

Grief / God's Comfort

Carol: Life is full of changes. Sometimes those changes come to us so suddenly we don't expect it. We find ourselves in a situation we never asked for and we never could have imagined. We may lose something very important to us. How will we respond? Will this challenge make us stronger, or will it break us?

Tammy: Hello friend. It's so good to have you back with us again. Carol and I welcome you to Women of Hope where we love to share things from our heart to yours.

Carol: And Tammy, it's always good to be together with you. Today we would like to tell you about a special friend who experienced a huge loss. And I think she's a stronger person today because of it. Unless you knew her you might not realize the pain she experienced. You see, Marsha's son died when he was about 3 years old. Through this experience she has learned a lot and has helped many others who have lost children too. I think we can all learn something from Marsha's story.

Tammy: Maybe you've also lost a child or someone you loved. Or, maybe you're trying to encourage someone else who's going through a tragedy like this. You don't know what you can say or do to help them. Or, maybe you've experienced a different kind of loss of your own.

Carol: We'd like to share with you some of the lessons our friend has learned and we have experienced ourselves from the loss of a loved one. It's good to know there are others who understand how painful a loss really is! You're not alone!

You know, grief is a complicated thing. After a loss of someone so dear, your heart and your life will never be the same. You are changed forever. If you expect things to be the same as they once were, you will be disappointed. It's much like the damage that a flood would have on the ground beneath it. After the water goes away the land is changed. It doesn't look the same. In the same way, your life will be different. But, in time you will be able to rebuild a new life.

Tammy: Each passing stage may bring back more memories. And, you'll need to say goodbye to those memories all over again. Stay strong. You can do it – take one step at a time, face one memory at a time!

We sometimes don't realize how special the ordinary, everyday things are that we used to do. They're now gone and we can't share them with that person anymore. Most of life is made up of ordinary things...a smile, a hug, holding a hand, tying a shoe or taking a walk.

Carol: It may seem like it would be less painful if you could just forget the loved one you lost. But of course you can't and you shouldn't. Marsha said that, for her remembering was a gift. There is

an old saying that it's better to have loved and lost what you love, than to never have loved. We were created to love and to be loved.

And you may wonder... Will I ever be happy again? Is it possible to be both sad and happy? Empty and full? Weary yet hopeful? Is there room for all these emotions to exist together? What do you think?

Tammy: Our friend Marsha told us how she would wake up in middle of night with panic...thinking about what else could go wrong. She wanted to hold tight to what she still had. Yet the tighter she held on, the more she felt fear that she might lose it. Finally she realized it was foolish to think that it was all up to her. And this is what she said:

'When you're having a moment of extra grief you may need to sit still and take it in. Holding onto the grief for a moment may be the only way to let it go. Does that surprise you? It did surprise me until I really thought about it. If you cover up your grief then it is still there locked inside. You see, the truth is that the things we hold onto are actually holding us.'

Carol: Wow. Listen to that again. "The things we hold onto are actually holding us." Marsha is right. And you know what else can help? Spending time with people who remind you that life is still in front of you. They encourage you to keep living and hoping and to push forward to what lies ahead.

Don't be afraid to share your grief. As you share your grief, this allows others to mourn their losses. You may have lost your child, but that child who is someone else's brother, friend or relative and they're also feeling their own sadness.

Tammy: How do we share in someone's grief? What can we do?

Listening and caring seems to be the best thing you can do. Don't try to pretend the hurt never happened. Let your friend talk about it as much as they need to.

But, one warning...we should never try to compare losses with another person. Each person feels their own loss very deeply. No two losses are ever the same. All difficult losses are felt in different ways.

Carol: And here's another thought: Grief may sometimes wear a mask. What do we mean by that? Well, someone once said that *anger is the gatekeeper of sadness*. I believe they meant that sometimes we are angry, but it's actually a cover up for our sadness. We don't want to think about whatever it is that makes us hurt, so we push that down inside. But it's too hard to cover up such a deep feeling, so anger bursts forth. We are really very, very sad but it might look like we're angry instead.

