

Loss and grief: How should I pray?

Loss and grief are an inevitable part of every person's journey through life. When we experience these troublesome times, there is one fundamental choice we need to make: the choice to keep holding onto Jesus, no matter what has happened, or is still happening, we choose to stay with Him.

Read through the book of Job again. Here we see that, although Job wrestled with God, he eventually saw that God was still sovereign, still in control, and still knew what He was doing. Let's take a closer look at Job, a righteous man, who was knocked sideways by loss and grief, and found help from a Man acquainted with sorrows.

Job was an upright and devout man; he feared God and shunned evil. From one day to the next, Job's peaceful and prosperous life was changed: he lost all his possessions, his children, the respect of his wife, his relatives, his servants, his neighbours, and his friends. Furthermore, his own body was tormented with incurable sores. (Job 19:13-29). How did Job react to all these calamities? He arose and fell to the ground in worship. (Job 1:20). "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away." (Job 1:21). Although Job refused to sin by his words (Job 2:10), he did struggle with himself. "I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes." (Job 3:26). He was troubled to the point of wanting to die. (Job 6:8-9). Right through the book, we see Job asking "Why?" Although he strives with God, yet he admits "Truly I know it is so...how can a man be righteous before God? He could not answer Him one time out of a thousand." (Job 9:2-3). Job continues to be rejected and accused by his friends; yet he continues to cry out to God for help. Job longs for a Mediator to plead on his behalf with God (Job 9:33), or that God was a 'man' that he could plead with Him (Job 16:21). Job was terrified: "...I am terrified at His presence; when I consider this, I am afraid of Him. For God made my heart weak, and the Almighty terrifies me." (Job 23:15-16). Yet, despite Job's terror and confusion, he doesn't stop turning to God for help

Isolation: When loss and grief hit you, you may become isolated by a) withdrawing from God, b) withdrawing from people, and c) people withdrawing from you. In this last instance there is little you can do to stop people from withdrawing from you, but you can like Job choose to not withdraw from God. This decision and attitude of your heart towards God, is prayer, even if you do not have words at this stage.

As someone acquainted with grief, I can tell you that God is your only source of comfort. We can't afford to turn from Him if grief strikes. If we have done so initially, even as a physical or spiritual reflex to the situation, we must choose to turn back to Him. It may take time, but you need to.

Practical help:

- ✓ Sit quietly with God. There is no need for words. He will intercede for you by His Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:26-27).
- ✓ When you are ready, talk to Him as your heart leads you – quietly or out loud. Breathe each name in and out, one at a time, "Father"..."Counsellor"..."Comforter"..."Jesus", especially in the dark hours of the night when you feel most alone. And when you feel forsaken, remember you aren't!

- ✓ When you feel you can, begin to read the Word. Make what you read your prayers, for instance, the anguish of Job's petitions unto the LORD, the comfort David received in Psalm 90. Try to memorize Psalm 94:17-18.
- ✓ If, like me, you feel weak (and remember, this is precisely when His power is at work in you), write a verse on a bright piece of cardboard and place it on your bedside table, or somewhere where you will see it before you fall asleep, and upon waking. Read it, and take it to heart; ask God to write it on your heart.
- ✓ If you pray with someone who is experiencing trauma, identify with their pain, but after that give them over to God. Your involvement must be without judgment, or a sense of 'knowing better', just be there.
- ✓ As a child of God, always try to remember, He will never let you go. Even if you feel you have lost all hope, you will rise again. Rest in God's might; rest in His goodness; rest in His Fatherhood; rest in His wisdom.