

In Open Letter, This Woman Demands Joel Osteen Apologize to Millions of People Around the World

Lynda Cheldelin Fell, author and founder of AlyBlue Media, has called out Joel Osteen in an open letter, arguing that the popular preacher owes her and millions others an apology.

“I forgive you,” Fell begins. “More specifically, I forgive you your trespasses against me and millions of others. For you have been led into temptation to judge something you have never experienced, and throw those who have to the lions.”

The “trespasses” she refers to is Osteen’s treatment of people who have lost loved ones, specifically children and spouses. Fell, who lost her teenage daughter to a car accident and whose husband suffered a stroke at the age of 46 shortly thereafter, took issue with the preacher’s words on the subject.

“I forgive you for using grieving parents in your book *Your Best Life Now* to illustrate your point that some people thrive on self-pity, or worse relishing the attention it brings,” she continues. “For your trespasses against the bereaved are not your fault. Sadly, you portray the perfect example of a larger problem in our society known as grief illiteracy.”

Grief illiteracy, according to Fell, “stems from adhering to outdated beliefs surrounding the mourning process following the loss of a loved one.”

“Pastor Osteen, your idea that the bereaved need just a few months to ‘let go of their grief’” is a gross assumption bearing little resemblance to the truth,” Fell writes. “Much

like Phil and Judy, the bereft couple you portray in *Your Best Life Now*, finding peace and joy in the aftermath of profound loss can take years if not a lifetime.

“And much like you, many well-meaning family and friends walk away, quit coming, quit calling and start avoiding the bereaved because of the notion that mourning is only acceptable for a mere few months. It’s true that in the initial weeks following a loss, delivered meals and untold hugs are abundant. But the grieving process has barely begun when the meals stop coming and the last visitor leaves.”

Osteen is renowned for his messages of hope and encouragement, though some prominent leaders have criticized him for glossing over some of the tougher aspects of the Christian walk and the human condition.

Fell, cognizant of Osteen’s not having undergone the types of losses he addresses in the book, nevertheless takes him to task for how he tells those who have.

“I do have empathy for your shortcoming on this issue, for you haven’t lost a child,” Fells writes. “But let me help you understand why your depiction of Phil and Judy to make a point about self-pity is not only incredibly insensitive but, truth be told, a bit tragic coming from an esteemed person like yourself.”

She then proceeds to describe in detail the pain she still feels over the death of her daughter, using the analogy of a painful, disfiguring and all-consuming burn injury that is invisible to most people but debilitating nonetheless. Her description takes him through an emotionally vivid depiction of how everyday activities that most people take for granted are constant reminders of her loss.

“Every loss is as unique to the individual as one’s fingerprint, but for most the timeframe for healing can be years,” she said. “Not weeks or months, but years. That’s

because the devastation left in the wake of a profound loss bears a tremendous impact upon not just our emotional health, but our physical and spiritual fitness as well, costing our health care industry millions each year.”

She also calls Osteen out for his “chiding a widower for missing his wife 10 years later” in a blog entry.

“You compare his loss with the same defeat one feels over a job he didn’t get, or a relationship that didn’t work out,” she writes. “Shame on you, Pastor Osteen.

“By perpetuating the belief that sorrow lasting longer than a few months is nothing more than self-pity, you invalidate the grief of millions of bereaved souls, robbing them of the very hope needed to survive.

“The barrage of protests against you over recent weeks for your illiterate depictions of the bereaved is unfortunately well-earned. Some have demanded an apology, but I forgive you your trespasses against me and millions of others. I forgive you for judging something you have never experienced, for you are human too. But repeatedly throwing the wounded to the lions is truly ignorant.”