

6 Ways to Handle Loss

It was one of those gray days where the heavy clouds depicted my emotions. They looked like they could shed streams of water any minute, and I felt as though I could shed streams of tears.

This month marks four years since my father closed the final page on this chapter and stepped into that Great Story that has no ending. I miss my dad. Sometimes the waves of missing him hit me quite unexpectedly, and the sudden rush of tears surprises me.

But today, it's not just my dad I'm missing; I'm reflecting on the many, many losses that we've experienced the last few years.

Loss. The final turning of the page. Why does it hit so hard? I've experienced loss many times—loss from miscarriage, loss of friends, loss from death, loss of a church, loss of loved ones, loss of relationships, loss of dreams. But no matter how much loss one experiences, I don't think it's something we ever grow comfortable with. Loss is always an unwelcome intruder in our lives.

Experiencing a fresh loss can feel overwhelming on days like today. So I counsel my heart with truth. When loss overwhelms my soul, I must lead my heart back to the side of the one who will never desert His own.

“The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed” (Deut. 31:8).

This is truth that anchors my soul and provides me with hope for the future. On that gray day, I counseled my heart with truth, and you are welcome to join me in considering how I've

navigated loss.

Reorient Your Heart

For me, reorienting my heart involves taking my thoughts captive. My thoughts dictate where my heart goes. When I keep revisiting a painful conversation, imagine unknown realities, and dwell on a painful situation that is out of my control, I'll soon enter despair. And despair is not a place that glorifies God.

Reorienting my heart is not denial of the loss, it's not taking a stoic view of the pain, but it is simply taking captive thoughts that are not leading me to solid footing.

What does God tell me to dwell on?

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things (Phil. 4:8).

It's a battle to take my mind from the pit. I have to keep grabbing every thought that wanders back to the source of my despair. I have to drag those thoughts to the cross and dwell on what I know to be true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, good, excellent and praise-worthy.

Taking every thought captive doesn't mean stuffing the problem or being passive, but before I move forward in any attempts to resolve an issue, I first need to settle my mind with truth ... which leads me to my next step.

Replace Lies With Truth

Usually when we walk through a painful season of loss, we're bombarded with lies that rob our hope. We hear the dreary forecast running through our brain: "This is too hard." "No matter how hard you try, things will never improve." "Just

give up." "God isn't listening." "God doesn't care."

When those lies start to take over, I must reorient my heart by taking every thought captive, then replace those lies with truth: "He is a God of seeing." "God is able." "He who began a good work will complete it." "God is my shield." "God hears my cries."

Remember God's Past Faithfulness

Take a walk down memory lane and recount God's faithfulness. Pull out an old journal where you've recorded answers to prayers, or simply ask God to bring to mind past events when He worked in powerful ways in your life. Spend some time strolling through scriptural accounts of God showing up to do the impossible during desperate times.

Rein in Your Emotions

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Spirit's fruit is self-control. It doesn't get top billing—love and joy seem to be what people crave when it comes to the Spirit's work, but self-control is the characteristic of the Spirit that enables the "more desirable fruit" to flourish. Ask the Spirit for the grace and power to bring your emotions under control.

When you've reached melt-down mode, I encourage you to take a long walk and talk to the Father. Pour out your heart to Him rather than venting with someone else first.

"Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future" (Prov. 31:25).

"Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back" (Prov. 29:11).

Resolve Issues

When navigating loss, you may have issues that need to be

resolved. Evaluate where your heart is: Are you angry with God? Do you have unresolved conflict with anyone? Are you experiencing loss because of disobedience?

Honestly consider if there is anything in the wake of this loss that you need to do. Ask the Spirit to open your eyes and lead you. You cannot move on to a place of joy and contentment if you are unwilling to seek reconciliation.

Rise Up to Worship

Meditate on passages of Scripture like Psalm 57 and offer words of thanksgiving for specific and personal past works of God. Spend some moments focusing on character traits of God you appreciate and lift up words of praise to Him.

Are you navigating a painful loss today? I pray God meets you in your sorrow and you experience His deep and abiding compassion.

Taken from Kimberly Wagner's blog post "6 Ways to Navigate Loss" at . Used with permission.