GRIEF

HER OASIS SUPPLEMENT

Dear Sister,

I see you. Those three little words can breathe life into our weariness. Navigating grief, pain, and disappointment weighs heavily on us, and for some, this season feels unbearable. We often crave fixes and reassurance, but the truth is grief and pain can make others uncomfortable. It's isolating to feel alone, even in a crowd.

Hearing the raw stories and emotions of others offers a thread of hope, reminding us that our feelings are valid and we're not alone in our struggles. Grief is unique; it takes time, and there are no shortcuts.

Lovely, my heartfelt prayer is that you always feel seen. Please remember you are not alone. Sometimes, the deepest comfort comes from someone quietly sitting beside us, holding our hand, simply being present without needing to fix or explain. Your story matters so much, and by sharing it, you create space for healing—not just for yourself, but for those who listen. When we open our hearts to each other, we let in the light that helps us move forward together.

I pray these stories, thoughts, musings and insights from sisters who have walked in your shoes bring you hope.

Blessings,
Ingrid

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re-member us

by Victoria Sandage

Uncertainty is in the atmosphere around us.

Uncertainty begins when we take our first breath as newborn babies. We enter our world looking for safety, security, comfort, and assurance that our needs will be met. As we move through life, uncertainties increase with our responsibilities and experiences. Uncertainty can loom heavy, and lead to much anxiety.

Will I have enough money in retirement?
Do I take social security now or wait?
How might I be cared for if I get sick?
Will the cancer spread or be eradicated with treatment?
Will my kids be okay?
Will gas and food prices go up and squeeze my budget even more?
Will I have enough energy for the next thing?
Will this relationship survive?
Will this grief and loss overwhelm me?

Our world is shaking, with earthquakes, famines, floods, hurricanes, and wars and rumors of wars, divisions and governments toppling.

Will I be safe, protected, assured, comforted?

All that can be shaken will be shaken and sifted, our faulty props will crumble, our idols will fall, and our dependencies stripped away, so that only the eternal, the unshakable will remain. Hebrews 12:26,27

Do we have uncertainties with God too?

They aren't uncertainties as much as mysteries that He uncovers and reveals, as we are ready.

re-member us (con't)

How and when God comes through for us is a mystery. How He comes is best, His ways are perfect. There is also a mystery in when He will come through, often at the eleventh hour, but we can be assured He will come.

We want assurances. It's in our nature.

Oh, so much uncertainty in life.
Uncertainty goes with living this life and our walk with God.
How do we walk with God in the face of all this uncertainty?

We couple our faith to uncertainty.
How do we do that?

We ***remember.***
We ***remember*** that He is the one who clothes the flowers of the field and provides food for the birds of the air.

Does He not care even more for us, His beloved ones?
Will He not provide us with everything we need?

We ***remember.***
We ***remember*** His Promises.

Has He not promised us a peace and a rest that is beyond our comprehension?
Peace I give to you, come to Me, I will give you rest.

Has He not promised to give us a future that is good and full of hope?
Does He not hold our grieving heart?

That means for here, in this life, now, because we need it **today.**

re-member us (con't)

We ***remember*** His words, we listen again and again to His heart. We sit with Him.

Do I see Jesus looking at me with tender love, as He says softly do not be afraid for I am with you?

The day will come when we will exhale our final breath of this life. We will slip across the veil, and all that has been uncertain will become fully certain. When we are finally safe at home, Perfect Love will meet us face to face, and Perfect Love will have cast out all of our fears and anxieties, sighings, sicknesses, sadness, pain, and death will be gone forever.

For now, this side of Heaven, it is ours to ***remember.***

Remember, our Heavenly Father sees us. He knows our struggles in this life is full of uncertainties. He is not distant but walks with us, nearer than our very breath, wanting to help us every day.

For now, we come to Jesus and let Him ***re-member*** us and make us whole.

{Scripture references: Psalm 18:30, Hosea 6:3, Matthew 6:25-31, John 14:27, Matthew 11:28, Jeremiah 29:11, Isaiah 41:10, 1 John 4:18, Revelation 21;4}

journaled thoughts

my mom's journey home

by Terri Sullivant

Part One

As I write this today my Mama has just chosen to do hospice. She is at the end of her race and is at peace and ready to go be with the Lord. We don't know the day and time of her home-going but He does.

