



*Dealing with
Grief and Loss*

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One of the most helpful passages in the Bible on dealing with grief is found in Genesis 23:1-4. It gives us some important principles about dealing with death. It says,

"And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

So, what do we learn from this passage that will help us deal with death in a Biblical manner?

1. There is a time to mourn.

The word mourn literally means to tear the hair and beat the breast; to lament and wail. It is normal to weep and feel sorrowful. Someone who does not mourn the loss of a loved one has a serious problem. They have bottled up what is normal and natural and are going to experience a greater conflict down the road.

You are not mourning just their absence, but if they were close to you, you are mourning the loss of part of who you are. You are mourning the loss of part of your identity. This is especially true for those who raised the deceased or were married to the deceased for many years. Their identity is so intertwined with that of the deceased that it is hard to reconcile who they are now.

The key here is that you have to realize that your identity cannot be in anyone but Jesus Christ. If you are saved, you are a new creation in Him. Your identity must be in Him if you are going to get through the loss of a loved one. If Christ is in you, things have changed concerning death.

Romans 8:10 says, *"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."* You must recognize that your life is now hid in Christ, and He is in your heart. Galatians 2:20 says, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* Notice that Paul says "I", that is the old I, the old man, "am crucified with Christ".

If you are saved, then you are not the old man any longer. Your identity is "in Him". I realize that we have a strong identification with our loved ones, but they are not who we are. Our relationship with them did not define us completely.

I love my wife. I cannot imagine what life would be without her. But if that was to happen, I would have to remember that her death did not end my life. Why? Because my life was not in her, it is in Jesus Christ. Your life is not found in anyone on this earth, but rather it is found in Jesus Christ.

2. There is a time to stop mourning.

In verse 3, Abraham stood up from before his dead. He didn't stay there the rest of his life. You must realize that you still have a life to live, and God still has a purpose for you.

Several years ago, when I was on a trip to England, I was putting out literature door to door and ran across a lady that was sitting on her front porch in her pajamas crying. I asked her what she was troubled about, and she told me that she was sad because her father had died. I asked if I could come back later and visit with her. She agreed, so I took a missionary with me and later went back to her house.

When we got there, she was inside and invited us in. Her house was a shrine to her late father. She began to tell us how she had taken care of him since she was just a teenager and how she had done everything for him.

I asked when he passed, and she said about four years ago. She was completely engulfed in grief and had never stopped mourning because she had no identity of her own. Because she had no identity of her own, she had no purpose to live. Her only purpose in life had been to take care of him. She didn't know what to do now.

Romans 8:28 says, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* You may have lost your purpose, but God still has one for you. You are called according to His purpose. Turning from your own confusion to His purpose for your life is vital to standing up from your dead and moving on with the life that you have been given.

To end mourning, your dead must be buried out of your sight. Some time ago I counseled with a man who was overcome with grief at the death of his wife. She had passed away almost six months prior, and he was getting worse each day.

As we sat down to talk, he began to tell me how much he missed her and how he just didn't know if he could go on without her. He pulled her phone out of his pocket. He said that he kept it active so that he could call her voice mail and listen to her voice. He did this several times a day. Even though he knew his wife was gone, his mind was telling him that she was still there. The confusion was destroying him.

Abraham said, I must bury my dead out of my sight. He put away the things belonging to Sarah, not to forget her, but to bury her. He was saying that he must live with the living and not with the dead.

As you are still among the living, those who have died must be put out of your sight or you will be focused on death rather than life. This means that you need to pack away, out of sight, photos, personal possessions, and anything in your home or at work that would anchor you to the past.

There will come a time when your heart has healed from the grief and sorrow, and then you can bring out the photos and personal possessions and remember them with the joy and fondness that is healthy and good. But to keep everything before your eyes until that time is much like keeping their dead body in your living room. The dead must be put away out of sight.

The reason death is such a woeful trial is because of what it represents. Physical death is the reminder of the wages of sin. In Genesis 2:17, God told Adam and Eve, "*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*" We know according to Romans 6:23, "*The wages of sin is death*"

Prior to Adam and Eve's sin in the garden there was no death, physically or spiritually. Man was created in perfection and had never experienced death. But sin brought forth death. Sin brought forth sorrow and pain. Death is an ever present reminder of the consequences of sin. When you drive past a cemetery, you are faced with the reality of the effects of sin.

The truth is that physical death is not the end of mankind. Genesis 25:8 says, "*Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.*" The soul does not cease to exist after the body dies. This body is just the holding place for your soul. It is temporary. It is headed toward death, but your soul will never die. You will live forever somewhere, either in heaven or hell.

Genesis 2:7 says, *"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."* The soul is the seat of your intellect and your emotions. These two together form your will. The soul is how you think and feel. The terms heart and mind and soul are often interchangeable in the Bible. They speak of the same area of thinking and feeling.

The soul is different from the body and the spirit. Your soul is your self-conscience, the body is your physical conscience, and the spirit is your God conscience. In the account of Lazarus and the rich man, we read in Luke 16:22-24, *"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."*

Prior to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Hell was divided into two compartments. All men went to Hell because the payment for sin was not yet made. However, not all were in torment.

We see here that those who had put their trust in God were comforted and those who had trusted in themselves, their riches or their goodness were in torment. We understand that their soul, meaning their senses, their thinking, and their feelings were conscience of what was going on.

So here we are confronted with death and the consequences of sin. The state of physical separation from the body is the first death and eternal separation from God is called the second death.

Revelation 21:8 says, *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."*

The first death reminds us of the greater death that awaits all those who reject God. Death should cause us to question our position with God. Revelation 20:13-15 says, *"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."*

The question that death should cause us to ask is this, "Is my name written in the book of life in heaven so that I will not be part of the second death?"

Friend, the only way that you can get your name in the book of life in heaven is by accepting the payment that Jesus Christ made on the cross for your sin. If you are judged according to your works, you will be cast into the lake of fire. Why? Romans 3:23 says, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"*

However, when you obey the gospel and put your faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the only acceptable payment for sin, God in heaven receives you on Christ's merit. He forgives your sin for Christ's sake.

Ephesians 4:32 says, *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* The Bible tells us that when you trust in Jesus Christ as your Saviour, your soul is saved from the second death. Your sins are blotted out and God sees you as righteous.

God knows how to help us overcome death, both in the loss of our loved ones and in regard to the second death. The first step is to ensure that your name is written in the book of life in heaven. Has it been? Are you saved? If so, you have no need to fear death because Jesus has conquered it for you.

To learn more about how to be saved and come into a right relationship with God, I encourage you to take our free Bible study entitled, "Finding Hope in Jesus". Feel free to contact us at biblestudyglobal@gmail.com to learn more about our FREE Bible study program.

Also, below and on the next page are some other helpful articles written by Pastor Carter. Please feel free to share these with someone who might be helped by them.



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