

ZONDERVAN

Grieving the Loss of a Loved One

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READING FOR SPECIAL DAYS OR NEEDS

SPECIAL OCCASIONS, HOLIDAYS, AND personal circumstances may trigger your grief and expose a new dimension of living life without your loved one. When you encounter these times in your journey and desire encouragement or a fresh perspective, turn to the selected reading for that specific day or need.

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YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF

LOSING SOMEONE YOU LOVE through death is painful and personal. You soon learn that grief can't be confined to a method, time frame, or event; it's a process. Grief is an unpredictable, solitary, and unforgettable experience, one that can't be healed in a moment, a month, or even a lifetime. Grief ebbs and flows, like the swelling waves of an ocean. One moment we feel engulfed by a wave of sorrow. The next we are lifted by waves of hope and acceptance. Grief is an irregular tide that often takes us by surprise.

How you respond to it determines the quality and direction of your life. You can choose to allow it to drown you emotionally, or you can allow loss to enlarge your soul. As difficult as it is to lose a loved one, grief can deepen you as a person and increase your empathy and your trust in God. Loss can open your eyes to see the same world from a different viewpoint . . . with new scenery. In that sense, grief is a journey.

Whether you've recently suffered loss and are beginning your grief journey, are several years into your journey, or are somewhere in between, a void will always exist in your life from losing your loved one. Each season of your life may find you blazing a new trail as you discover a different dimension of your loss. And just when you think your journey through grief has finally ended, you see a fork in the road and find yourself trudging down a familiar path that you've walked before.

Grieving the Loss of a Loved One gives you permission to be who you are and where you are in your journey. Take a moment to glance at the table of contents. You may want to use it as your compass, helping you to find the section of the book that best fits your need each day. Or you may want to read the book straight through, one devotional per day. However you use the book, let it help you wherever you are on the journey.

If you need to cry, weep with all your heart.

If you need to vent, tell God the whole truth about how you're feeling.

If you're ready to celebrate, do it with gusto.

My hope is that you will adopt *Grieving the Loss of a Loved One* as a personal companion. Think of it as a good friend with whom you can share laughs, tears, dreams, and your innermost thoughts. Whether you read this devotional guide daily or as the need arises, highlight it, dog-ear it, write in it. My prayer is that it will be a tool to guide you to a deeper understanding of who God is.


I pray the stories that follow will comfort your soul and give you courage to press on in your journey. What I have written has grown out of my personal experience of losing my infant son and three children through miscarriages; being married to a man who lost both of his parents as a child; and encountering life losses through my parents' divorce, cross-country moves, infertility, adoption, and career transitions.

I believe that God, who suffered the loss of His only Son, understands our worst pain and our darkest thoughts. Wherever you are on the journey through grief, God wants not only to speak to you but also to draw near. I hope the stories, Scripture, prayers, and the opportunity to record your own thoughts, questions, and prayers in the journal section will help to bring healing and a closer relationship with the one who loves you.

I am convinced that we sometimes go through difficult experiences so we can encourage others who will later endure similar hardships. As a matter of fact, this book wouldn't have been possible without the men, women, and children who shared their personal insights and stories. I have written this book not as an expert, not as someone who has arrived, but as a fellow griever, still on the journey. Behind the pages of *Grieving the Loss of a Loved One* is a person who can relate to at least some of what you are experiencing. And behind that person is a faithful God.

Section 1 Denying
YOUR JOURNEY
THROUGH DENIAL

Denying: *to declare untrue, to disclaim connection with
or responsibility for, to refuse to accept.*



God never comes through the door that I hold open for
Him,
But always knocks at the one place which I have walled
up with concrete.
But if I do not let Him in there,
He turns away altogether.

HELMUT THIELICKE

It's a funny thing about grief — handling it efficiently
doesn't make it go away.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

How do I manage a difficulty? Well, at first I try to
walk past it. If that does not help, I try to climb over it;
and when I cannot climb over it, to crawl underneath.
And when that is not possible, I go straight through —
God and me.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

CLIPPINGS FROM MY NOTEBOOK

Devotion 1

JOURNEY THROUGH
THE FOG TO REALITY

You can't heal a wound by saying it's not there!

JEREMIAH 6:14, TLB

Shock.

Disbelief.

Numbness.

Confusion.

YOU MAY ENCOUNTER SOME of these feelings when facing the reality of your loss. At times you may feel as if you're walking on a road through a dense fog, stumbling through the nothingness that surrounds you, groping for an escape yet finding none.

Getting fogged in was a common occurrence when we lived in Oregon. Most mornings I would peer out our family room window expecting to see fir trees and mountains, only to find they had vanished once again.

Whenever the fog rolled in, I felt out of control, thinking about airport delays and white-knuckle driving. Over time, though, I learned to cope with the eerie white vapor and to forge through it — sometimes with the help of my car's high beams. I realized the impairment was temporary, and that gave me hope to endure. By afternoon the fog would lift, and I could see clearly again.

That's how it is with grief. Our initial shock over a loved one's death may cause us to deny it or ignore it. We may feel lost, paralyzed, in limbo, somewhere between reality and a dream.

This can't be happening! you think.

But it is.

I don't want to face it!

But you have to.

Maybe not right this moment. That's okay. But if you want to journey through grief, you must look beyond the clouds created by denial and fears. With God's strength and in His timing, the fog will begin to clear, and you'll be able to see reality again. It may not be what you want to see, and it may look quite different than before, but it is a necessary part of your journey through grief.

How are you coping with your loss? When you look out the window of your circumstance today, what do you see? Are you in the fog, denying reality? Or is the fog beginning to clear to reveal a new landscape?

Lord, it's so hard to cope with what has happened. I don't want to believe my loved one is gone. I keep hoping I'll wake up and discover this is only a dream. I feel so unsure about where I am right now. I can't see what life should look like. Please help me through this part of the journey. You say that You will never leave me or forsake me and that You will be a lamp to my feet. Please be my headlights and lead me through this time of uncertainty and pain. Amen.



MY PERSONAL JOURNEY