Michael and I got the opportunity to go be with her the week before Christmas. I really wanted to be with her this Christmas because it was becoming apparent that it would be her last. So glad I did.

The day after I came home, she had to go into the hospital once again and that's when she decided she really wanted to just be free to choose the way she would leave this world. She chose hospice.

I felt inspired to write a poem to honor her and I read it to her on the phone when she was lucid enough to hear it. So often we say these words to honor someone we love after they are gone. I wanted to be sure to tell her now, before that time.

I'm sharing the poem today in her honor, while she's still here with us for a little while yet. She is a wonderful person and I want to tell you about her now.

A Poem for my mom, ***Irreplaceable***

my mom's journey home (con't)

As I think of my mom, her place in my life
I realize that none could ever suffice,
No one could ever take her place,
The gift of her love, her gracious embrace.

As a baby once in her womb protected,
For life as her child now and always connected;
A place in my heart, kept only for mother,
Will always be hers, not for another.

I will always remember her kind eyes,
Her comforting touch, how she helped me to try,
To learn and grow, overcome and succeed,
Sacrificing to provide for my needs.

Contentment and peace she always carried
Though demands were many, she was not harried.
The calm in a storm, her peace of mind;
Her quiet strength, so rare to find.

As the ground under my feet, a sure place to stand
She was always there, to steward the land
Along with my father, as his faithful wife,
They gave us a worthy and wholesome life.

How grateful I am, fortunate and blessed
To have a mom who gave her best
For me, my family, her friends and the farm,
Helped us all find our way, to be safe from harm.

Dear Mom, when the light of this life grows dim,
I know you are going to be with Him,
Jesus awaits you with arms open wide,
Eager to have you by His side.

You, my mama, I will never forget,
For generations to come, for those not yet;
Will hear of your goodness, kindness and grace,
How you finished well in your race.

And for me, you will forever be
Irreplaceable.
With all my love, Terri

my mom's journey home (con't)

by Terri Sullivant

Part Two

Many of you know that my Mom recently passed away. In November 2021 the Lord impressed upon me that 2022 would be a year of “suddenlies.” I wrote a blog about it back then and have been watching this happen in 2022, starting with Mom’s passing January 1, 2022. It was her time. She was ready. There were many beautiful things that happened around this time.

But the fact remains, I’ve lost her and won’t see her again until heaven. It’s not easy to let go.

My two sisters, one sister-in-law, and I went to Florida together about a month ago. This has been an annual trip we have taken, usually with our Mom. We were all feeling a lot. One of my sisters had the idea to release balloons in her honor. It was a fantastic experience. We spoke out our thoughts and feelings to Mom into the skies as we released the balloons, blue and yellow, her favorite colors. There were four balloons, and as they rose higher, all four stayed information together, like a color guard honoring her departure and her entrance into heaven.

Breathtaking.

my mom's journey home (con't)

Since then, I've experienced a lot of weakness, just feeling vulnerable much of the time. I don't think there's another way to sense when a person you've been attached to since birth is suddenly gone. It feels like there's a gaping hole in your heart. Your energy is low. You're aware that you need to grieve and process to allow space and time to care for yourself. I've heard stories I've processed with the family that I hadn't heard before. I've become aware of places in my soul that need healing and have been experiencing that. I've sought out healing prayer and have seen a counselor, and I will continue that for as long as I need to.

But I can't escape this time of weakness, even if I wanted to, but I can't just power through on my strength. All I can do is stay connected with Jesus and my people as I sit with the discomfort. He is with me. Others who care about me are with me. I know that God's strength is perfected in me in this very place of weakness. As long as I stay in a place of peace and relational connection, He can come into my heart and soul and take up residence in new and more powerful ways.

It's easy to put up barriers to this kind of vulnerability because we are uncomfortable with it. We quickly feel ashamed of our weakness. I've been embracing the gifts that this time of weakness brings me in a new way. I'm more honest and real than I ever have been. I'm less likely to just "buck up" and shift gears into a kind of strength that will leave me drained and empty. Instead, I'm able to have compassion and empathy and take the time to be focused on relationships rather than performance and results.