Tammy: Holidays or special days can be especially difficult. Marsha has learned that you do have a CHOICE when it comes to your thoughts and attitude. You can choose in advance to fight for joy! Sometimes her sorrow seemed so big she thought it would destroy her. She felt weak, small and fragile. She asked friends to pray for her, and with her, and over time, through the extreme, overwhelming pain of loss, Marsha has found joy in everyday things. How such joy and sorrow can live side by side is something we cannot understand. And yet she has experienced it. She says, today, her grief is still there, but the burden is not so heavy and it does not threaten to overtake her like it once did. Tears that were once constant now only come from time to time.

Carol: Today Marsha is able to say, 'Yes, there *is* room for both joy and sorrow, grief and hope.' After almost 3 years God gave Marsha and her family the beautiful gift of another son. She realizes that this child might not have been born, if his big brother had not passed away. More recently she was given another child, this time it was a little girl. And guess what name they gave her? Hope.

We asked Marsha what gave her hope during her time of such sadness and grief, she told us it was the knowledge that during the darkest days of her life, she knew that God was holding her in the palm of his hand!

Tammy: How did she know this? Well God says in his word, the Bible: "When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt you." (Isaiah 43:2 GNT)

In your darkness and grief, how do you feel about this? Perhaps you, too, have laid your treasure, your precious loved one, in the dust. But it does not end there! Although you cannot see past the dark bend in this road, there is a pathway ahead with God by our side. There is a future and hope.

How do we receive God's comfort during painful times?

Carol: Have you ever been in deep water where you couldn't touch the bottom? If not, maybe you can imagine it with me. You try to stand up as if you are on solid ground but your feet keep sinking down, down. It can be a scary feeling if you can't swim. Our lives can be like that at times, can't they? When we are in problems so deep over our heads that we feel we're not on solid ground, if we choose to call out to God, we will learn how far God reaches. We will understand how long and high and deep and how wide the love of God really is. There is no place that his love doesn't reach!

Tammy: No one knows who wrote the words of this poem but they are beautiful and comforting words. Listen as I read it to you.

'The will of God will never take you
where the loving grace of God cannot keep you, where the arms of God cannot support you,
where the riches of God cannot supply your needs.

The will of God will never take you
where the comfort of God cannot dry your tears, where the Word of God cannot satisfy you, where
the miracles of God cannot be done for you
where God cannot find you.'

Carol: Marsha, Tammy and I have experienced grief. God has never left us. We could never
measure his grace and love for us. Though this journey seems impossible at times, you will be
able to say; it is still *well with my soul*.

Together on Women of Hope today, we are talking about the loss of a loved one. You may know all
about that or you may have a friend who knows about it and you have walked alongside of her.

So how can Marsha say, 'It is well with my soul' after losing her child and really mean it?

It's not that her life wasn't affected. Her physical life and her emotions, her family, they were all
deeply affected. But her *inner being* and her *spiritual life* is unharmed, and even strengthened, by
her trust in God.

Tammy: Someone said: "Life is bigger than loss because God is bigger than loss. Pain and death
do not have the final word; *God* does." (Jerry Sittser, *A Grace Disguised*)

In the end it is God alone who has the final word. The story isn't over yet.

Marsha realized she needs to stay very close to God by spending time reading his word and
praying to him. When she is tired and stressed and too busy with the all the cares of this world to
pray and read God's word, that is when her burden is too heavy to bear.

Carol: We all need to read God's word, the Bible, because if we don't there are many things in life
that won't make sense to us. It is not that we will understand everything and have all the answers.
But we will see God how he really is. He will give us his view of things of the world that *he* has
created. He will guide us in the way we should go. You see, God's ways are different than our
ways. In his word, the Bible, he says:

"My thoughts are not like your thoughts.

And your ways are not like my ways,"

..."The heavens are higher than the earth.

And my ways are higher than your ways.

My thoughts are higher than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8 NIRV)

Tammy: Many times we would write the story of our lives differently than how God has planned it. But as his children we can trust him to look at the big picture and love us enough to sometimes say “No”. And when we hurt because he says ‘no’, He holds us close and reminds us that he is faithful and sure. He doesn’t change. He is taking good care of us.

Choosing joy in the midst of sorrow is one thing, but choosing our yesterday, today and forever? We dare not. We may think we know what is best for us but we see such a small part of our lives. God sees it all – the past, the present and the future all at once. Staying close to God and accepting his will for us is the safest place to be.

