

Why Loss and Hope Are Not Diametrically Opposed

Note: This is the first part of a series. Check back on for the second part.

Time cannot heal all wounds. Some wounds are seemingly stubborn, unhealable. Instead of healing, recovering and being restored, some wounds, upon meeting the irresistible force of sorrow, behave as the immovable object of time—"Something's Gotta Give," as lyricist Johnny Mercer said in 1954. Thankfully, when the wound suffered is the loss of a cherished loved one, that "something" is within reach because the power of the Holy Spirit is available, guiding us.

Sometimes, the pain will not heal so much as we otherwise live through a deliberate, perhaps plodding, cycle of accepting the loss and consequences it brings. We relearn how to live, this time in an altered life reshaped by the empty space where our beloved used to exist—always ready with a cheerful word, hug, encouraging thought or maybe slightly too-colorful limerick of the sort that might kick a person out of Sunday school class for several weeks. We celebrate their return home to God's kingdom in heaven. We're excited to know someone close and precious to us has now actually heard the words declared in Scripture, "Well done, good and faithful servant." But we also treasure our blessed assurance that our dearly departed have fought the good fight, run the race and kept the faith.

There is security in that knowledge, and it can be a powerful source of inspiration in the new days, weeks, months and years following our loved one's passing. It also can be a threshold through which we leave behind our former lives. By no means is it a simple series of steps, but God is present and longs to comfort and guide us as we learn to navigate life without our loved one—a life where he or she is only met in memory or

prayer now.

We know His heart breaks for us in our hurt and sorrow. He feels our sadness right along with us, but more so, He feels our deepest longing to hear that person's voice for one extra moment more. He watches as we replay that voice mail over and over again, the last tangible reminder of our missing friend. He watches us dissolve into a misty, disconnected remembering of how they took their coffee—specifically every minute nuance of how they ordered a cup of coffee with breakfast in a diner on vacation in the opposite corner of the country one Spring a decade ago.

No matter how far the depth of our yearning, He's ready to walk us forward on our healing journey, no matter how long the grieving and healing journey takes. {eoa}

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