

Where Is Holy Spirit When My Heart Shatters to Pieces?

Our day could be going well from the start. Our routine is set and we have a momentum and we feel accomplished. But then the unthinkable happens.

Whether it is a phone call, or an unexpected visit from the authorities, our world could feel like it has collapsed in an instant. Tragedy and loss has affected us and we didn't invite it. We didn't ask for it but our lives changed in an instant.

I had started a community outreach center in the summer and we knew we were on the brink of revival, but in late September 2000, after receiving the news that my brother had died, I found myself walking through a fog, with so many unanswered questions. I tried to make sure my responsibilities were taken care of, including a ministry I felt like I was neglecting, but I had to be with my family.

As our family made funeral arrangements, we remembered the good times, and every word for the eulogy had a deeper and more profound meaning. It had to convey the best about my brother, and even though it would be in the newspaper next to other eulogies, I understood that each one had a family and a story, and left people who loved them behind. Some passed due to old age, while others like my brother, were tragically taken at a young age.

Questions abounded about the details of his death, and some will continue to go unanswered. As a family, we went together to the place where he was found. What were we looking for? I don't really know, but we loved him and we wanted to say goodbye in one way or another. Everything we did had meaning, including the funeral that he would have wanted.

Friends and family sent their condolences, and I was grateful

for the food and coffee people brought. I had moments when all I wanted was to be alone and hide from the world, but there were other times when I needed to be around people. At times I could cry, but then other times I hated that I couldn't weep. I even tried to act strong in front of certain people, but then fell apart when I was near others.

Six months before he died, we went up to the cemetery above the small church we grew up in, where hours before he had rededicated his life to Christ and was water baptized. We walked those hills together and chased wild turkeys. But as I grieved after he passed, those hope-filled memories were hard to grasp hold of as so many questions and fears went through my mind. I would take long walks where I cried and grieved and yelled, and ran ... and hid. I would yell, "Where are you God? My family needs You!"

I even asked the question, "Where is God in my pain and grief? Where is the Holy Spirit?"

We may think that the wonderful Spirit is not present, that perhaps He left us. But He would reveal Himself briefly through the grace of friends or short encouraging words. We catch that moment and hold on as best as we can to a glimmer of hope, to a ray of sunshine into the darkness we are in. I couldn't sense the presence of God for days, even weeks. I knew He was present, but I was angry that I felt like He was gone. I was even ashamed to show how I felt, but I had great friends who listened to me and prayed with me even when I didn't want prayer.

We jumped into revival and every emotion I had I directed toward God. One night at a youth group meeting, the Spirit of God fell on me in my pain and mourning, and I yelled to God, crying out the name of Jesus, and four teenagers who were praying with us were baptized with the Spirit in that instant. Another time we shared what we were going through with a group of teenagers and we prayed for them, and a number were filled

with the Spirit. A few even had demonic entities reveal themselves, but in a few moments, the precious teenagers were freed.

We saw revival taking place, but I was still grieving. But I realized that it was part of my story. I decided that my pain and grief would be turned into helping others see that Jesus is always with them. Deuteronomy 31:8 (MEV) says, "The Lord, He goes before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you. Do not fear, nor be dismayed."

Psalms 139 (MEV) says, "Where shall I go from Your spirit, or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell at the end of the sea, even there Your hand shall guide me, and Your right hand shall take hold of me." This is something I had to keep reminding myself for a long time, that He is always with me, even if I didn't sense it. This brought me comfort as I mourned and I can tell others, "He is with you."

If you have walked through tragedy, or maybe you are in the midst of grieving and feel like God has left you, find a place to meet with God and write out your prayers and questions directly to God. Then, knowing the biblical truth that He will never leave you nor forsake you, close your eyes and ask Jesus to show you where He was during that time.

When you ask Him, know He will show you He was right there with you. Allow enough time to interact with Him and be completely honest with Him, and He will pour His love into your heart. {eo}

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