All this is changing my way of being, communicating, and leading. Things I've been aware of in the past are going deeper, and I'm seeing the roots of things I want to remove from my life.

my mom's journey home (con't)

Mom made a recording for all five of her children we listened to in the funeral home before the viewing. It was like the blessing of the Old Testament patriarchs on their deathbeds, speaking identity and blessing over each of their children. First, she said she felt like the most blessed woman in the world to have such a wonderful family. Then she spoke about each of us personally. To me, she said, *"Terri, you have helped to guide the family."* It touched me deeply. I know that part of my identity and calling is to help guide the family – my family of origin, my own family, the family of God, and my community.

I want to do that with true maturity, not in my strength but with the strength perfected in weakness and vulnerability. There was a childhood way that I did this, an adult version of how I did this, and now I am signing up for a more mature way to be that guide I have been called to be.

Walking through this season, I've realized in a new way that Jesus lived in profound weakness every moment of every day of his life on earth. Can you imagine? He was God, for heaven's sake! He limited Himself to a human body and soul – knowing what He could do because He was God, but only doing what He saw His Father doing, allowing Himself to be fully human in how he experienced life, yet without falling into sin. Wow. He lived in huge weakness compared to the strength He possessed.

Likewise, we possess many strengths that we can use to "*get 'er done."* Of course, there are times when we just need to work hard and get through stuff. But the only way we can know how and when to use our strengths is the same way Jesus did. So when I feel like I "*should*" get super busy to distract myself from what I'm feeling, take charge of a situation, or take on an emotional/relational burden of some kind, I stop and ask, "*Father, what are you doing?"* He may say, "*Yes, go for it,*" "*No, don't go for it," "Wait, go slow,"* or *"Let's talk about this."*

Whatever He says, that's what I want to tune into. I believe that's the kind of dependence and vulnerability He wants us to live in.

raw musings

loss of a marriage

by Tracey

Amid a painful divorce, I found myself grappling with fear and despair as a single mom. My family's financial security was shattered, leaving me overwhelmed and questioning my worth. One night, in a vulnerable moment of sorrow, I felt the Jesus reassure me, "I will restore all that has been lost and broken."

Waking from the dream, I felt a whisper of hope wash over me. The poetically tragic yet redemptive story of Job came to mind—a man who lost everything yet remained steadfast in his faith. Job's ultimate restoration showed me that even in my darkest moments, surrendering my struggles to God opens the door for profound healing and transformation, filling me with hope and strength.

Divorce may steal many things from us, but it doesn't have to take away our joy or peace. God always has a plan to mend our hearts and restore our lives. Restoration is on His agenda, not just for me but for you, too.

So, take heart and hold on to hope, no matter what you are hoping for.

pain of infertility

by Beth

For years, I grappled with the profound grief of infertility, often feeling adrift in a sea of despair. In those darkest times, I stumbled upon the transformative power of poetry woven into songs—each lyric a beacon of hope that reignited my spirit and drew me closer to Jesus.

One pivotal moment that forever changed my perspective came when I discovered a pastor on YouTube who boldly urged barren women to celebrate their journeys. His words pierced through my sorrow, igniting a flicker of hope within me. I felt as if he was speaking directly to my heart, offering a powerful reminder that even in my deepest struggles, I can find joy.

It was at that moment that I realized the depth of my strength; I embraced the belief that my story was still unfolding. That encouragement became my lifeline and source of inspiration that lifted me during my most challenging days. In the face of adversity, I learned to find joy, discovering beauty in the struggle and strength in my faith.

My first fertility procedure continued my heartache as my long awaited appointment had to be rescheduled because the facility was having technical issues with their equipment. The setback left me emotionally drained, knowing I would have to wait several more months to get another appointment. However, again, through poetry in song, I was reminded that God is in control, even when I don't see the plan.

That night, I prayed for guidance and felt a strong urge to prepare a nursery despite the fear that was holding me back. With each layer of paint, I leaned into faith, writing down God's promises and treating my journey like a sacred adventure.

I was putting my faith into action!

pain of infertility (con't)

Throughout my faith journey, God kept stoking my fire of hope, showing me that one day, my dream would come true - I was going to be a mother. My journey with infertility continued for another year and took me to places with God I never thought possible. I heard God's voice so clearly, and His poetic words, expressed through song, continued to keep my faith alive. It was my unwavering faith that sustained me through the darkest moments, and it was my faith that ultimately led me to the joy of motherhood.

