

Starting Afresh After Heart-Wrenching Loss

I looked up the word “resilience” a few weeks ago. I was preparing for a speaking engagement I had coming up on the topic, and this is what I found:

resilience

noun | re·sil·ience | \ri-'zil-yən(t)s

: the ability to become strong, healthy or successful again after something bad happens

: the ability of something to return to its original shape after it has been pulled, stretched, pressed, bent, etc.

Resilience is often prized. I’d venture to say that every one of us would like to be resilient. But what if we could be more than resilient?

I must admit I was a bit disappointed with this definition. I had honestly thought resilience was something greater than this. The moment I read this definition, I found myself challenging the notion that we’re to become strong again or healthy again or successful again when something bad happens. I began challenging the thought that there’s value to returning to our “original shape.”

I mean, after all, where’s the meaning and purpose of our trials if they don’t induce change?

What if, when something bad happens, we were never intended to return to our original shape? What if the very thing we thought would destroy us is the thing intended to strengthen us and allow us to live more fully? To become stronger than ever before?

There was a time when I thought it was not possible to see good come out of my past. But I was proven wrong.

Years after my dad's murder, I sat around a table with some family members telling them all God had done in and through my life, hoping they'd want to receive the same healing I had. I told them about how I had wrestled and wrestled with what had happened to my dad after he died. I told them about all the happy masks I forced myself to put on year after year and how, many years later, I finally reached a point when I was emotionally unable to put on even one more. I told them about the anxiety and depression that ensued and how hopeless I became. I told them about the desperation I felt as the darkness closed in on me but that in that moment the light of God shone into my heart and soul like never before. I told them just how good the Good News of the gospel was to me in that moment. That I was saved, plucked from the fire, as I cried out to Jesus. I told them about Anthony, the man who murdered my dad, and how I had forgiven him. And finally, I told them that I was healed, finally healed, because of what Jesus had done in and through me.

They sat, mostly silent, as I spoke. Listening.

Then my aunt said, "Laurie, I'm glad you've finally come to a good place again."

I didn't have a chance to respond to her before her son said, "No, Mom. Laurie isn't saying she's finally come to a good place again. She's saying she's better than she's ever been before. Even before Uncle Rick died. Right?" He looked to me for confirmation.

I nodded my head. *That's exactly right*, I thought, with tears in my eyes.

He got it.

You see, Jesus had not returned me to my original shape. He

had fashioned me altogether different. New.

Over and over again, I have seen Jesus use every bit of my pain. Though I would absolutely love to have my dad in my life right now, I can say with absolute certainty that my pain has made me better. And so will yours, if you allow Jesus to use it.

We need something greater than resilience. Something altogether new. {eoa}

*In 2010, **Laurie Coombs** was called to forgive the man who murdered her father. What happened as a result of that journey is chronicled in her book, Letters From My Father's Murderer (Kregel, 2015). She blogs at and is a regular writer for and . Coombs and her husband, Travis, make their home in Nevada along with their two daughters and are in the process of adopting from Ethiopia.*

Coombs can also be found on Facebook ([lauriecoombs](#)), Twitter ([lauriecoombs](#)) and Pinterest ([laurieacoombs](#)).