friends passed. Prior to these experiences, I shared what I had learned intellectually from books and research. However, after these experiences, grief has a totally different perspective. This has helped me to understand the need to discuss grief as it relates to the heart of a person instead of their head.

The problem with grief is that it is a cruel teacher of tragedies that occur in our lives. Grief has a way of totally debilitating us by its control over every part and aspect of our lives. Thus, the more one can know about grief and how it affects us, the more knowledgeable we will become in coping, as it invades our lives.

Grief is one of the bitterest experiences of life. When grief comes it often seems as if God is no where to be found. We know he is, but the feeling of absence is very real.

One author says, "He learned that we are a product of a throwaway society. If something breaks, we throw it out and replace it. A person dies and the survivors are told to get on with your life."

Someone else has well said, "We are a mourning avoiding culture". When a friend asks how you are doing, they don't really want to know that you cannot sleep or concentrate, that you sob uncontrollably, or that you fear your sanity. The expected answer is a quick "fine", because life goes on.

Our culture tells us to get over grief, but in reality we never get over it. We just learn to live with it. What does God say concerning our grief?

## ACKNOWLEDGE THE REALITY OF GRIEF

Accept the reality of death. Thirty million people die each year. Eighty-four persons die every minute, and 1.5 persons per second. With sin came the disease we call death. I. Cor. 15:21 . "Without sin death would have had no beginning; without death sin would have no end."

Martin Luther spoke no small truth when he suggested "Every man must do two things alone. He must do his own believing and he must do his own dieing." Is that not what George Bernard Shaw was suggesting "The statistics on death are quite impressive, one out of one people die?" Ecc. 3:2 "A time to be born, and a time to die." Heb. 9:27 "it is appointed unto men once to die."

No culture or person is exempt from grief. It may be the pain of an airplane crash in Lockerbie, Scotland, a husband in Atlanta, Ga. whose Wife has died, a mom in Bosnia whose child has been killed.

I have had many experiences with people who were grieving. I have found one thing in common. When there is loss there is pain. Grief accompanies loss. It can be loss through Death. It can also be loss through other causes.

*Grief is a natural and healthy consequence that should occur when a loss has happened in a person's life.* Grief is the silent, knife-like terror and sadness that comes a hundred times a day when you start to speak to someone who is no longer there. Grief is the emptiness that comes when you eat alone after eating with another for many

years. Grief is teaching yourself to go to bed without saying goodnight to the one who once slept beside you. Grief is the helpless wishing things were different when you know they are not , and will never be again. Grief is a whole cluster of adjustments, apprehensions, and uncertainties that stifle life in its forward progress and make it difficult to redirect the energies of life.

When someone dies, we grieve the present, the past, and what might have been in the future. If our relationship with the person was difficult, our grief is complicated by our regret for what cannot now be resolved. You may realize you lost not only the person, but also the dream of what you hoped your relationship could have become.

You may feel you are going crazy, yet are afraid to ask the question. As you enter the spiral, you will experience a period of disorientation. You will feel numb from your efforts to block reality from your mind. This protects you from the shock. You may withdraw, become more introverted, or display erratic behavior, demanding attention from others.

If you love deeply, you will grieve deeply. If you deny your grief, you deny the reality of the love you felt. As you explore your memories openly, you will gradually identify reality and release your pain and emotional investment. If you do not express your feelings as you review your memories, you risk creating emotional and physical strain on yourself, which may end in illness. Letting go gradually does not mean forgetting, but rather remembering yourself. This will enable you to put your energy into living full once again.

Sam Keen speaks profoundly when he says, “I have learned one important thing in my life and that is how to begin again.” In 1944, Erich Lindemann first used the words “grief work” to describe the spiral process of grief. Fact number one, grieving is a natural and normal way of dealing with any kind of loss!

*Grief affects a person with their whole being emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually!* Grief has an overwhelming power to inhibit a person in many ways. I am not aware of any trauma more devastating than grief. The emotional impact of grief can cause a person to weep uncontrollably one minute and then be totally depressed the next minute. Grief can cause a person to be hyperactive for days at a time followed by days of listlessness and exhaustion with other mood swings mixed in between. A person in grief can be in control of their thoughts at one moment and suddenly a word or action triggers a response resulting in numbness of mind and body. Thoughts may range from supposed insanity of mind to one’s complete control of his mental faculties. Thoughts may fluctuate from day to day as the person deals with their feelings of grief.

Spiritually, one may find themselves blaming God for what has happened and in the next few minutes they may be praying to God to help them in their time of need. Regardless of what manifestation of grief you are experiencing, you should realize it will affect your entire person. Fact number two, grief will affect a person's whole being!

*Grief is always an individual matter; you never know how another person feels!* Grief is as individualistic as the snowflakes that fall from the sky. No person's grief is ever the same as another person's grief. This statement is true even if you and your entire family are grieving the death of the same loved one. Grief is individualistic because we are all different in our mourning. We all carry into the grieving process a list of values and attitudes that motivate us to deal with the loss in a particular manner.

The old cliché, "I know exactly how you feel," should NEVER be heard by any person that is dealing with grief. It is impossible for one person to know and to understand how another person feels about their grief situation. Just as each person has fingerprints that are uniquely their own, so each person has his own individual way of dealing with grief.

When someone utters those irreverent words to a grieving person, saying, "I know exactly how you feel," they are implying that all grief is generally the same and is easily understood. Such is not the case! There is literally no way one's grief is the same as another's or that one can know exactly how the other person is feeling. Words are inadequate to describe the emotions a person has in regard to their feelings of sadness and pain.