The moment I had been waiting for had finally arrived! Exactly one year after preparing my nursery, I received the incredible news — I was expecting! Nine months later, I welcomed a beautiful little girl into the world.

My journey to motherhood serves as a powerful reminder of perseverance, hope, and the remarkable ways faith can manifest in our lives. My precious gift is proof that if we hold onto our dreams and believe in the goodness to come, miracles can unfold in ways we might never have imagined. Remember, no matter the challenges, never lose sight of the possibilities — God has already written your beautiful story.

unfulfilled long season

by Lizzie

"*I'm not sure I can handle waiting anymore,"* I screamed out into the empty void. I was in major frustration and had paralyzing fear concerning my singleness as I approached my mid-century. Honestly, I had lost all hope. I have been waiting on God for a husband for almost three decades. I had started to feel that my dream of walking down the aisle was slipping away, along with all the promises God had given me for marriage.

All my friends were married and with their own families. I was constantly the odd man out. My struggle for a plus one became a constant panic for every social invitation I received. I looked around my church - no men! My community - been there and dated that! Prospects for a potential husband looked very dim! In the absence of proof, my faith was wavering.

I was very close to getting so angry with God that I was ready to throw in the towel. I watched everyone around me find love and enjoy their "happily ever after." Every time I attended another wedding, a piece of my heart died. I felt overlooked by God and disrespected by many in my church, and my identity was in the beginning of crisis mode.

But then I found my battle cry.

Though the cherry trees don't blossom and the strawberries don't ripen,
Though the apples are worm-eaten and the wheat fields stunted,
Though the sheep pens are sheepless and the cattle barns empty,
I'm singing joyful praise to God.
I'm turning cartwheels of joy to my Savior God. Counting on God's Rule to prevail, I take heart and gain strength.
I run like a deer. I feel like I'm the king of the mountain!
~Habakkuk 3:17-19 (The Message)

unfulfilled long season (con't)

I search the trees to see a bloom and find not a single bud.
I lost my voice and couldn't sing.
My life was barren, with no growth in sight.

In that barrenness, Habakkuk reminded me that there was a choice to trust God even when my heart was so weak.

I was 47 years old when I met my husband. Far older than I ever imagined, and by then, I assumed I would never get married and have a family of my own. But in God's perfect timing, He brought my ideal husband, who had three children, wrapped in one beautiful package.

His perfect will unfolded in ways I could not imagine. God not only fulfilled my heart's desire, but He gave me far beyond what I could comprehend. If it weren't for my Lectio Divina moment with Habakkuk, I would have thrown in the towel and missed my miracle.

relatable stories

grief experienced

by Terri Sullivant

Bearer of the gift of being tried by fire, emerging better not better. In my 30s and 40s, I committed to read through the entire Bible in a year. Those were the busiest years of raising five children, but I made it a priority for several years.

The first few years I read through the entire book of Job on the annual schedule. It was depressing. I didn't understand exactly what was making him have such long arguments with God and other people. I didn't understand why God said yes, when the devil asked permission to test him. I was more like a Pollyanna than Job, a born optimist. It didn't fit well with my bent. So, I decided to read only the first and last chapters of Job, chapters 1 and 42, and then be done with it for a year (confession is good for the soul.)

Then in 2004, I began to live my own job story. Suddenly, my world turned upside down when I was hit with the trigeminal neuralgia, *aka the suicide disease*, a seizure disorder of the fifth cranial nerve. After about two months of living with excruciating pain, I finally got the correct but sobering diagnosis. I went to Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida to have brain surgery to stop the seizures. I'll never forget the morning I went in for the surgery. An African man stood holding the door of the operating room open. I looked in the room and saw the *"saw"* that would be used on my skull. I shot him an anxious look, and he smiled back at me and said, *"welcome to the land of miracles."* The miracle of the surgery that day was at the seizure stopped, thank God! However, I still had severe, searing pain in my face because the nerve was demyelinated, which means that the coating was disintegrated so it was like a live wire. Also, the left side of my face was paralyzed, I saw a double, and my hearing was impaired on the left side. I needed a cane to walk, a patch on my left eye, and a plug in my left ear.

grief experienced (con't)

My life had suddenly become like a walking nightmare. After being discharged from the hospital a week later, my husband and I went to stay with an old college friend and his wife in Jacksonville who just happened to be the head of the Jacksonville Mayo clinic. They graciously open their home to us while I recovered.