Carol: For Marsha, everything changed when she stopped looking at how small she is and focused on how *big* her God is! He knows us each by name and he never fails! We are so small but we are carried by the God of the whole universe! Even on the good days, on the sunniest of days, He still carries us. For there is nothing we can do without him. Indeed, it is good to stop and remember who the Lord is. It helps us to see life more clearly.

Grief changes you forever. When you trust God in your grief, he will walk with you and you will be changed for the *better*. Another person who has experienced a deep loss, losing his wife and two of his children, said that he did not get over the loss of his loved ones; instead, he absorbed the loss into his life until it became a part of who he is. He found within that pain the grace to survive and eventually grow. (Jerry Sittser, *A Grace Disguised*)

Will there still be tears? Absolutely! The hunger of loss cannot be satisfied until we are finally in heaven. There is a ‘missing them’ that won’t get filled. But there can still be joy and you can walk with hope!

Tammy: All losses are unique. And so are we. But God knows that. And he knows what we need to get through the difficult time we are going through. He gives grace to me for *my* loss and grace to *you* for your loss. He helps us with exactly what we need *when* we need it. But, he doesn’t usually give us what we need *before* we need it. He wants us to depend on him!

Take it one step at a time. God gives us what we need for right now, for this moment, for today. Tomorrow, he will give us what we need for tomorrow. It’s better not to think too far ahead asking, “What if?” For that’s when we begin to worry and get overwhelmed. Remember, God will be there with you tomorrow and next week and next year, to carry you through.

If you are new in your grief journey, let us encourage you that you will not always feel the way you feel right now. With God's help, the pain will get less hard! The laughter will return to your house

and you will smile again. You won't ever forget your child, your friend, your husband, but in Jesus Christ, you *will* be comforted. For God has said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." (John 14:8 KJV)

Carol: If you already have a relationship with God, and have called out to Jesus to forgive you and take control of your life, I encourage you. Remember God's faithfulness in the *past*. And then see his faithfulness and care for you *today*. Once you do that, take it one step further. Trust him with your *future*.

What about you? Do you need peace in your heart? Are you discontent, worried, or weary?

Whatever hurt or trial you're going through, whatever loss you're mourning, remember that this world is not all there is. If you have believed in Jesus Christ, the **best** - better than your life has ever been, better than you could ever have dreamed - is yet to come! God will make all things right. Keep trusting him. Look to the Bible for the Truth you seek. You won't be disappointed. Friend, don't continue to carry burdens that you were not meant to carry. Give your hurt and your worry to God and receive His peace in return.

Tammy: Before we go today I want to share a story with you from a pastor who listens to Women of Hope. This is what he said:

'I am a regular listener and a Pastor. When I heard this program, I felt deeply blessed and thanked the Lord for such a program. I conduct a few church meetings at homes in remote villages. In the congregation, especially, the ladies are illiterate. It is very difficult for me to visit with them frequently and teach the Word of God. Therefore, I asked them to listen to this program and also provided them with a few programs on CD. The ladies have benefited greatly by listening; they have learned about cleanliness in their house and received useful health tips. These health tips are very useful as there are no health centers in the vicinity. They also learned how to take care of their children properly, and how to maintain good relationship with other people. As a pastor, I am supposed to take care of my (flock), but I am glad that Women of Hope is doing so on my behalf. Please pray for all my house fellowships, so that they may grow more in the Lord.'

(Letter from Rev Sinha, West Bengal April 2014)

Carol: Thank you, Pastor, for those great encouraging words. We are very happy that the Women of Hope programs have been so helpful to you and your church members and we will pray for the house fellowships. God bless you.

Tammy: We have to go now, but we do look forward to next time. We would love to hear from you – You can write to us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope.... The email address is: twrwomenofhope@twr.org. That's twrwomenofhope@twr.org.

Or if you have missed a program or you want to hear it again visit our website twrwomenofhope.org. Or visit our Facebook page.

Carol: We do hope you will be with us again. Remember, God will make all things right. Give your hurt and your worry to Him and receive His peace in return.

God bless you.

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