Beware of Glib Cliques during your moments of Grief.

I have had many experiences with people who were grieving. I have found one thing in common. When there is loss there is pain, grief accompanies loss. The last thing a person experiencing loss needs is a trite clique to try and encourage them. Christians are big on bereavement cliques such as ...

### ***"Be Strong" cliques***

Big boys don't cry  
The children are Flexible...they will bounce back  
You must be strong for the children.  
Support groups are for wimps.  
You've just got to get hold of yourself!  
Others have held up well. You can, too.  
  
Cheer up.  
No sense crying over spilt milk.  
This is nature's way.

### ***"Hurry Up" cliques***

You're not your old self.  
Out of sight, out of mind.  
Time will heal.  
You're young, and you'll be able to make a new life for  
yourself.  
I just don't understand your behavior.  
Life goes on.  
No sense dwelling on the Past.

### **"Guilt" cliques**

If you look around, you can always find someone who  
is worse off than you.  
This is the work of the Devil ( meaning that if you had  
a closer relationship with God the devil couldn't  
have had his way).  
If I were you I'd do it this way.  
Count your blessings.  
Only the good die young.  
If you had been a better Christian, this wouldn't have happened to you.  
Think of all your precious memories.  
It's a blessing.

### **"God" cliques**

God needs him more than you do.  
He's happy now because He's with God.  
God did this to show how powerful he can be in your  
life.  
It was God's will.  
God never gives us more than we can handle.  
God helps those who help themselves.

### **"Discounting" cliques**

I know just how you feel.  
Silence is golden.  
If there's anything I can do, just call me.  
You can have more children.  
It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.  
Be glad you don't have problems like mine.

What you don't know won't hurt you?

"Where is God during a crisis? He may not seem anywhere near. If God isn't around and we can't count on Him, what hope do we have? That's the way many feel."

## ACCEPT THE EMOTIONS OF GRIEF

We live in a world where many people do not want to admit their feelings. We like to hide our emotions from others because we are afraid people will think we are weak and frail. Many people make the mistake of thinking that if they grieve for a loss in their lives, then they are behaving in an abnormal and unnatural way. Thus, they make the mistake of forgetting grief is a natural way of dealing with the loss of something or someone that we love. Less we forget the reminder from the previous chapter, the shortest verse in all the bible is perhaps one of the most powerful verses as well, JOHN 11: 35, "Jesus wept." Jesus was not afraid of allowing the Jews and others around Him to see His expression of grief over the death of a dear friend. He cried because he felt the agony that comes from losing a dear friend!

Some people pretend and "act better than they feel" when a loss occurs in their life. Instead of grieving and working through their sorrow, they try to act as if everything is back to normal and that they are in control again. Each of us should realize the grief experience is a natural and a very normal response. Grieving is normal, healthy, and should occur when we have been dealt a devastating loss in our lives. In his book, *Don't Take My Grief Away*, Doug Manning writes "[G]rieving is as natural as crying when you are hurt, sleeping when you are tired, eating when you are hungry, or sneezing when your nose itches. It is nature's way of healing a broken heart.'

During the grieving process you can expect to see several of these emotions exposed.

1. **Disappointment.**
2. **Numbness.**
3. **Tears.**
4. **Anger.**

Anger is a sign of protest. Anger can be expressed in several directions, sometimes even at God, at the unfairness of life, at others, and even at self.

5. **Guilt.**

Guilt is present when we feel we didn't do enough or allowed something to happen that led to the loss. It doesn't mean this is really the way it is, but the emotion is normal.

Guilt is expressed through the "if only," "the should haves," and "shouldn't haves." This response is especially true when the loss involves a child.

6. **Fear.**

7. **Depression.**

## AFFIRM THE MINISTRY OF GRIEF

Time heals! It's true...it does. God works and uses time to heal. The loss of a loved one to death is like an "emotional amputation." A real part of you is gone and it is difficult to adjust to the idea. You read of people, for example, who have had a leg amputated, but still feel an itch in the foot that is no longer there. The brain has not adapted to the fact the leg and foot are no longer there. In time, the brain adapts itself to the absence of the leg. But this does not occur at once; it is a slow process; it takes time.

In like manner, the "emotional amputation" involved in the grief is a JOURNEY, a pilgrimage, something we "pass through..."

The Psalmist spoke of "going through the valley of the shadow" and Jesus spoke of the strength that comes from "going through mourning." Grief is a journey...and it takes time to make the pilgrimage, because there are certain stages we have to pass through along the way.

## GOD HEALS THE HURT HEART THROUGH THE "LOVE AND SUPPORT OF PEOPLE"

Our love of friends and family in time of sorrow sustains and inspires us. We feel the touch of God. Acts of love, letters, flowers, telegrams, gifts, calls, kind words, tender handshakes, gentle hugs, visits and most of all...your prayers...sustain us.

## JESUS PROVIDES A FAMILY TO HELP BEAR OUR GRIEF...

Those who believe in Jesus and do His will are part of a family ( **Mt 13:46-50**). That family is the family of God, the church ( **1 Tim 3:15; 5:1-2**)

As a family, we can bear one another's grief...

By weeping with those who weep – **Rom. 12:15**

By sharing in each other's sufferings - **1 Cor.**

**12:25-26**

By comforting one another with the comfort we

each receive from God - **2 Co 1:3-5**

Sadly, many do not take advantage of this special blessing of having a spiritual family, so when their grief comes, they must often bear it alone. But take comfort in the thought that nothing can separate us from God...not even death!

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