

7 Things Learned in 10 years

10 years ago (Feb 2008)...my wife Jennifer went to a meeting for work after dinner. It wasn't snowing when she left but started while the meeting was going on. By the time she was headed home, the snow fall had picked up and was nearly blinding. She was killed in a two car accident five miles from home. She was 39 years old. To this day, that is the most traumatic event in my life.

Many things were difficult and not much fun. But, I would like to share some things that I have learned by the grace of God over the last 10 years.

#1 God gets blamed for a lot of things. As a Christian, we believe that God is a sovereign God in control of all things. Here is how the logic goes that I have heard. Karen experienced this too as a child upon the death of her mother.

Man's Logic: God is in control of everything. Since He did not prevent this tragedy, that means He "allowed" this tragedy. Therefore, this is the plan that God has for my life.

NO NO NO NO.....

Every situation in our life has 4 elements in play. A) God B) The devil C) Decisions of others D) Our decisions

A) God – He is the Almighty Creator and sovereign over all things. He gave Adam and Eve a job to multiply and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). They were to have the authority of the earth. But Adam and Eve sinned (Gen 3) and gave that authority to the devil. That sin started all the processes that ultimately leads to death – spiritually and physically. Sickness, murder, assault, and all of the other crimes against humanity are a result of the original sin. Man's master shifted from God to the devil. As the book of Revelations plays out, all things will be returned to the state that God originally created.

B) Devil – He thought himself to be equal to God. (Ez 28:11-19). I heard a preacher say that wickedness was found in the devil when there was no tempter. God threw him to the earth before man was created. The devil hates everything of God. The devil cannot create life. So he hates life and loves murder, abortion, and seeks to bring pain. John 10:10 *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.* I Peter 1:8 *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* What is the devils job? He paces back and forth over the earth (Job 1:6-7) looking for someone to devour, steal from, kill, or destroy. He targets followers of Christ but has no problem in spreading destruction to everyone.

C) Decisions of others – They affect us. The decisions of others can put us into places that neither we nor God wanted us to be. Our hearts break when we see children in situations that were caused by the decisions of their parents. People

make the decision to get drunk or high and then get in to drive a vehicle. There is no end to this list. God did not cause this to happen, but He has a way out. Ps 34:19 *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*"

D) Our decisions - God created a human being that has a free will. This will is so free that it can reject the One who created them. I can't even comprehend the immense power that it would take to create a free will and soul that will go on for eternity. The clay is so free that it can reject the Potter (Is 29:16) God does not control our thoughts and movements by overpowering our will. We are free to make decisions. We are free to live for God. We are free to live against God.

So, I said all of that to get back to this. God did not take Jennifer because He needed her in heaven more than He needed her here on earth. The devil took the opportunity to steal her from us because that is what he does. Decisions were made on timing of when to leave places by the other gentleman in the accident as well as Jennifer. A change of 20 seconds would have altered history. Jennifer was not the greatest driver. Did she zig instead of zag on that snowy road? Was she distracted when I tried to call her on the cell phone? The difficult answer is "I don't know". But, I refuse to solely blame God, release everyone and everything else of their responsibilities, and say it was God's Will.

#2 The If's and Why's can drive you crazy. I started down that road which is natural. What if she would have taken the 3 ton Excursion instead of that cracker box Kia? What if she would have not stopped at Kroger's on the way home? If..If..If..If

Why did this happen? Why did God allow this to happen? What sin was there that could have allowed the door to be opened for this attack? Why did it have to snow that night? Why? Why? Why?.....

The If's and Why's will drive you crazy and into depression if you let them. I studied Job for a while in the subsequent months. God spoke in the last several chapters of Job addressing some of the charges that were brought up by Job and his friends. If you read it closely, God never explained why those tragedies came to Job's life. I had to make peace that there are things I will never know the answer "Why?"....ever. Once we get to Heaven, I doubt that I will care about the "Why".

Deut 29:29 *"The **secret things belong unto the Lord** our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of the law."*

#3 Life goes on. Oh man do I hate this one. I can hate this one, but it is still true. I remember coming home from the entire funeral process. It was the first Saturday morning and it was just me and the kids. I thought "What the rip am I supposed to do now?" Rip is a traditional Miller cuss word without officially cussing. The kids and I have our emotional guts ripped out. But, life goes on. While we were burying our dead,

the world continued on without us. The bills still have to be paid which means I have to go back to work. The kids need to finish school to prepare them for their lives ahead. But, at that point, nobody cared about life. Frankly, we did not really want to be alive, if the truth is told.