On the first night, I lay in bed and complete shock. My mind was spinning. I thought, *surely this is a bad dream! I'll wake up and it'll be all over.* I stilled my mind and began to pray. I said silently, *Lord, what on earth are you doing? What is going on here?* I sensed His presence in the room, and He replied, *this is about you and me becoming best friends.* I was speechless. I thought, *this is not the way I would go about that!*

Then I clearly sensed His loneliness. I pray silently, *Lord, you have so many friends, how can you be lonely?* He went on to say, *I have a lot of friends, but not too many who are best friends because when I take them through this kind of trial, they don't want to be friends anymore.* I thought, *I get that!* But I also realize just how serious He was. Then He said, *you'll never know all of me until you know Me in the fellowship of My suffering. Through suffering, you come to know parts of Me that you haven't known before, like Job did.* Wow. I fell silent for a while. then responded, *Well, Lord, if that is what it's all about, I'm in. Just let me end up where Job did in chapter 42.*

The next two years were full of pain, being incapacitated on the couch, not being able to sleep, not being able to take care of my two high school boys still at home. I had to be on pain meds, I could not eat much because of the facial pain, and the list of physical suffering were endless.

grief experienced (con't)

At the same time, the church where my husband was a pastor and where we had been part of for 20 years went through severe testing, with lots of fallout.

At the same time, my father-in-law who lived with us at the time, went through a terrible health crisis as well. My husband had three traumatic situations to deal with simultaneously, and my own heart was in much pain as my body sometimes. I had some of the most profound experiences of the love of God I'd ever had during that time on the couch. It was such severe pain my whole body would be trembling. I cried out to the Lord to help me, and He showed up. Suddenly, I felt the tunnel of wind all around my body and inside me. It felt like I was being lifted off the couch.

There was a message in the wind, revelation from God. In it, He was saying, *I cherish you, I cherish you*. That message went with that wind throughout my entire being. I could not do one thing to merit at that. I believe it removed the residue of performance orientation in my life. I received His intimate, cherishing love that day, and never lost it. I understood my intimate fellowship with God was right in the middle of my most intense suffering. His love transcends all circumstances!

During that time, I got more honest with God than ever, and the book of Job became my manual! When any human being is tested to that degree, it is inevitable that the kind of questions and arguments Job head will surface. When a person must endure so much pain and suffering, all those thoughts and emotions boil to the surface and spill over amid the fiery trial. Now I understand that. I also understand in a new way all my suffering is for His suffering. He was feeling all of it with me, bearing it all with me.

grief experienced (con't)

God knows we will reach the end of our capacity to cope with the pain we are experiencing at those times in life when suffering hits most intensely. So, He lets us know somehow ahead of time, with the hope that we will be prepared and know that He is with us when we feel He must have abandoned us. What I now know is that He wants you to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that He is always with you, no matter where you are, rain or shine, light or darkness.

During my season on the couch, I got really mad at God one day. I had reached a breaking point. I just couldn't hold it in anymore. I went into the garage, got into the car, locked the doors (as if that made a difference) and yelled at Him! I shouted, *why did you say yes to this? Why did you let this happen to me?* I just let it all out for several minutes, expressing exactly how I felt. Afterward, I felt very sheepish. I came back into the house and laid on the couch apologizing for what I'd just done. A moment later, I simply saw with the eyes of my spirit His smiling face, beaming at me. He said, *you can never lose my favor, not even on your worst day.* I melted into a puddle of tears. The anger subsided. I felt peace. I felt loved. I simply needed to get that all out. Much to my amazement, it was okay with Him.

There was a transforming work of grace done in my life during that time. I now realize that some of the ingredients lacking in my natural humanity were added to me in the flames of this fire. As I said, my natural personality tended to be more like Pollyanna, an eternal optimist, a natural encourager. I still have those traits, tempered now by a keen awareness of the darker hues of truth about life. I am still a naturally positive, encouraging person, but much more empathetic with the sufferings of others and the consequences of life in a fallen world. I just get it more and have capacity for all of life. Pollyanna and Job are now friends.

grief experienced (con't)

More than ever, I am confident and unshakable in knowing that God is always with us in all things everywhere. Absolutely nothing can ever separate us from His love.

