

February 21, 2010 PM

THE SEASON OF LOSS

“Sometimes something useless happens on earth. Bad things happen to good people, and good things happen to bad people.” (Eccl. 8:14, NCV)

Nothing is permanent. You can lose your job, you can lose your health, you can lose a friendship. You will lose people that you love to death. Job lost everything, but his life and a nagging wife. Yet he held on to his relationship with his God.

Somehow he understood we don't always get what we deserve in this life. Most people think bad things happen because we are bad and good things happen to us because we are good. Neither of these are true.

When good things happen to us, that's called grace.

When bad things happen, it's called life.

In Luke 13 Jesus tells us that tragedy was not because of their sin. That does not do away with the divine law of sowing and reaping, or that there are not consequences to our bad decisions and evil choices.

I am saying innocent people get hurt and we experience loss at no fault of our own. Everything that happens is certainly not God's will. God grieves over sin more than any of us. He has a will but has given mankind a freewill and He will not force His will upon us.

It's God's will that people are saved, and it's not His will that they perish in their sin, but God does not violate our freewill.

Tonight I want to see from God's Word about how we can respond to loss.

I. I must release my grief.

Jesus said, ***“Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.” (Matt. 5:4)***

A. Loss always produces strong emotions.

1. Anger.
2. Fear.
3. Guilt.

B. We must deal with grief.

1. It is therapeutic to talk to someone about it.
2. What I can't talk about controls me.
3. God does not expect us to walk around with a smile despite it.
4. Jesus said, "It's OK to grieve." Even if it's for your own sake.

C. What do you do with your grief?

1. You don't repress it.
2. You release it to God.

David said, ***"Pour out our heart to God for He is our refuge." (Ps. 62:8)***
"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Ps. 34:18)

3. If you don't allow your grief out, it will poison you.

II. I must receive from others.

"Carry each others burdens..." (Gal. 6:2)

A. Human tendency is to build a wall, close the door and not see anyone.

1. I need others' support.
2. I need others' perspective.
3. Our pain narrows our focus. I can't see anything but me.

B. A function of the church is to care for each other.

1. When you are part of a Sunday School class you have a support group.
2. If you don't take advantage of the church support system, it's your choice.

***“By helping each other with your troubles, you obey the law of Christ.”
“Look after each other so that not one of you will fail to find God's best blessings.” (Hebrews 12:15, LB)***

3. We need God's promises and God's people in seasons of loss.

III. I must refuse to be bitter.

“Some people have no happiness at all. They live and die with bitter hearts.” (Job 21:25, GN)

A. You have to decide if you want to be happy or bitter. You can't be both.

1. They can't live in the same house.
2. You will be bitter or get better.
3. There is no correlation between happiness and circumstances.
4. Happiness is a choice. You are happy as you choose to be.
5. You can learn to be happy.

B. The antidote to bitterness:

1. Accept what cannot be changed.

***“...Reach out to God...then face the world again, firm and courageous...”
(Job 11:13; 16)***

Faith is not denying reality; it's refusing to be discouraged, in spite of the problem. Most of life is beyond our control.

2. Focus on what's left, not on what's lost.

“No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God’s will for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, LB)

- God is with you.
- God is at work bringing good out of even the bad.

The antidote for depression is gratitude!

IV. I must remember what’s important.

Jesus said, ***“Life is not measured by how much one owns.” (Luke 12:15, NCV)***

A. Losses help us to do values: Discovery of what’s really important.

1. Clarify your values.
2. Focus on what’s important.

B. The greatest things in life are not things.

“We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.” (1 Timothy 6:7, NIV)

V. I must rely on Christ.

“I have learned the secret of being happy at any time, in everything that happens. I can do all things through Christ, because He gives me strength.” (Phil. 4:13, NCV)

How do I learn to rely on Christ?

A. Lean on Christ for stability.

“Those who trust in the Lord are steady as Mount Zion, unmoved by any circumstances.” (Ps. 125:1, LB)

“You, Lord, give true peace to those who depend on you.” (Isa. 26:3)

“Such a person will not be overthrown by evil circumstances. God’s constant care of him will make a deep impression on all who see it. He does not fear bad news, nor live in dread of what may happen. For he is settled in his mind that God will take care of him.” (Ps. 112:6-7, LB)

B. Listen to Christ for direction.

“I know what I am planning for you, says the Lord. I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future.” (Jer. 29:11)

C. Look to Christ for salvation (deliverance)

“God is our protection and our strength. He always helps in times of trouble. So we will not be afraid, even if the earth shakes, or the mountains fall into the sea.” (Ps. 46:2, NCV)

“We were really crushed and overwhelmed, and feared we would never live through it...we saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was good, for then we put everything into the hands of God, who alone could save us. And He did help us and saved us and we expect Him to do it again and again.” (2 Cor. 1:10, LB)