I was outside one day and the mail lady pulled into the drive to talk to me. She said that even though it does not seem like it now, in a couple of years you will be able laugh and smile again. A couple of years? How can I get through the next hour? This is where the focus had to narrow. Get through the next hour. Hours stack into days. Days stack into years and here we are 10 years later. Please don't misunderstand. It is a long road. The Lord has never left us or forsaken us (Heb 13:5, Deut 31:8). He comforted us with His Word, with His inward speaking, and with people that He brought into our lives for comfort and encouragement. Healing and restoration has come progressively.

#4 Death is the fulfillment of the marriage covenant. I was driving home from work one day. This truth started coming up inside of me. It was strong and I knew it was from the Lord. The strange thing was this happened 4 years after Jennifer died and 2 years after Karen and I got married. My mother had died a few months earlier. Unknown to me at the time, the Lord was preparing me for a situation with my stepdad.

Wedding vows usually say that we will love, honor, and cherish our spouse. We will do that in sickness and in health as well as for richer or poorer. The traditional last words would be "till death do us part." Death did part Jennifer and me ten years ago. My thoughts were that the marriage covenant was broken. The Lord showed me on that drive home from work that the covenant was not broken. The covenant was fulfilled. It was complete. It was 30 or 40 years too soon. But, it was complete all the same. As flawed as it was at times, we did our best to love, honor, and cherish until death did us part. Jennifer was safe in Heaven for eternity. Isn't that the ultimate goal we have for our loved ones to have them safe in Heaven?

#5 Time does not heal all wounds An internet search shows a quote from Rose Kennedy who states that time does not heal all wounds. If you remember, she lost one son by war and two by assassin's bullets.

It is a point that I have meditated and went to the Scriptures many times. The pain lessens. But I have never arrived at a place where I don't miss Jennifer. Psalms 139: 13-16 tells us how we are wonderfully made and how God has created our innermost being. Each one of us is unique. There is no one like us either in history or the future. You are the only you there will ever be. We miss the person more than the role they play in our life. I miss the person of Jennifer who was my wife. I can say the same thing about my mom Sandy. I miss her not because she played the role of Mom. I miss the person Sandy who was my mom. We are unique. Our departed loved ones are unique. There is no replacing them.

If there is no replacing our loved ones and time does not heal all wounds, what are we to do? We have to look to the only one that can heal and that is Jesus.

Isaiah 61:1 – *The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners..* vr
2....to comfort all who mourn.....

I stood on that “bind up the brokenhearted”. I was brokenhearted. In fact, my heart was shattered into so many pieces that it was impossible to glue them back together. But somehow, Jesus put it back together. It is a healing process starting 10 years. It continues to this day. Jesus makes it possible that you can love again. He will bring other people into your life. They are not replacements. But it is an expansion of your capacity to love. It is a miracle from God that I cannot explain.

#6 God is the God of Restoration Immediately after the original sin of man, God started His plan of restoration to bring us back to Him. The entire Bible is that plan laid out. Immediately after Jennifer’s death, God started a plan of restoration. First is the grieving process. You must go through it. If you don’t, you will be stuck there and it will affect your entire life. As the grieving process winds down, the restoration process can begin. Your thinking, emotions, and ability to love will stabilize. The grieving process and the restoration process overlap. It has been only with the perspective of time and God’s help can I see this.

God has brought me Karen which is a story in itself for another time. My kids have survived childhood and are pursuing their adult lives as God leads. My oldest son will soon be married and on his own adventure of married life. My daughter is finishing her master’s degree. My youngest son is pursuing a military career. Is it a bed of roses and perfect? No. Are there still hurts and struggles? Yes. But, the Lord is faithful and continues to help us. I must continually go back to the Scriptures for strength.

Job 42:10 *After Job prayed for his friends, the Lord **restored** his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.*

Job 42:12 *The Lord blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the former part....*

Job 42:16-17 *After this, Job lived a 140 years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so Job died; an old man and full of years.*

#7 Eternity is only a heartbeat away. This was from one of the sermons from Pastor John King. More people from my childhood and life have died starting with Jennifer in 2008, my mom in 2012, and two uncles in 2014 (within a few weeks of each other). I have crossed the 50 year age mark and it has heightened my awareness of eternity. God creates beings that are eternal. You will never pass away to nothingness. While the body will die, your soul and spirit are eternal. Since we are only a heartbeat away from eternity, we need to make certain of eternal home. Follow the Romans Road to Heaven: Rom 3:23, Rom 3:10, Rom 5:12, Rom 6:23, Rom 5:8, Rom 10:9-10

Thanks for reading. Dion