There were so many blessings that came to me at that time in my relationship with Him and from people who came to pray for me and serve my family. I saw the Lord in a whole new way, and we did become the best of friends. I was fully healed of the pain, the double vision, the hearing impairment, and was finally able to get off the couch and do life again. I still have some facial palsy, but today I am restored and healthy, older and wiser, and very thankful everyday of life I get to live. And I did end up where Job did in chapter 42.

Don't become offended with God or anyone He might use to be part of your suffering. Let it all go, forgive, trust Him and become better not bitter. This is what happened to me. I now have much more trust and depth of relationship with God, more empathy and compassion for the sufferings of others, more understanding of grieving and how to walk through it into a new reality. God is good all the time.

Life isn't always good. Be he is, and He loves you.

grief's waiting room

by Victoria Sandage

Healing - just mentioning the subject can stir up a mixture of emotions. Thankful hearts for those who have experienced healing in some area. For others, the word "healing" can stir up feelings of disappointment, discouragement, or even anger that healing hasn't happened. Some of us have had sudden miraculous healings in our body, mind, and emotions. For others, healing happens only after months or years of pain, heartache, and agonizing waiting. Many are in "the waiting room" now. Waiting takes "God with us" stamina, courage, hope, and the presence of others.

In December 2018, I sat on my mother's bed as she took her last breath. We knew the day would come. For a while, she had been warning us that one of these times, after another heart episode, she would not return. But for some reason, it was still shocking. Losing a mother or a child in this life is huge. Mother-child attachment is powerful. When we lose our mother or a child, we can experience a depth of pain unlike any other. I felt like I was on an ocean liner of grief, trying to survive the enormous battering waves, and the land was nowhere in sight.

Fourteen months after mom exchanged her earthy home for her heavenly one, my dad joined her. Grief then piled upon grief, and suddenly I was thrust into a unique group of people called "orphans." It's hard to explain that until both of your parents are gone. Some have lost one or both parents, not necessarily through death, but through abandonment, rejection, violence, and neglect. Those feelings can be intensely painful and need the deep healing love of Jesus.

grief's waiting room (con't)

What has helped me immensely in my grief/loss journey has been a promise that I will not be left alone in this world. Emmanuel, "God is with us." Emmanuel Journaling is a practice that has helped me get in touch with Jesus being with me in my suffering. The Word also gives hope. We have promises that bring us comfort when we feel lost and alone.

[*The Lord answered] "Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.* Isaiah 49:15 (AMP)

"I will not leave you as orphans [comfortless, bereaved, and helpless]; I will come [back] to you." John 14:18 (AMP)

A few months after losing my dad, I suddenly lost vision in one eye; everything went pitch black. My retina had detached entirely, leaving everything dark. My doctor told me the retina in the other eye was beginning to detach too. After five surgeries, medically, nothing else could help improve my sight. This news was difficult to embrace. As a photographer, I couldn't imagine not being able to do what I love!

I have since learned that I can still capture beautiful images. I am beyond grateful. It's not the same, but I'm adapting.

I have a vision in one eye, it's not great, but I'm thankful for that much. I'm waiting on Jesus, My Healer, to restore my full vision. Waiting is hard. Anyone who knows me knows that patience has not been one of my most shining virtues. But the healing journey has been a catalyst for growth in that area. So, I am improving!

grief's waiting room (con't)

Sometimes God uses doctors to heal; other times, it's just in His perfect timing outside the natural realm. Sometimes healing comes on this side of heaven, and other times not. Healing will come. Waiting is hard and it takes patience.

"Don't run from tests and hardships, brothers and sisters. As difficult as they are, you will ultimately find joy in them; if you embrace them, your faith will blossom under pressure and teach you true patience as you endure. And true patience brought on by endurance will equip you to complete the long journey and cross the finish line —mature, complete, and wanting nothing." James 1:2 (Voice)

Stamina (endurance) means having the ability, determination, or strength to continue doing something challenging over a long period. Most often, we need stamina as we await our healing. Chronic pain, grief, and illness are plain exhausting. It takes stamina to get out of bed (if you can) to face another day, do what you must do, and put one foot in front of the other. It takes stamina to keep trying, doing your part, whatever that might be, and to keep believing healing will come. I'm not sure that we can keep up the stamina without hoping it will help and that we will be healed.

"Hope is the joyful anticipation of good" (Bill Johnson).

