

A Passage Through Grief

During an eight-month period, multiple blows of grief battered my family. The first was related to our daughter, Shela.

My husband and I had adopted Shela when she was four months old. For all of her 19 years, she battled a neuromuscular disease that crippled her body and threatened her life.

Shela never weighed more than 55 pounds and was unable to walk, crawl or dress herself. Yet, despite her disability, she was a committed Christian who had graduated from high school with honors and successfully completed her freshman year in college.

One day we admitted Shela to the hospital with a viral infection. Following the insertion of a breathing tube, her heart stopped. After resuscitation attempts failed, she was declared dead.

A memorial celebration focused on Shela's courage, the lessons she taught us, and the promise of her eternal life and healing. Grief took its toll, but I was beginning to believe survival was possible.

Then a few months later, I received a call to the bedside of the father who had abandoned my mother and me when I was a little girl. I shared with him that in his absence I had come to know God as my "everlasting Father" and that He gave His Son as our Savior.

In spite of my sharing, Dad died one week later without having given his life to the Lord or expressing regret over abandoning us. Now, while trying to care for my family, I was confronted with an incredible two-way grief.

Soon after, my 93-year-old grandmother passed away. These deaths left me with two small estates to settle, all the

accompanying paperwork and three wrenching losses to grieve.

I clung to all I knew of who God is—a sovereign, loving, just and faithful Creator who tells me that He has a perfect plan for my life, even though I struggled to see the purpose in what I was experiencing.

I'd read somewhere that a grieving person should simply "do the next thing." I took that advice. I also waited on God for healing and tried to release the loss I felt little by little, with His help.

I learned that I could trust God to fulfill His Word to those who weep: Weeping is for a night (a short season), and then joy comes in the morning!