

A Christ-Focused Widow's 2 Keys to Healing in Excruciating Sorrow

There's no way to make death and grief OK. Death is an aberration in God's universe, and every time we meet it there is suffering. We try all kinds of things to delay it, ignore it and pretend we can evade it, but not one of us can escape death. Death hurts—a lot.

Grief is many things; loss, loneliness, anxiety, stress, anger, depression, exhaustion and so much more. Grief comes in waves, and each one is different than the one before. If you've lost someone close to you, even caring friends are unlikely to fully appreciate its deep and long-lasting impact on your mind, heart and life.

I think the best word to describe the impact of death on those of us left behind is pain. What do you do with the pain as a widow? The death of my husband Al last year wounded me deeply. And yet I'm still standing. Some days are harder than others, but I keep going. Some have asked how I can do so. It's more than simply knowing God, although that's important.

Several things have been helpful in my grief journey, but there's one thing I've come to know that has made the most difference. And it is this:

It's not supposed to not hurt.

You could take out the double negative and it would still be true; this is supposed to hurt. This is not OK. And when we as Christians try to make it OK, we cripple our own hearts and miss out on the empowerment God would like to gift us with.

For those of us going through grief, it often seems that if we

could just make the pain go away, everything would be all right. But that's not what God promises, at least not yet.

And it's not even true. If the pain would magically go away, so would the memories, the love, the gift of that person in your life. That is true even if the relationship also included suffering.

Pain means we care. Pain means we loved. Pain means this is not the way God intended our lives and the world to be. Pain means our love was deep, our lives are different because of that loved one's place in it, and their time on this earth changed us forever. Those are good things. Would we really not want to hurt at the death of someone we cared about so deeply?

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So what do you do with the pain? How do you go on? Can you even go on?

Here are two responses to the pain that encompass what we know of life, God and His kingdom. And these responses apply even if the pain you carry is from something other than the death of a loved one.

1. Do It in Pain.

You've heard Joyce Meyers say "Do it afraid." It's the same principle here. Don't wait until you don't hurt to move forward, because "not hurting" is not going to happen. The acuteness of your pain will lessen, but it will not go away. It's not supposed to. That's why God has to wipe our tears away when He makes all things new. (Rev. 21:4).

If you're still alive, God's got something for you to do. Somebody needs you. There's a gift inside you that the world needs. If you wait for the pain to go away before giving that gift, you'll never do so.

Yes, grief takes time. Mourning has a place in our experience.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn." (Matt. 5:4). There are no trophies given for speed as you journey through grief.

But journey you must. You must seek healing. You must keep taking one step forward. You must make the choice to pay the bills, care for your physical health and love those still in your life. The way you do those things may change, but you don't stop. You must decide that you will not wait to feel no pain before you engage—or re-engage—in the purpose for which God still has you on this Earth.

Our western culture and western Christianity has too often given the impression that the goal of life is comfort—freedom from worry, responsibility and suffering. That's neither healthy nor realistic, and it is not what God promised. So quit expecting to stop hurting!

That doesn't mean we wallow in pain. We are absolutely responsible for doing all that we can to live healthy, find healing, and experience peace and joy. But that health, peace and joy come right in the middle of pain and suffering.

It's not one or the other; it's both/and. It's pain and healing. It's suffering *and hope*. It's sadness *and joy*. We can—we must—embrace them both. Jesus promised His followers both trouble and peace. (John 16:33).

2. Look to the Future.

While embracing our present reality, we can also look forward with absolute certainty to victory in the end. We know the end of the story—that Jesus wins and that death and suffering will be done away with forever.

That gives us amazing power to endure. Think of it this way. However long ago your loved one died, you've made it this far. You've experienced a moment of pain so overwhelming that you didn't know if you could survive a moment longer, but you did. If you're reading this, you're still here. You made it.

And if you could survive that moment, you can survive another.

If you could survive five minutes, you can survive an hour. If you can survive a day, you can survive a week. Or a month.

Because we know with absolute certainty how the story ends, we can survive. Will the end come next month? If you knew Jesus would return next month and your pain would end, do you think you could hold on? What if you knew that would happen next year? It might be hard, but you could make it.

I don't know when Jesus will return. I don't know how long you and I will carry this suffering. It might be a month, or a year, or it might be more years. But I know that you and I can make it. Jesus said, "He who endures to the end will be saved." (Matt. 24:13)

Imagining how long you may have to endure suffering and pain can seem overwhelming. But knowing with absolute certainty that your suffering will end makes it possible. As the long version of the Serenity Prayer says, "Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time," one moment is all we have to worry about.

In that moment, we can know Jesus is with us. And that's enough.

Question: Have you been waiting for the pain to end before taking the next step? What can you do today to embrace both the pain and the healing? You can leave a comment by clicking [here](#).

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