We need hope. We need the courage to hang on while we seek and keep seeking, knock and keep knocking (stamina). "Ask and keep on asking, and it will be given to you; seek and keep on seeking, and you will find; knock and keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking, it will be opened." Matthew 7:7-8 (TPT)

grief's waiting room (con't)

In Luke 8:43-48, there is an inspirational woman who had stamina, courage, and hope. For twelve years, she must have lived with disappointment after disappointment, spending all her money searching for a cure. Yet, she never gave up hope. Isaiah 42:3 reminds us that He will never extinguish that dimly burning wick. This woman had the stamina to keep searching for healing and had hope that this man they called "Messiah" could do something to help her, to alleviate her suffering. This brave woman had the courage and determination to press through the crowds. She was considered "unclean" but she reach her hand out to touch the hem of Jesus's robe and was healed immediately.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:29-31 (NIV)

Gratitude is not overrated. There was a time years ago that I was preparing for shoulder surgery, knowing I would face limitations for some months. I was very concerned about how I would handle that, given that I was very active and always on the move. I needed a strategy. I heard God say to me (in the way He sometimes does, with that quiet inside voice), "Don't focus on what you can't do, but what you can do."

My Wonderful Counselor's words were invaluable to me at that time and even more so these last couple of years, as I have faced more challenging physical limitations. Changing my focus to what I can do and what I have, instead of complaining and griping about my condition, leads to gratitude. Gratitude rewires the brain, leading to many significant benefits, including our healing.

grief's waiting room (con't)

Community and friendship have been a lifeline for me throughout my grief and healing journey. When my stamina, courage, or hope levels are at their lowest, someone has come along with a hug, a listening ear, a shoulder to lean on, a text or call, a card, an encouraging word, a prayer, something practical, or just being with me. Never underestimate the significance of your "presence." So often, it is an anchor in the storm, a life preserver among the waves, a light on the shore. Let's be there for those around us waiting for their healing, whatever it looks like. Let's be present for one another, bringing His Presence, being His Hands and Feet. Let us be Jesus with Skin On.

"...But God designed the body in such a way ....If one part is suffering, then all the members suffer alongside it. If one member is honored, then all the members celebrate alongside it." 1 Corinthians 12:25-26 (Voice)

"Celebrate with those who celebrate, and weep with those who grieve." Romans 12:15 (TPT)

The Father's heart and desire are for us to be whole, fully restored. He gave His Son Jesus so we would be whole. It helps to know that physical, spiritual, and emotional restoration is a promise, a gift purchased at the cross and our inheritance as Daughters of the King. There will come a day when every tear will be wiped away, and all the hurt and pain vanish, where there is no more separation or sadness, where all wrongs will be made right.

In the meantime, "in the waiting," let's do our best to have courage and stamina, practice gratitude, and walk alongside one another in the face of our trials and afflictions. Let us hold onto hope that "one day we will be healed," whether that "one day" is just around the corner or down the road and across the veil.

grief's waiting room (con't)

Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed daily. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.
2 Corinthians 4:16-17 (NIV)

For instance, we know that when these bodies of ours are taken down like tents and folded away, they will be replaced by resurrection bodies in Heaven—God-made, not handmade—and we'll never have to relocate our "tents" again. Sometimes we can hardly wait to move—and so we cry out in frustration. Compared to what's coming, living conditions around here seem like a stopover in an unfurnished shack, and we're tired of it! We've been given a glimpse of the real thing, our true home, our resurrection bodies! The Spirit of God whets our appetite by giving us a taste of what's ahead. He puts a little of Heaven in our hearts so that we'll never settle for less. 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 (MSG)

If you are “in the waiting room" and navigating life with pain, frustration, disappointment, and discouragement, you are not alone. God is with you, and you have sisters who see you.

You've got this, and all of heaven is behind you.

communion, scripture, and prayer

final days

by Ingrid Maddock

In February 2018, my mother began her transition to heaven after a long battle with illness. In this challenging time, I chose to bring in Hospice to focus on her comfort.

My mother, a lover of words, found solace having scripture read to her. During her final journey, I spent countless hours reading to her from familiar and comforting sources. Though she was non-responsive, the words of God brought her peace and light. In her last weeks, when food and water were no longer an option, her spirit thrived on scripture. In the most challenging moments overnight, when fear would knock at the door and panic would fill my mother's frail, skinny frame, the poetic words of Psalm 91 would bring reassurance and comfort.

One poignant moment, after I read the poetic words from Psalm 91, a red cardinal appeared at her window. A whisper of a moment passed when miraculously she opened her eyes and declared, *"I love you."* I stood in awe at the power of the spoken word. It was so life-giving. To this day, that has been one of the most incredible gifts I have ever received.

My mother soon went home to be with her Savior, but the power of Psalm 91 endures. It has remained my wellspring of living water and a source of profound life-sustenance, a constant reassurance and comfort.

I want to share the poetic words from Psalm 91 with you with the hope it will bring you comfort and peace.

final days (con't)

As I read Psalm 91 over my mother, I personalized the words. I would like to do the same for you.

I sit down in the High God's presence, and spend the night in Shaddai's shadow, I say: "God, you're my refuge. I trust in you and I'm safe!" That's right—You rescue me from hidden traps, shield me from deadly hazards. Your huge outstretched arms protect me—under them I'm perfectly safe; Your arms fend off all harm. I fear nothing—not wild wolves in the night, not flying arrows in the day, Not disease that prowls through the darkness, not disaster that erupts at high noon. Even though others succumb all around, drop like flies right and left, no harm will even graze me.

I stand untouched, watch it all from a distance, watch the wicked turn into corpses. Yes, because You are my refuge, the High God is my very own home, Evil can't get close to me, harm can't get through the door. You ordered Your angels to guard me wherever I go. If I stumble, they'll catch me; their job is to keep me from falling. I walk unharmed among lions and snakes, and kick young lions and serpents from the path.

God you tell me "If I hold on to You for dear life," You will get me out of any trouble. You will give me the best of care when I get to know and trust You. You tell me to call You and You will {always} answer. You will be at my side in bad times; You will rescue me, then throw me a party. You will give me a long life, and You will give me a long drink of salvation!"

~ Psalm 91 {Message Translation, Personalized, Emphasized}

healing communion

by Ingrid Maddock

In the summer of 2019, I wasn't feeling well. I delayed going to the doctor because we had so much going on in our family, including the death of my father-in-law. By the time fall rolled around, I knew I had to schedule an appointment. My doctor ran a series of tests, and the results indicated an issue with my liver. They wanted to schedule an ultrasound. That night, my husband and I start taking communion believing for healing.

I went for the ultrasound, and they ended up finding a lesion on my ovary. They ordered another blood test and a different ultrasound. When I went back to the doctor's office for those results, she said my liver was completely normal. She had no explanation for the shift because it had only been a week since my initial bloodwork. Amazing news! But then, in the same breath, she said the lesion in my ovary was very dense, abnormal, and she wanted to refer me to a specialist.

More tests, more bloodwork, and more confirmations that something was not right in my ovary. Cancer was floated as a possibility. The morning I had another test scheduled, I felt a cleansing going on. When I went for my next test, to everyone's surprise, the lesion could not be found. Gone!

Amazing news again! But then another “but.” She said they saw something suspicious in my uterus. It was a growth, and they wanted to do a biopsy. Again, faith was put to the test.

healing communion (con't)

At my follow-up appointment two weeks later, the doctor walked into the room and said, "No cancer!" I knew God healed me again.

Communion brought me to a place of complete child-like faith in Him. It is easy to reason and search for answers to everything, but really, it comes back to having the faith of a child to know: I have something that doesn't belong. So, God, I am giving it back to you without reasoning, questioning, or doubting. Take care of things for me.

I know what He did for me and what He can do for you.

No matter where you are in your journey, no matter how many bad reports or set backs, don't lose hope!

I cannot explain the why but I do know the Who. And He is faithful.

closing prayer

Dear Father,

In this time of grief, please grant me the patience to allow my sorrow to unfold at its own pace. Please help me to honor my unique journey and the depths of my loss, without comparison to others. May I find comfort in the memories of those I've loved, both family and friends, and may I seek the strength to express my needs to those around me.

Guide me through the waves of sorrow, reminding me that my feelings are valid and not confined by others' expectations. Let me embrace this natural process of healing, knowing that my grief is a reflection of the love I hold.

Be with me in my suffering and pain, as my life is uncertain. As I wait for you. Holding the shattered pieces as you place them back together one by one, giving me a glimpse of the future hope you placed in my heart.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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